

Music to Tell Our Stories



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Opera

0/3 steps

- Warm-Up
- A New Phenomenon
- Parts of an Opera

Musical Theatre

0/4 steps

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- The Broadway Musical
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- Music Sets the Tone (cont.)

Film

0/4 steps

- Warm-Up
- Early Days
- The Film Composing Process
- Famous Composers and Their Films

11 Steps



About

Writer Joan Didion says that "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." Through stories, we share and learn from experiences, we attempt to explain things we don't understand, we amuse ourselves, and we remind each other of what we value. When paired with music, visual, and dramatic arts, storytelling becomes a transcendent emotional experience for both performers and audience members.

In this unit, you will learn about how music shapes three primary storytelling media: opera, musical theatre, and film.

Start

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## Opera



"Opera is the ultimate art form. It has singing and music and drama and dance and emotion and story." - Diane Paulus, director

"[Opera is] a repository of the most glorious music and drama that man has created." - Bruce Beresford, director

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Warm-Up

- Throughout the next steps, you will learn:
- How a story is told through the medium of opera
  - Some basic terms associated with opera
  - How the parts of the opera contribute to its total effect

Complete



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Opera is a form of storytelling in which singing is combined with theatre or stage drama, orchestral music, visual art (in the form of production design and costuming), and dance. Italian composers first experimented with this in the early 1600s, but its popularity soon spread throughout all of Europe. Composers from different countries developed their own national styles.

Opera halls became social hubs for the elite to rub elbows and show off their wealth. Virtuoso performers (females were known as *prima donnas*) became superstars.

Read the following article and pick ONE of the listed operas that you would like to learn more about: [San Francisco Opera](#) | [A Brief History of Opera](#)

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A New Phenomenon

A New Phenomenon

Thursday, November 25

Opera buffa describes what type of plot? (required)

This question has 1 right answer.

Serious and dignified

Comedy

Tragedy

Historical and factual

0/1 Question

Cancel

Next


Complete




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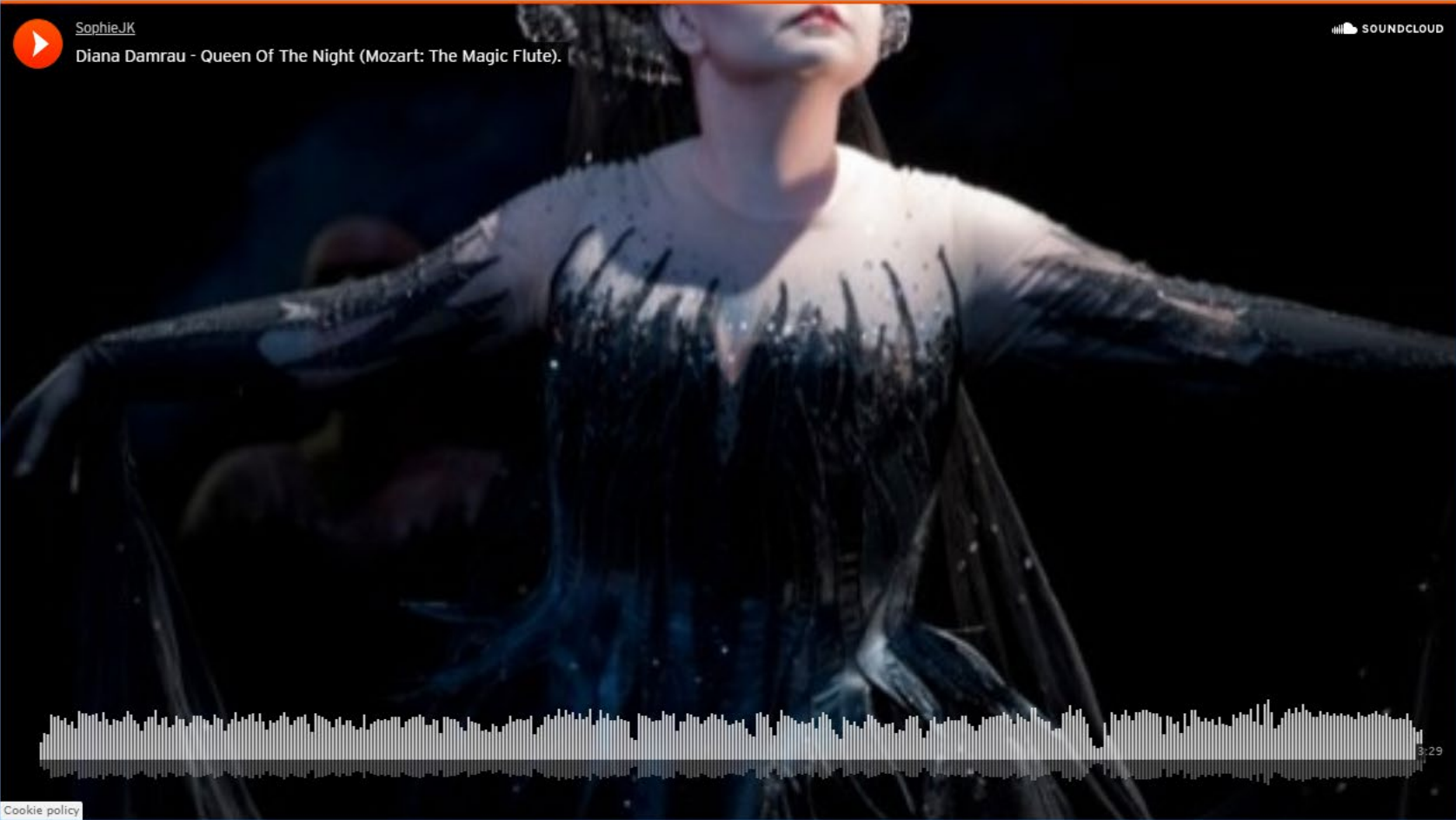
### Cadenza/Coloratura

Opera is the pinnacle of musical performance and artistry, so opera performers are the best of their age. A cadenza is a musical passage that is gives the singer space to show off their talent and virtuosity. The orchestra gets out of the way and the vocalist performs incredible feats of range and technicality. Coloratura is vocal music that is embellished with trills, extreme ranges, and fast notes and runs. It can be featured in a cadenza, but it is also usually present throughout an aria or the entire opera.

 [SophieJK](#)

Diana Damrau - Queen Of The Night (Mozart: The Magic Flute).

 SOUNDCLLOUD



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### Leitmotif

A leitmotif is a musical phrase or theme that is appears throughout the opera and is associated with a character, object, idea, emotion, or theme. When an audience hears the leitmotif, it is their cue that one of these is in play in the scene.

### Libretto

The libretto of an opera consists of the words/lyrics that the singers sing in the opera. The composer works with the librettist to set these words to music. Sometimes, the librettist and the composer are the same person!

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Musical Theatre



"If you have something important to say, Broadway and New York are great places to say it." - Yakov Smirnoff

"Broadway! Broad-way! I don't aspire to the middle. I aspire to the tip-tip-top of it all." - Billy Porter

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Warm-Up

Throughout the next steps, you will learn:

- About the elements of a musical
- How music sets the atmosphere and the scene
- About musical theatre on Broadway

Complete



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Musical Theatre > Warm-Up

## Warm-Up

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- About the elements of a musical
- How music sets the atmosphere and the scene
- About musical theatre on Broadway

### Questionnaire



Only the program owner will see your responses.

### Warm-Up

Thursday, November 25

List as many musicals as you can think of! (required)

Write your answer

0/1 Question

Cancel

Send

Complete

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## ○ The Film Composing Process

- Famous Composers and Their Films

Early pioneers of musicals were George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Cole Porter in the 1920s and '30s, with works such as *Lady Be Good*, *Show Boat*, and *Anything Goes* which reflected the jazz style. In the following decades, Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim further developed the musical by infusing 20th-century harmonies and sociopolitical drama. In the late 20th century, Andrew Lloyd Webber joined Broadway musical royalty with *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Sunset Boulevard*.

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↗

Music Sets the Tone

Music permeates opera - the art form is defined by music such that every word is sung. On the other end of the dramatic spectrum is a play, which contains entirely spoken dialogue. In between the two sits musical theatre, which combines spoken dialogue and drama with music that conveys the emotional development of the story.



In this photo, the Phantom and Christine (from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*) sing a duet in which he lulls her into a trance and lures her into his lair. How would you describe the music that should accompany this scene?

Complete



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Music Sets the Tone (cont.)

Listen to "The Phantom of the Opera" - the song that accompanies the photo. Did it match your expectations? Was it effective in conveying the emotions of the scene?



redguy

The Phantom Of The Opera

Andrew Lloyd Webber's

The PHANTOM of the OPERA

December 22

IN SELECT CITIES



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Try watching the scene in action.



The Phantom of the Opera

 Watch later

 Share

Complete

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"In most films music is brought in at the end, after the picture is more or less locked, to amplify the emotions the filmmaker wants you to feel." - Ken Burns

"When I make film music, I'm a filmmaker first and foremost. It's about serving the needs of the film. You're telling a story; in a way, you stop becoming a composer and become a storyteller instead. You tell the story with the most appropriate themes. How you approach these things is a very personal matter, but your goal is to tell the story first." - Johann Johannsson

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Warm-Up

Throughout the next steps, you will learn:

- The role of the film composer and the purposes that music serves in film
- How appropriate music enhances visual images and gives a film continuity
- To discuss the functions and styles of music for film

Complete



# Early Days

From the very beginning of motion pictures, music has been an essential companion. Before movies had sound, live music was played to bring life to the pictures. A pianist or organist would improvise a score live, watching the film along with the audience and interpreting the mood of the scene with appropriate music. What a feat!

Thomas Edison and his partners played a critical role in the inventions that drove filmmaking, first by creating the Kinetoscope and later the Vitascope, before providing musicians with "cue sheets" so they could plan appropriate music. In 1915, an entire live orchestra was assembled to accompany the showing of the silent film *The Birth of a Nation*. Despite being "the most controversial film ever made in the United States," and, "the most reprehensibly racist film in Hollywood history," its technical innovations had a profound and lasting impact on the film industry - including the permanent fixture of the orchestra as an essential to film.

After Edison's invention of the Vitaphone, sound and music could be synced to otherwise silent motion pictures, and the composition of original music for film became worthwhile in pursuit of the perfect dramatic impact.

Studying opera and musical theatre aids in understanding the evolution of film music. Overtures and incidental music (music that accompanies a dramatic performance but is less important than the drama occurring) influenced early film composers.



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# The Film Composing Process



1. The composer views the completed film.
2. The composer and director work together to "spot" the film, or determine which scenes should have music.
3. The composer views each spotted sequence several times to get a feel for their respective moods.
4. The composer sketches musical ideas and must rapidly "score" them, or orchestrate them for a full ensemble.
5. The music is recorded while the conductor watches the film and syncs up the music to important moments in the film.
6. The music recording is mixed and mastered.
7. The music recording is combined with all other sound elements of the film and "dubbed" into one soundtrack, adjusting volumes so that dialogue and other sounds can be heard over the music.

Complete



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## Famous Composers and Their Films



### The 25 Greatest Film Composers

Choose one of the composers from the list AND choose one of their films. Answer the following questions:

1. Which composer and film did you choose?
2. Paste a link to some of the music from this film.
3. How does the music in this scene establish the time and place in which the action takes place?

Complete



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Questionnaire

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Famous Composers and Their Films

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Which composer and film did you choose? (required)

Write your answer

Paste a link to some of the music in this film (a YouTube video with the scene and music together is preferable). (required)

Write your answer

0/3 Questions

Cancel

Send

The 25 Greatest Film Composers

Choose one of the composers from the list AND choose one of their films. Answer the following questions:

- 1. Which composer and film did you choose?
- 2. Paste a link to some of the music from this film.

Complete