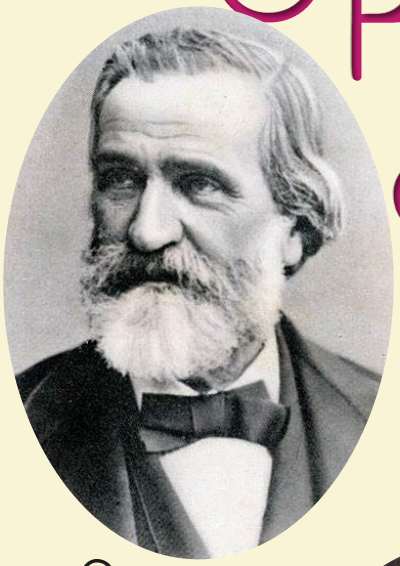
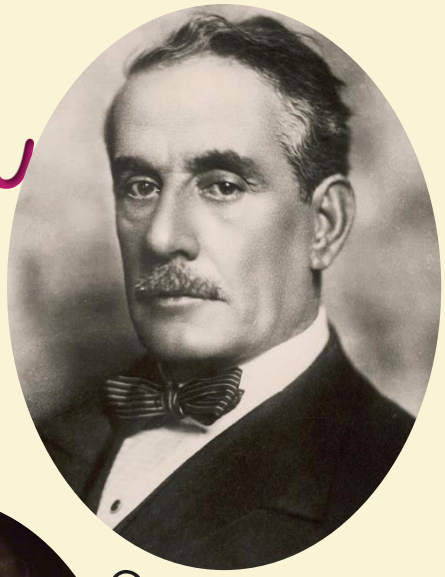
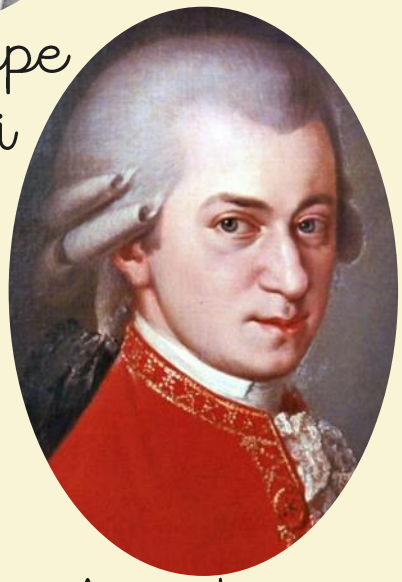
Opera Composers of the Month



Giuseppe Verdi



Giacomo Puccini



Amadeus Mozart



Gioachino Rossini



Henry Purcell

What is Opera?

Opera (the Italian for *work*) is an art form that tells a story through music and singing. It first began in the 16th Century as a way to entertain royalty at court.

Opera was a chance for composers to express a range of strong emotions both musically and in staging, costumes and scenery. After the 18th Century composers all across Europe were writing and now operas are sung in many languages including German, English, French and Spanish!





The first ever public opera house opened in 1637 (the Teatro San Cassiano, in Venice, Italy).



This transformed Venice into Europe's main centre for opera.
As opera grew in popularity as an art form, more songs were included to please the crowds.

Listen and Discuss :

What emotion does the music make you feel?
What instruments can you hear?
How many different voices can you hear singing?
Does the music change tempo at any point? How?



"Bella Figlia dell 'amore" from Giuseppe Verdi's opera - Rigoletto

Operas are most commonly staged at an opera house or theatre, such as the London Coliseum, home to "ENO". Which stands for English National Opera.

Opera houses are designed specifically for performances on a grand scale. The large stage, where the singers perform, sits in front of the backstage area, which is used to hold the set.



Below the stage, you'll find the '**pit**', designed for the orchestra.

At the front of the orchestra pit is where the conductor stands and leads both the musicians and singers.

To make sure their music was accepted well by audiences of the time, composers wrote their operas in the language that most of the audience understood.

This is why, for example, Austrian composer Mozart's opera called *The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) was written with Italian words.

Fun Fact
The book of the lyrics to an opera is called its *libretto*.

Listen and Discuss :
What is happening in this piece?
How does seeing the singers help you to understand what is happening in the piece?
What is unusual about who is singing the song?

"Voi Che Sapete" from Mozart's opera - The



The piece of music we have just listened to (on the previous slide) is known as an "Aria", which comes from the Italian word for air.

An aria is a solo piece (which means only one person sings). Arias are an opportunity to showcase the solo voice and to get to know what is going on in the mind of the character in the moment.

"Nessun dorma" from Puccini's opera - Turandot

Usually, when an aria starts the action of the plot stops.



Luciano Pavarotti
One of the most famous opera singers of all time.

This is one of the great strengths of opera, there is time taken to let the audience into how the character feels and what they might do next. They can be while the character is alone wishing for their happy ending, an opportunity for a character to show off in front of a crowd, or a window into a character's mind.

Operas consist of solo singers and a chorus. There is no speaking in an opera, only singing. Solo singers perform arias and at certain points in the opera, soloists may join together to perform a duet or trio.

The chorus (a large group of singers) will join in and perform the bigger songs and consist of a SATB choir who will sing mostly in harmony.

The parts that comprise an SATB choir are:

Soprano (higher female) Alto (lower female)
Tenor (higher male) Bass (lower male)

Fun Fact

Opera singing uses a lot of **vibrato** and is highly recognisable for the notes distinct wobble.

Extra Information :

If a singer's voice comes somewhere in between a soprano and alto they are called a mezzo soprano. Likewise if a male singer comes somewhere in between a tenor and bass he is a baritone.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born : 27th January, 1756

Died : 5th December, 1791 (aged 35)

Nationality : Austrian

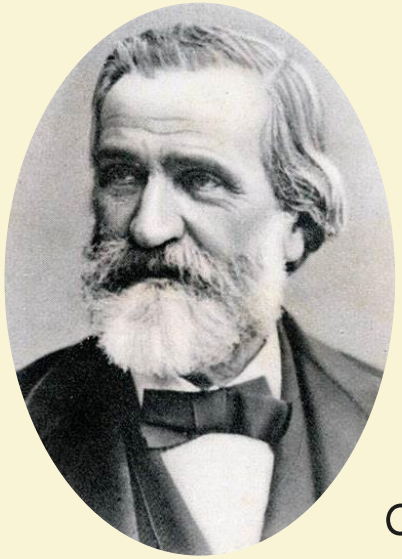
Was a musical prodigy and composed his first piece of music at the age of 4 years old!

Unlike any other composer in musical history, he wrote in all the musical genre of his day and excelled in every one!



He wrote many operas, in Italian and German but his most famous are :
The Marriage of Figaro, The Magic Flute, Cosi fan tutti and Don Giovanni.

The Magic Flute – Queen of the Night Aria - YouTube



Giuseppe Verdi

Born : 10th October, 1813

Died : 27th January, 1901

Nationality : Italian

He took private composition lessons while attending operatic performances and concerts, often of specifically German music.

Verdi almost gave up composing altogether after the death of his two children in infancy, which was followed shortly after by the death of his wife! However, he managed to pour all his emotions into his music and went on to produce the following great operas : Aida, Nubucco, La Traviata, Rigoletto and many more!

La Traviata: "Libiamo, ne' lieti calici" - YouTube

Gioachino Antonio Rossini



Born : 29th February, 1792
Died : 13th November, 1868
Nationality : Italian

He gained fame for his 39 operas, although he also wrote many songs, some chamber music and piano pieces, and some sacred music. He set new standards for both comic and serious opera before retiring from large-scale composition while still in his thirties, at the height of his popularity.

His first opera was performed in Venice in 1810 when he was 18 years old. His most famous operas are :
The Barber of Seville, William Tell and The Thieving Magpie

Barber of Seville - Rossini - YouTube

Henry Purcell

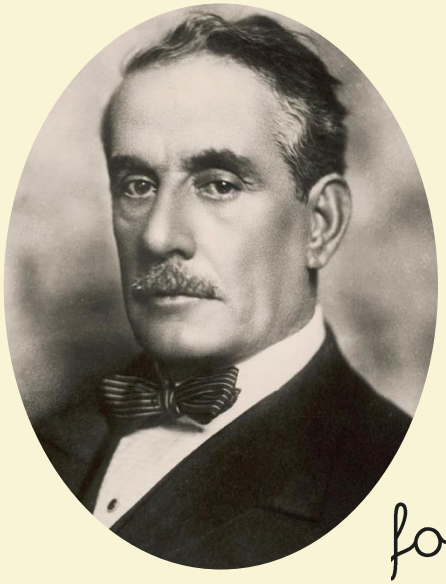
Born : Around September, 1659
Died : 21st November, 1695
Nationality : English

Purcell is often described as the greatest English composer. Much like Mozart, he died at a young age – 36.

Purcell produced his one and only opera titled "Dido and Aeneas", which unsurprisingly acquired him the title of greatest English opera composer up until the arrival of Benjamin Britten almost three centuries later.



Dido and Æneas - Henry Purcell (Dido's Lament) - YouTube



Giacomo Puccini
Born : 22nd December, 1858
Died : 29th November, 1924
Nationality : Italian

Puccini was an Italian composer known for his operas. He is seen as the greatest and most successful composer of Italian opera after Verdi. He was descended from a long line of composers, stemming from the late-Baroque era.

Some of his most famous operas are : La Bohéme, Madame Butterfly and Turandot (interestingly, he actually died before completing this opera and it was later finished by another composer using the detailed notes that Puccini had left!)

Puccini - Mme Batterfly - Un bel di, vedremo - YouTube