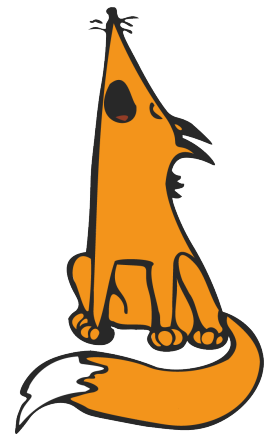




DUNEDIN CONSORT

The Dunedin Consort Guide to Opera



Creating an Opera – Part 1 (20-25minutes)

Over the next 6 exercises, you will be exploring all the elements needed to create an opera! Today we will be focusing on the singers and characters in opera.

There are many different types of voice, and in classical music these are usually split up into four different categories:

Soprano	high female voice
Alto	low female voice
Tenor	high male voice
Bass	low male voice

There are also some other really interesting voice types, such as the countertenor, which is a male voice that is so high that it's like a female alto voice, or higher. Very rarely, you can even get male sopranos!

In the Baroque era, composers would often assign particular voice types to different characters. For example, it was common for the younger main roles in an opera to be assigned to singers with high voice types, such as sopranos and tenors. Older characters, like the parents of the young main characters, would often be cast for lower voice types such as altos or bass singers.

Very high male voices were extremely popular in the Baroque era, and composers loved to give their hero roles the highest male voice possible.

Question:

Can you think of a reason why roles played by younger people in opera would be written for people with higher voice types?

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This wasn't always the case though – in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, the Queen of the Night – who is a mother and is *very* scary – has an aria which has one of the highest parts for soprano ever written.

Exercise:

Imagine that you are writing an opera which will have **TWO** main roles (characters) in it. What kind of voice type would you assign to each character, and why? Your characters don't have to be people and they can be as unusual as you like!

A **TRAIT** is a characteristic that makes someone behave in a certain way. For example, a cheerful person will be happy, and a curious person might seek out new adventures – just like a pirate! Try to imagine two personality traits that each of your characters will have, and why this would affect the type of voice that would suit them.

When creating a character, to make them more real it can be useful to imagine something that has happened to them in the past, which affects their personality in the present. This is called a **BACKSTORY**. Imagine a backstory for your characters that would change the way a singer would portray each role.

Role 1

Name:

.....

Voice type:

.....

Description:

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.....
.....

Personality trait 1:

.....

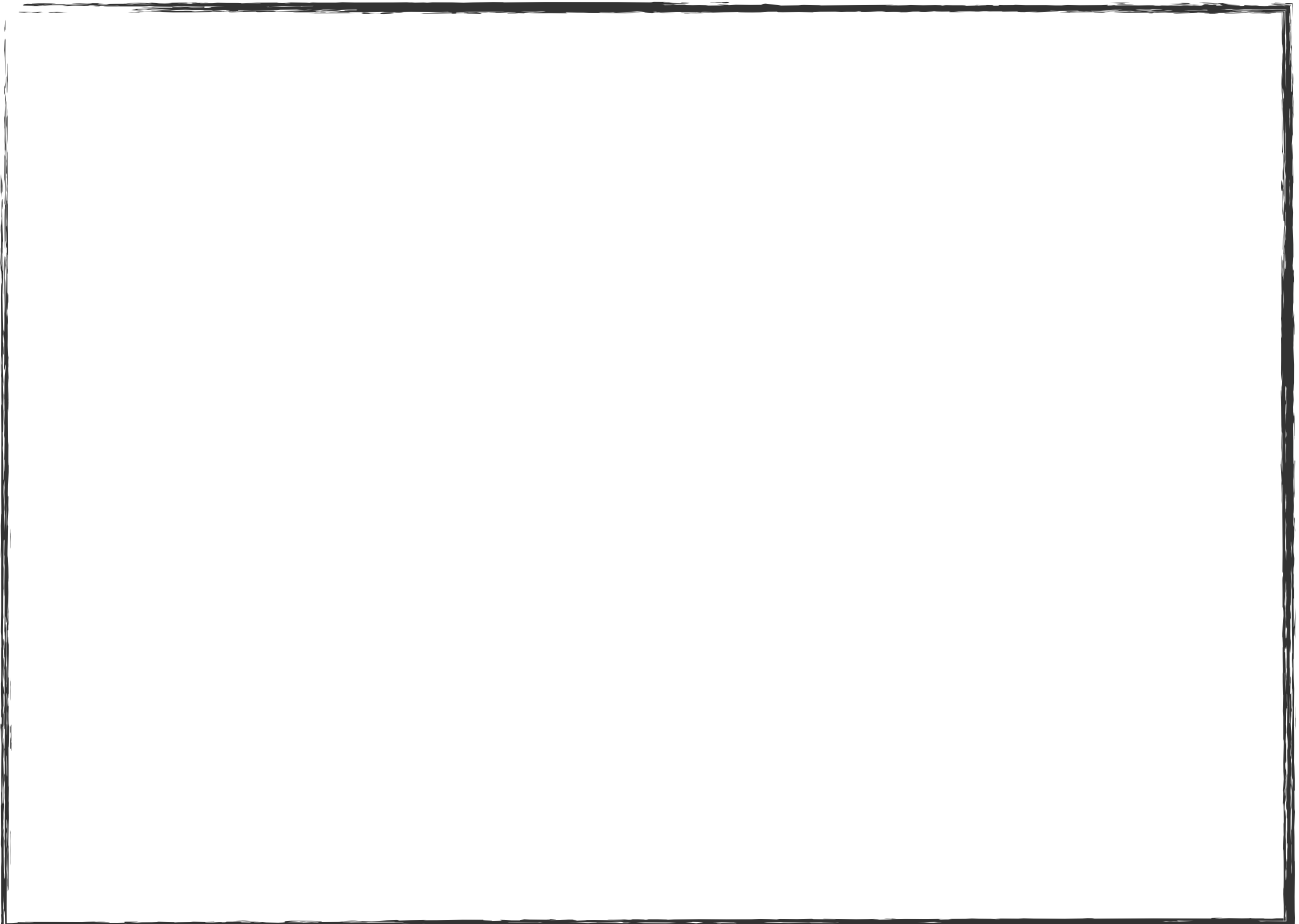
Personality trait 2:

.....

Backstory:

.....
.....
.....

Draw a simple picture of your 1st character in the box below:



Role 2

Name:

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Voice type:

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Description:

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.....
.....

Personality trait 1:

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Personality trait 2:

.....

Backstory:

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.....
.....

Draw a simple picture of your 2nd character in the box below:

