



The Operatic Voice

Soprano: The highest of the female voice types, the soprano has always had a place of prominence in the vocal hierarchy. In opera, the heroine or protagonist is portrayed by a soprano, because the high, bright sound typical of the soprano voice suggests youth, innocence, and virtue.

Mezzo-soprano: A mezzo-soprano, or mezzo, has a voice lower than a soprano's but higher than a contralto's. Throughout opera history the mezzo has been used to portray many different types of characters, such as mothers or mother-types, seductive heroines, and villainesses. Mezzo's can also play young men, performing in so-called "trouser" or "pants" roles. In choral music, the vocal counter-part of the mezzo-soprano is the alto. An example of a mezzo-soprano singer is Marilyn Horne.

Tenor: A tenor is a male singer with a high voice, although not as high as a countertenor. The tenor often plays sympathetic roles in an opera, such as the hero or protagonist. Examples of tenor singers include Enrico Caruso, Mario Lanza, Luciano Pavarotti, and Plácido Domingo.

Baritone: The baritone is the most common male voice, lower in range than the tenor and with a darker tone. In comic opera, the baritone is often the ringleader of the hijinks, but in tragic opera, he is often the villain. Examples of baritone singers include Robert Merrill and Sherrill Milnes.

Bass: The lowest and "darkest" of the male voices. In opera seria, basses usually portray characters who are aged, wise, or evil. In opera buffa, basses generally portray characters who are foolish, or laughable. Examples of bass singers include Ezio Pinza and Nicolai Ghiaurov.

	<i>Coloratura</i>	<i>Lyric</i>	<i>Spinto</i>	<i>Dramatic</i>
Soprano	Norina (<i>Don Pasquale</i>) Gilda (<i>Rigoletto</i>) Lucia (<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>)	Liu (<i>Turandot</i>) Mimi (<i>La Bohème</i>) Pamina (<i>Magic Flute</i>)	Tosca (<i>Tosca</i>) Amelia (<i>A Masked Ball</i>) Leonora (<i>Il Trovatore</i>)	Turandot (<i>Turandot</i>) Norma (<i>Norma</i>) Elektra (<i>Elektra</i>)
Mezzo-Soprano	Rosina (<i>Barber of Seville</i>) Angelina (<i>La Cenerentola</i>) Dorabella (<i>Così fan tutte</i>)	Carmen (<i>Carmen</i>) Charlotte (<i>Werther</i>) Giulietta (<i>Hoffmann</i>)	Santuzza (<i>Cavalleria</i>) Adalgisa (<i>Norma</i>) The Composer (<i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i>)	Azucena (<i>Il Trovatore</i>) Ulrica (<i>A Masked Ball</i>) Herodias (<i>Salome</i>)
Tenor	Count Almaviva (<i>Barber of Seville</i>) Don Ottavio (<i>Don Giovanni</i>) Ferrando (<i>Così fan tutte</i>)	Alfredo (<i>La Traviata</i>) Rodolfo (<i>La Bohème</i>) Tamino (<i>Magic Flute</i>)	Calaf (<i>Turandot</i>) Pollione (<i>Norma</i>) Cavaradossi (<i>Tosca</i>)	Dick Johnson (<i>Fanciulla</i>) Don Jose (<i>Carmen</i>) Otello (<i>Otello</i>)
Baritone	Figaro (<i>Barber of Seville</i>) Count Almavira (<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>) Dr. Malatesta (<i>Don Pasquale</i>)	Marcello (<i>La Bohème</i>) Don Giovanni (<i>Don Giovanni</i>) Sharpless (<i>Madama Butterfly</i>)	Verdi Baritone Germont (<i>La Traviata</i>) Di Luna (<i>Il Trovatore</i>) Rigoletto (<i>Rigoletto</i>)	Scarpia (<i>Tosca</i>) Jochanaan (<i>Salome</i>) Jack Rance (<i>Fanciulla</i>)
Bass	Bartolo (<i>Barber of Seville</i>) Don Magnifico (<i>Cenerentola</i>) Dr. Dulcamara (<i>Elixir of Love</i>)	Leporello (<i>Don Giovanni</i>) Colline (<i>La Bohème</i>) Figaro (<i>Marriage of Figaro</i>)	Buffo Bass Don Pasquale (<i>Don Pasquale</i>) Don Alfonso (<i>Così fan tutte</i>)	Basso Cantate Oroveso (<i>Norma</i>) Timur (<i>Turandot</i>) Sarastro (<i>Magic Flute</i>)