

Operatic Duets

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Operatic Duets

- **Duet: A composition for two performers with or without accompaniment in which the interest is mutually shared**
- **Duets entered Italian Opera in the Venetian operas of Monteverdi and Cavalli.**
- **Duets occur in amorous as well as contentious human relationships.**

Operatic Duet Participants

Tenor and Baritone
Tenor and Bass
Baritone and Bass
Soprano and Mezzo
Soprano and Soprano
Soprano and Tenor
Children, often a Soprano and Mezzo

Hansel and Gretel

Composer Engelbert Humperdinck

Libretto Adelheid Wette

The opera is based on a fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm. First performance Weimar 1893

Synopsis

- **The overture begins with the melody of the Children's prayer which dominates the whole opera**
- **The children have been sent out of the house to gather berries as there is no food to eat in the house. They become lost in the woods and fall asleep after the Sandman and the Dew Fairy sing to them**

The Children's Player

Act 2 Before Hansel and Gretel are going to sleep

**When at night I go to sleep, fourteen angels watch
to keep**

Two my head are guarding, two my feet are guiding

Two are on my right hand

Two are on my left hand

Two who warmly cover

Two who o'er me hover

Two to whom 'tis given to guide my steps to heaven

Hansel---Mezzo

Gretel---Soprano

Les Contes d'Hoffmann (Tales of Hoffmann)

Composer Jacques Offenbach

Libretto Barbier and Carre 1880

- **The student Hoffman is telling his story to a group of people in a tavern.**
- **In the first act ,Hoffman falls in love with Olympia, the mechanical doll ,who falls apart.**
- **In the second act, he falls in love with the courtesan Giuletta, the dupe of an evil magician.**
- **The baccarolle (boat song) duet takes place in a Venetian setting where Hoffman almost loses his shadow (soul) to the evil magician.**

Jacques Offenbach

1819-1880

Jacques Offenbach was the son of Isaac Judah Eberst who came from Offenbach, Germany. The family name was changed by the father because he was known in France as "*der Offenbacher*".

Jacques was a gifted musical child and studied the violin and cello. He surprised his family by filling the cello part in the family musical when the regular cellist failed to appear.

The Baccarolle Duet

**Giuletta---Soprano
Nicklausse---Mezzo**

**Act 2, chapter 14
"Belle nuit, o nuit d'amour"**

Madama Butterfly 1904

**Composer Giacomo Puccini
Libretto Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica**

- **Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) is waiting for her lover Pinkerton to return to her in Japan.**
- **She does not know that he has married an American woman. Butterfly is unaware of their plan to take her son to America with them.**
- **Butterfly sings with Suzuki, her maid, a lovely duet of yearning and happiness to come when Pinkerton returns to her.**
- **This opera is one of the most popular in the repertory even though it was intensely attacked at its opening at La Scala in 1904**

Duet Madama Butterfly/Suzuki

Cio-Cio-San---Soprano

Suzuki---Mezzo

Act 2, chapters 25 and 26

"Scuoti quella fronda di ciliegi"

"Or vienni ad adorer"

Maria Stuarda 1835

Composer Gaetano Donizetti Libretto G. Bardari

Based on a play by Friedrich von Schiller

- **Queen Elizabeth is considering a marriage to the Dauphin of France, but is in love with Leicester.**
- **Talbot, a counselor to Queen Elisabeth but a secret priest, persuades Leister to arrange a meeting between Queen Mary and Queen Elisabeth who is jealous of Mary and Leister.**
- **When Talbot shows Leister a miniature of Mary, it awakens his love for her.**
- **(Both Donizetti and Schiller took a lot of liberties with the historical facts)**

Duet Leister/Talbot

Leister---Tenor

Talbot---Bass

Act 1, Chapter 8,9,10 and 11

"Hai nelle giostre, o Talbo, chiestodi me?"

To

"Ah! rimiro il bel sembiante"

La Traviata 1853

Composer Giuseppe Verdi Libretto Francesco Maria Piave

- **Violetta, a Parisian courtesan, meets Alfredo at a party in her lavish home.**
- **They fall madly in love and she forsakes her life style in Paris to move to the country with him**
- **She secretly sells her jewels and possessions to pay their expenses.**
- **Alfredo's father Giorgio Germont, convinces her to give up her lover so that the family can be free of scandal and can allow his daughter to marry respectably.**

La Traviata

- **Violetta does so. Alfredo is very angry and has a duel with her "protector" and is forced to leave Paris.**
- **He later returns to find her near death. She dies in his arms with the blessing of his father, who recognizes her good character.**

Duet Alfredo/Violetta

Alfredo---Tenor

Violetta---Sopran

Act 1, Chapters 5,6 and 7

"Un di felice"

Lucia di Lammermoor 1835

Composer Gaetano Donizetti Libretto Salvatore Cammarano

- **Walter Scott wrote the Scottish novel upon which this opera is based.**
- **Lucia's family, the Ashtons, have been feuding with the Ravenwoods. Lucia and Edgardo are in love even though their families have been ad odds.**
- **Her brother Enrico insists she marry Lord Bucklaw to save the family from ruin and return them to political favor.**

Lucia di Lammermoor

- **The lovers meet in the park and exchange symbols of undying love with a simple betrothal.**
- **Edgardo must leave for France; they bid farewell and he promises to write but her brother intercepts the letters and deceives her in believing that Edgardo no longer loves her.**
- **She is forced into marriage with Bucklaw and kills him on their wedding night and goes mad. The fatal love dooms them both.**

Love Duet Lucia and Edgardo

**Lucia---Soprano
Edgardo---Tenor**

Act 1, Chapters 12,13,14 and 15

**"Sulla tomba che rinserra"
To
"Verrano a te sull'aure"**

Simon Boccanegra 1856

**Composer Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto Francesco Maria Piave and Arrigo Boito**

- **Boccanegra, a plebeian, is put forward by Paolo and Pietro for election as Doge of Genoa.**
- **He hopes this will facilitate his marriage to Maria, who has born him a daughter.**
- **Maria, the daughter of a wealthy aristocrat Fiesco, dies and her daughter disappears.**
- **After many years Maria's and Buccanegra's daughter reappears as Amelia who is in love with Gabriele Adorno.**

Simon Boccanegra

- **In the last act the Doge Boccanegra dies of poison given to him in a cup of wine by the rebellious Paolo.**
- **The true identity of Fiesco as Amelia's grandfather is finally revealed.**
- **The lover's are united and with his last breath Boccanegra declares Gabriele Adorno as the next Doge.**

Duet Fiesco/Boccanegra

Fiesco---Bass

Boccanegra---Baritone

Act 3, Chapter 25 and 26

"Mardon le tempia"

"Come fantasima Fiesco t'appar"

To

"Piango, perche mi parta in te"

Otello 1887

Composer Giuseppe Verdi Libretto Arrigo Boito

- **The Moor of Venice, Otello, returns to Cyprus where the crowd awaits the hero, who is the governor of the island.**
- **The evil Jago who is jealous of Cassio, who was promoted over him, sets out to plot Otello's down fall.**
- **He sows doubt into Otello's mind about the faith of his wife Desdemona.**
- **Otello kills Desdemona and when he learns of her innocence stabs himself and dies over her dead body.**

First Act Love Duet Otello/Desdemona

Otello---Tenor

Desdemona---Soprano

Act 1, Chapter 10

"Gia nella notte densa"