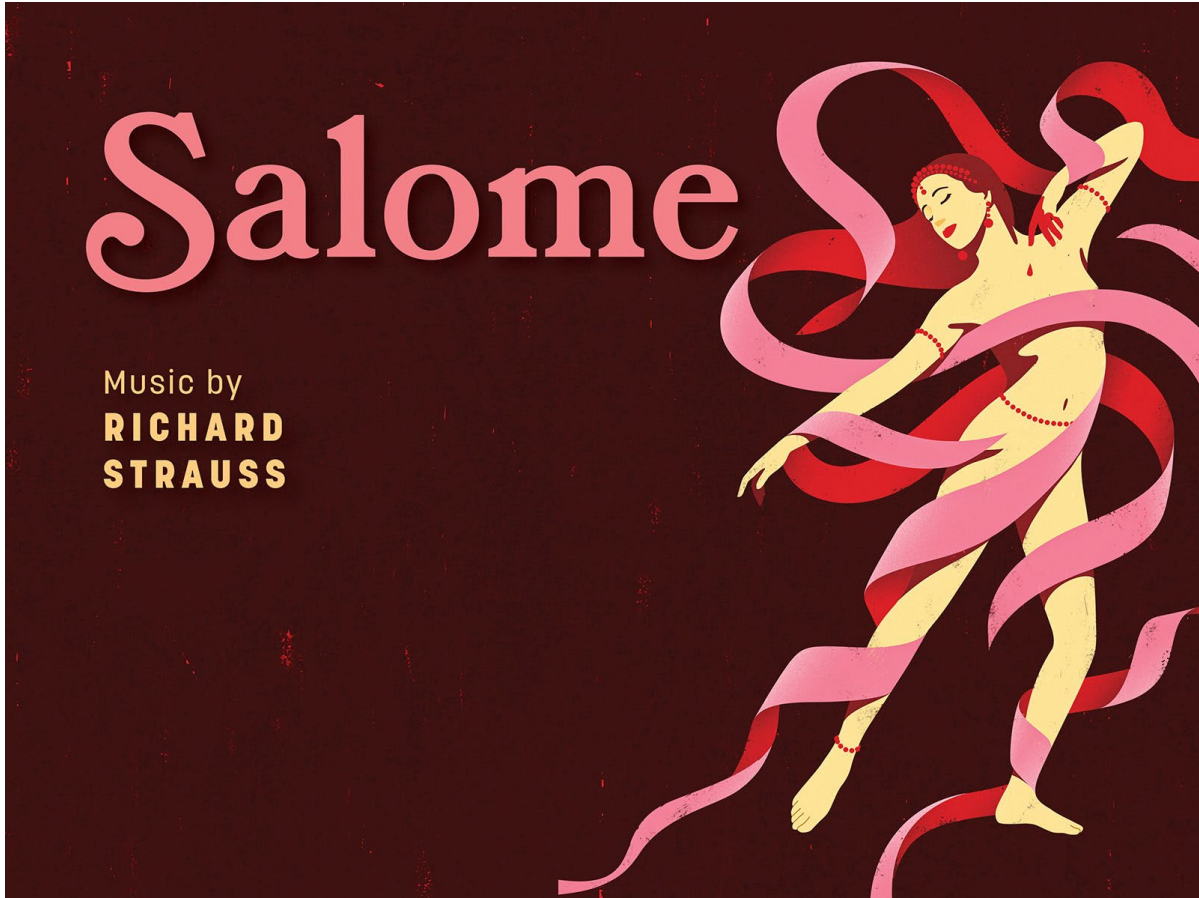




Every voice tells a story.



Student Night at the Opera  
March 19, 2025

Student Night at the Opera is generously supported by the City of San Diego Arts and Culture Commission, the California Arts Council, The Prebys Foundation, and many individual donors who care about introducing the next generation of opera lovers to this art form.

*Created by  
Cynthia Stokes, MFA  
with help from*

*Anne Fennell, K-12 Music Program Manager for San Diego Unified School District, and  
Llewellyn Crain and Bernardo Bermudez at San Diego Opera*

# *Salome* Study Guide

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## A FEW THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE ATTENDING *STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA*

- Opera is a story that is sung. As you watch and listen to the opera, think about how the words and music mix together to develop character relationships, conflict, and an overall artistic effect. Opera composers use different voice types to create a dramatic or comedic effect. How do the singers' voices impact you as you experience the opera?
- Opera singers sound very different from pop or rock and roll singers because they are not using microphones. Instead, they use their bodies as amplifiers. Opera singers have the rare gift of being able to make their voices soar over an orchestra and a chorus without any electronic support.
- Opera is often performed in languages other than English. It was the most popular art form in Europe before movies, so operas were written in the language of the people who first attended them. Read the synopsis and listen to the musical excerpts before coming to the performance. The Civic Theatre has supertitles projected above the stage in English and Spanish for audience members to read along as the story is performed.
- You will attend the final orchestra dress rehearsal. It's the last rehearsal of all theatrical and musical elements and it is not open to the public. Because this is a rehearsal, there may be starting and stopping and some singers may "mark" (not sing fully).
- The opera you will attend is a live performance. The performers can see you and hear you in the audience – your polite behavior, applause, and cheers tell them you are enjoying the performance.
- Turn off and put away any distractions (electronic devices, like phones, tablets, etc.)
- Leave large purses and backpacks at home or on the bus. They will not be allowed inside the theatre.
- Food and gum are not allowed in the theatre.
- Give the performance your full attention. You are going to have an amazing time!

### Location:

San Diego Civic Theatre  
1100 Third Ave. (Corner of Third Ave. and B Street)  
San Diego, CA 92101

### Date and Time:

Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, from 6:30 to 8:10. Tickets may be picked up beginning at 5:00, and all attendees must be in their seats by 6:20.

# *SALOME*

Libretto by Hedwig Lachmann

Music by Richard Strauss

Adapted from the play *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde

Premiered on December 9, 1905 in Dresden, Germany

## BACKGROUND

When the opera was originally written, it took place in Biblical Galilee, in the Palace of King **Herod** (Herodes) at Tiberius.

*Salome*, Op. 54 (Op. is short for *opus*, which means “work” in Latin and is the word from which opera is derived) is an opera in one act by composer Richard Strauss. The libretto (text) is the German translation of the 1891 French play *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde. Strauss dedicated the opera to his friend Sir Edgar Speyer, a British-American financier and philanthropist who was a supporter of music.

The opera is famous (at the time of its premiere, infamous) for its “Dance of the Seven Veils.” The final scene is frequently heard as a concert-piece for dramatic sopranos.

## CHARACTERS

### **Salome**

Princess, stepdaughter and niece of King **Herod** (Soprano)

### **Jochanaan**

Jewish preacher and prophet, biblically known as John the Baptist (Bass-Baritone)

### **Herod (Herodes, Tetrarch)**

King of Judaea and Perea (Heldentenor)

### **Herodias**

Queen, **Herod’s** wife (and sister-in-law) (Soprano)

### **Narraboth**

Captain of the guard who is in love with Princess **Salome** (Tenor)

### **Page of Herodias**

Servant of **Herodias** (Contralto)

### **First Jew, Second Jew, Third Jew, Fourth Jew**

Members of the community who come to ask **Herod** to release **Jochanaan** to them and argue about the nature of God (Tenors)

### **Fifth Jew**

Member of the community who come to ask **Herod** to release **Jochanaan** to them and argue about the nature of God (Bass)

**First Nazarene**

Member of the community who comes to tell **Herod** of Christ's miracles (Bass)

**Second Nazarene**

Member of the community who comes to tell **Herod** of Christ's miracles (Tenor)

**First Soldier**

Member of **Herod's** guard (Bass)

**Second Soldier**

Member **Herod's** guard (Bass)

**A Cappadocian**

Member of **Herod's** court (Bass)

**A Slave**

Slave in Herod's court (Mezzo-soprano)

## VOICE TYPES

**Salome** and **Herodias** are both **sopranos**. The soprano is the highest of the female voice types and is almost always the 'heroine' or protagonist of an opera.

**Page of Herodias** and **A Slave** are both **mezzo-sopranos (contralto)**. The mezzo-soprano and contralto are the lowest of the female voice types and is almost always the antagonist of an opera, though sometimes they can be the protagonist (Carmen, for example). They often also play supporting roles.

**Herod, Narraboth, First Jew, Second Jew, Third Jew, Fourth Jew,** and **Second Nazarene** are all **tenors**. The tenor is the highest of the male voice types and is often, but not always, the lead male role. The tenor is usually the hero, but in this work, they are primarily supporting/comprimario roles.

**Jochanaan** is often cast as a **baritone (dramatic baritone)** or a **bass-baritone**. The baritone is the most common male voice and has a lower range than the tenor. The bass-baritone has a vocal richness and a large vocal range.

**The Fifth Jew, First Nazarene, A Cappadocian, First and Second Soldier** are all **basses (bass)**, the lowest of the male voices often used for roles like servants or for more serious roles projecting nobility and wisdom.

## PRODUCTION SYNOPSIS

From the terrace of **Herod's** palace, **Narraboth**, captain of the guard, gazes rapturously inside at Princess **Salome**, who is feasting with her stepfather and his guests. The voice of the prophet **Jochanaan** echoes from a deep cistern, where he is imprisoned by **Herod**, who fears him.

**Salome**, fleeing **Herod's** lechery, rushes out for fresh air and becomes curious when she hears **Jochanaan** curse her mother **Herodias**. When the soldiers refuse to bring **Jochanaan** to her, **Salome** persuades **Narraboth** to order that **Jochanaan** be summoned. **Jochanaan** and **Salome** meet as he denounces the incestuous union of **Herod** and **Herodias**. She is increasingly overcome by desire, praising his body, hair, and mouth. When **Salome** begs for **Jochanaan's** kiss, **Narraboth** stabs himself in horror. **Jochanaan** urges **Salome** to seek salvation in the Messiah.

**Herod** and **Herodias** appear. **Herod's** thoughts turn to **Salome**, who spurns his attentions. He begs **Salome** to dance for him and offers her anything she might wish in return. **Salome** makes him swear he will live up to his promise, then dances. **Salome** demands the head of **Jochanaan** on a silver platter, ignoring **Herod's** alternatives – jewels, rare birds, a sacred veil. Terrified, **Herod** finally gives in. After a tense pause, **Salome** has her wish: the head of **Jochanaan**. **Salome** seizes her reward, triumphantly kissing his lips. **Herod** orders **Salome** to be killed.

(Courtesy of Santa Fe Opera)

# LESSON PLANS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSES: GRADES 6-8

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON #1: SYNOPSIS

### Common Core Standards Middle School

#### Key Ideas and Details, Grade 6

2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details

#### Key Ideas and Details, Grade 8

1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### Overview

Students will make predictions about events and characters by reading the plot synopsis of *Salome*. Students will work in pairs or small groups as they read aloud the three sections of the plot synopsis aloud. Student responses should be kept so they can compare their predictions with the events in the opera.

### Exploring the Opera

Review the list of characters and the synopsis sections below and talk about what happens in each section of the opera. Work with a friend or in a small group to answer some questions about the story. Share your answers in a discussion or write them down.

### Salome: An Opera in One Act

- **Composer:** Richard Strauss
- **Librettist:** Hedwig Lachmann
- **Based on the play *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde**
- **Premiered:** Dresden, Germany, December 1905

### Main Characters:

- **Herod:** The Tetrarch of Judaea and Perea (Herodes Tetrarch)
- **Herodias:** His wife and sister-in-law
- **Salome:** His stepdaughter and niece
- **Jochanaan (John the Baptist)**
- **Narraboth:** Captain of the Guard
- **The Page of Herodias**
- **First Jew, Second Jew, Third Jew, Fourth Jew, Fifth Jew**
- **First Nazarene, Second Nazarene**
- **First Soldier, Second Soldier**
- **A Cappadocian**

- **A Slave**
- **Supernumeraries:** Royal guests (Egyptians and Romans), servants, and soldiers

**Setting:**

A great terrace in the Palace of **Herod**, set above the banqueting hall.

**Synopsis Part 1** (Excerpted from original synopsis of *Salome*)

From the balcony of King **Herod's** palace, **Narraboth**, the captain of the guard, watches Princess **Salome** with admiration as she dines with her stepfather and his guests.

Meanwhile, the voice of the prophet **Jochanaan** (John the Baptist) echoes from a deep pit where he is being held prisoner. **Herod** is afraid of **Jochanaan** and has locked him away.

**Salome**, trying to escape **Herod's** unwanted attention, steps outside for fresh air. She becomes curious when she hears **Jochanaan** shouting and cursing her mother, Queen **Herodias**. When the guards refuse to bring **Jochanaan** to her, she asks **Narraboth** to do it.

Now that you have read the first part of the opera story, discuss these questions.

- Why do you imagine **Narraboth** is watching **Salome** from the balcony?
- When **Salome** steps outside, how do you imagine she feels?
- Do you imagine that **Narraboth** will do what **Salome** asks of him?

Based on what you know from this first part of the synopsis, draw a picture of what you think the set for the opera will look like.

Using your imagination, make a prediction about what will happen next in the story and discuss among your group.

Make specific predictions about the following characters:

- **Narraboth**
- **Herod**
- **Salome**
- **Jochanaan**



## Synopsis Part 2

When **Jochanaan** finally appears, he speaks against **Herod** and **Herodias's** marriage, calling it sinful.

**Salome** becomes obsessed with **Jochanaan**, admiring his body, hair, and lips. When she asks to kiss him, **Narraboth** is so horrified that he takes his own life. **Jochanaan** tells **Salome** to turn to God for salvation.

Soon, **Herod** and **Herodias** arrive. **Herod** is fascinated by **Salome**, but she wants nothing to do with him. He begs her to dance for him, promising to give her anything she desires. After making him swear to keep his word, **Salome** performs a dance.

Now that you have read the second part of the opera story, discuss these questions:

- How close was your guess about what happens in Act 2?
- Cite a specific reference that supported your predictions about events in the synopsis.
- What surprised you in the synopsis?

Make a prediction about what you think will happen next in the opera.

From the synopsis, describe the costumes you imagine that two of the characters are wearing on stage.

## Synopsis Part 3

As her reward, **Salome** demands **Jochanaan's** head on a silver platter. Even though **Herod** offers her riches and rare gifts instead, she refuses to change her mind. Scared but unwilling to break his promise, **Herod** gives in.

Finally, **Jochanaan's** severed head is brought to **Salome**. She triumphantly kisses his lips, shocking everyone. Furious and disgusted, **Herod** orders his soldiers to kill **Salome**.

Now that you have read the third part of the opera story, discuss these questions:

- How close was your guess about the last section of the story?
- Cite a specific reference that supported your predictions about events in the synopsis?
- What surprised you in the story?

What do you imagine the last moment of the opera will look like? Sketch out your ideas or write them up.

Discussion Questions about the Opera:

- What is more important: to keep your word or protect someone in your care?
- Who has the right to make demands that are impossible to fulfill?
- Who has the right to make demands that come at a terrible price?
- If you were in the shoes of one of the characters in the story, what decisions would you have made that could create a different ending to this drama?

**Wrap up**

When you attend *Student Night at the Opera*, look closely at how the production (sets, lights and costumes) give you clues about the characters and story. After the opera, make sure you look at your own set and costume ideas and compare them to the Student Night at the Opera production.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON #2: THE LIBRETTIST

### Common Core: Key Ideas and Details

#### Craft and Structure, Grade 6

1. Identify textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says, explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### Craft and Structure, Grade 7

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases, as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative and technical meanings.
6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose of the text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

### Overview

In this lesson, students will analyze the libretto of *Salome* to understand characters and their relationships. They will also make inferences about the story's world based on clues provided by the librettist.

### Characters and Relationships

#### Vocabulary:

- **Opera** – A dramatic or comedic story performed onstage by singers using words and music. Opera productions use sets, lighting, and costumes to help bring the story to life. Operas are accompanied by an orchestra led by a conductor.
- **Opera Singer** – A performer who plays a character in an opera. In opera, all text is sung instead of spoken.
- **Character** – A person in an opera.
- **Character Want** – The most important goal a character is trying to achieve in an opera. Examples include wanting to be loved, gaining power, or earning respect.
- **Character Obstacle** – A fear or challenge that prevents a character from achieving their goal. For example, if a character feels unworthy, they may struggle to find love.
- **Opera Libretto** – The written text of an opera, similar to a play or poem. The words in a libretto are what opera singers perform during a show.

### Overview

An opera is a story told through singing and music. The people who perform in an opera are called opera singers, and they play different characters. Each character wants something important, but obstacles stand in their way.

Below are two short excerpts from the libretto of *Salome*. The first scene takes place at a party hosted by King **Herod**.

### Activity (Work with a Partner)

- Read the two excerpts with your partner.
- Discuss what you think the librettist (the writer of the opera's text) is trying to communicate. What big ideas or themes do you notice?

### Example #1

#### The Young Syrian

Princess Salome looks so beautiful tonight.

#### The Page

Look at the moon! It looks so strange. It reminds me of a woman rising from a grave, like a ghost searching for the dead.

#### The Young Syrian

Salome is a princess. She moves so gracefully, like a little dove dancing. King Herod loves wine. He has three kinds—one from Sumatra that is purple, like Caesar's royal cloak.

#### The Cappadocian

I have never seen Caesar.

#### Another Soldier

Another wine comes from a place called Cyprus, and it is golden yellow.

#### The Cappadocian

I love gold.

#### Soldier

The third wine is from Sicily, and it is red like blood.

### Discussion Questions

- What do you think each character wants in this scene? What is stopping them from getting it? Use details from the text to explain your ideas.
- How many different conversations are happening at the same time in this short scene?
- Look closely at the poetic language. What is the librettist telling us about this world?
- Why do you think the first name mentioned in the opera is *Salome*?

## Example #2

### Salome

*(Approaching the cistern, looking down)*

Oh, how black it looks down there! Oh!

How terrible it must be to live in such a dark, gloomy place. It's just like a grave.

*(wildly)* You heard me! Bring me the prophet at once—I want him out here!

### First Soldier

No, Princess, we cannot obey your order.

### Salome

Ah!

### Page

*(worried)*

What will happen now? I can sense something terrible coming.

### Salome

*(goes up to Narraboth, speaking softly and excitedly)*

You will do this for me, Narraboth. I know you will. I have always been kind to you.

You'll do this for me.

I just want to see this strange prophet—the one everyone has been talking about.

I think King Herod is afraid of him.

### Narraboth

But the Tetrarch has ordered that none of us may open the grill above the cistern.

### Salome

You will do this for me, Narraboth.

Tomorrow, I will ride in a carriage through the gate where the idol-makers stand.

If you wait there *(in a low voice)* I will throw down a tiny flower for you. And you will wait.

You will do this for me. I have always been kind to you. You will do it for me.

I only want to look at this strange prophet. Everyone talks about him.

The Tetrarch speaks of him often—I think he is afraid. Are you afraid, too, Narraboth?

## Discussion Questions

- What does **Salome** want in this moment?
- Look for specific examples in the text—what strategies is she using to get what she wants?
- What obstacle is preventing her from achieving her goal?
- Based on the text, what do you think will happen between **Salome** and **Narraboth**?
- Who will succeed?
- Who will fail?

### Expand the Discussion

- Who has more power in the relationship between **Salome** and the soldiers?
- Could another character in this scene stop **Salome**? How?
- Make a prediction: What do you think will happen to **Narraboth** later in the story?

### Wrap Up

Write down your predictions and compare them to what actually happens when you attend *Student Night at the Opera*.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON #3: THE COMPOSER

### Common Core Standards Middle School

#### Craft and Structure, Grade 6

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Grade 7

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.7 Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem, to listening to or viewing an audio video or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

### Standards Based Learning Music

Prof C1: connect music to oneself or its historical cultural or societal context

ACC C1: Analyze the intersection of music, oneself and music’s context

### Vocabulary:

- **Opera Composer:** A person who writes music for an opera.
- **Orchestra:** A large group of musicians who play different instruments together.
- **Aria:** an operatic composition created for one singer.
- **Duet:** an operatic composition created for two singers.
- **Ensemble:** an operatic composition created for a group of singers.

### Background

Opera composers use music to tell a story. The composer works with an orchestra and singers to create a special experience that goes beyond just the librettist’s words. The composer’s goal is to make the audience feel the story more deeply.

### Lesson Overview

Students will listen closely to a musical selection from opera composer Richard Strauss’s *Salome*. Students will then identify specific the difference between an aria, a duet and an ensemble; students will identify the moods that are created by the composer as well as setting and relationships.

### Materials

Pen or pencil and paper.

## Activity

- First listen to the **first four minutes** of the opera. (<https://youtu.be/mduax1upPUk>) The opera is in German, so you may not understand the words. But you will be able to tell that this section begins with a **duet** followed by an **ensemble** and finally an **aria**.
- Listen for how each section of the music makes you feel, what does the music help you imagine as you listen. Write this down. You can use words, images, or designs to help describe your experience of listening to this music. How would you compare the emotions conveyed in the aria and duet compared to the ensemble?
- Share your work and discuss it with a partner or in a small group. Were there similarities in what you each wrote? Make a note of these similarities and differences to look at after you attend the opera.
- Listen again to the first four minutes of the opera and discuss the following:
  - Describe the emotions you feel when you listen to the music.
  - Where do you hear sounds that remind you of chaos or nature, human activities or something otherworldly?
  - What time of year or time of day is the music creating?

## Expand this idea

When you attend *Student Night at the Opera*, this music will be played at the beginning of the opera. Compare the experience of listening to a recording of the opera to actually watching this live during a performance. Also take into consideration the effect of the orchestra, the conductor, the singers, and the scenic elements during the live production. How do they all impact your experience of a live opera performance?

## Wrap up

After you attend *Student Night at the Opera*, compare the two experiences to one another and discuss them with your class. Which experience has a stronger impact for you as an audience member, and why?



## MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON #4: PREPARING TO ATTEND THE OPERA

### Standards Based Learning Outcomes

#6. Performance and Audience Etiquette, Demonstrating Audience and Performance Decorum

3PAE1: Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette for the context and venue.

4PAE1: Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette for the context, venue and genre.

5PAE1: Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette for the context, venue, genre and style.

### Lesson Overview

This lesson will help students learn how the Civic Theatre helps to inform opera etiquette at a live performance. We will explore what makes opera singers so special and how they work with a conductor and orchestra to tell an opera story.

### Vocabulary

- **Opera:** A special type of play where people sing instead of speaking.
- **Opera Singer:** A person who sings in an opera.
- **Stage:** The area where the actors and singers perform.
- **Orchestra:** A group of musicians who play instruments.
- **Orchestra Pit:** The area below the stage where the orchestra sits and plays.
- **Conductor:** The person who leads the orchestra and makes sure everyone plays together.
- **Audience Seating:** The seats where people sit to watch the performance.

### Step 1

As a class, look at the images of San Diego Opera's Civic Theater where you will see San Diego Opera's production of *Salome*.

- Look at a picture of the Civic Theater. This is a photo outside of the theater:  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/xRikMHdGAS7ei4Es7>
- Look at a picture of audience seating in the theater. All the seats are facing the stage so everyone can watch the opera:  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/1Axs9L9DZUuNrxG46>
- This is a picture of the stage. This is where the opera singers will perform. They can see and hear the audience, just as the audience can see and hear them:  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/Bi67spU8XX9Mb3QS6>
- This is a picture of the orchestra pit; the orchestra pit is located between the stage and the audience. Up to 90 musicians and an opera conductor can play their instruments in the pit:  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/YoC8Q9F33FVPwDy39>

## Step 2

Discuss in small groups: why are the audience, stage and orchestra pit are set up this way? Predict why this helps tell the story of the opera.

## Step 3

Opera singers can see and hear the audience. How do you think this affects how you watch the performance? Also, opera singers don't use microphones—they use their trained voices to be heard over the orchestra. Where on stage do you think they should stand to be heard best? Discuss how this will impact the way you react to each performance?

## Step 4

The opera conductor helps the singers and the orchestra sing and play together. The conductor uses a baton in their hand to guide the music. When you are watching the performance, look for the conductor at the center of the orchestra pit. Describe how the singers keep eye contact with the conductor and other singers on stage.

**After you attend *Student Night at the Opera*, describe the relationship between the audience and the singer during a live performance and how it is different from watching TV or a movie.**

# LESSON PLANS FOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES: GRADES 9-12

## HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #1: THE STORY OF THE OPERA

### Common Core Standards: High School

#### Key Ideas and Details Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

#### Text types and purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

#### Research to build and present knowledge

9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

#### Key Ideas and Details Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

#### Craft and Structure Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

#### Overview

Students will first make predictions about events and characters by reading and discussing the plot synopsis of *Salome*. They will then examine important themes in the opera. Students will document their predictions and research to reflect on after attending Student Night at the Opera.

#### Vocabulary

- **Opera** – A theatrical work combining singing, orchestration, and drama.
- **Dramatic Irony** – A literary device where the audience possesses knowledge that the characters on stage do not.
- **Synopsis** – Summary of the opera's story.
- **Foreshadowing** – A literary device that hints at future events in the narrative.

## Step 1: Reading and Discussion

- Working in small groups, read each section of the opera. *Salome* is written as one act and has been divided into three equal sections. Respond to the prompts between the sections of the opera.

### Salome: An Opera in One Act

- **Composer:** Richard Strauss
- **Librettist:** Hedwig Lachmann
- **Based on the play *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde**
- **Premiered:** Dresden, Germany, December 1905

### Main Characters:

- **Herod:** The Tetrarch of Judaea and Perea (Herodes Tetrarch)
- **Herodias:** His wife and sister-in-law
- **Salome:** His stepdaughter and niece
- **Jochanaan (John the Baptist)**
- **Narraboth:** Captain of the Guard
- **The Page of Herodias**
- **First Jew, Second Jew, Third Jew, Fourth Jew, Fifth Jew**
- **First Nazarene, Second Nazarene**
- **First Soldier, Second Soldier**
- **A Cappadocian**
- **A Slave**
- **Supernumeraries:** Royal guests (Egyptians and Romans), servants, and soldiers

### Setting:

A great terrace in the Palace of **Herod**, set above the banqueting hall.

### Synopsis Part 1:

From the balcony of King **Herod's** palace, **Narraboth**, the captain of the guard, watches Princess **Salome** with admiration as she dines with her stepfather and his guests. He and the other soldiers and servants wait to be called by **Herod** or their masters. Meanwhile, the voice of the prophet **Jochanaan** (John the Baptist) echoes from a deep pit where **Herod** has imprisoned him out of fear.

**Salome**, trying to escape **Herod's** unwanted attention, steps outside for fresh air. She becomes curious when she hears **Jochanaan** shouting and cursing her mother, Queen **Herodias**. When the guards refuse to bring **Jochanaan** to her, she convinces **Narraboth** to command them to do so.

### Prompts for Discussion and Writing:

- The soldiers, captain of the guard, and servants are outsiders at **Herod's** party. They can only watch from a distance. What do you imagine they are talking about? How do you imagine their behavior and language change when **Salome** enters? Discuss how **Salome** treats **Narraboth** when she commands him to bring **Jochanaan**.
- The synopsis states that **Herod** imprisoned **Jochanaan** out of fear. Can you think of other stories where a character loses their freedom because another character fears them?
- Based on the synopsis and your imagination, draw or describe the pit where **Jochanaan** is imprisoned.
- Foreshadowing is a dramatic tool that hints at future events. Based on this first section, what is foreshadowed for the following characters?
  - **Narraboth**
  - **Salome**
  - **Jochanaan**

### Synopsis Part 2

When **Jochanaan** is brought out, he condemns the marriage of **Herod** and **Herodias**, calling it sinful. **Salome**, however, becomes obsessed with **Jochanaan**, admiring his body, hair, and lips. When she begs **Jochanaan** for a kiss, **Narraboth** is so horrified that he takes his own life. **Jochanaan** urges **Salome** to seek salvation in the Messiah.

**Herod** and **Herodias** arrive. **Herod** is fascinated by **Salome**, but she rejects him. Desperate to please her, he asks her to dance for him and promises to give her anything she wants in return. **Salome** makes him swear to keep his word, then performs a mesmerizing dance called "The Dance of the Seven Veils."

### Prompts for Discussion and Writing:

- Can you think of modern examples in literature, film, or real life where obsession plays a similar role? Discuss with your classmates. What are the consequences of obsession?
- The opera examines how power is wielded through seduction and coercion, often with terrible consequences. What larger themes are the composer and librettist addressing?
- If you were the costume designer for *Salome*, how would you dress the characters? Discuss or sketch your ideas. Consider colors and fabrics that might give the audience clues about the story.
- Foreshadowing is a dramatic tool that hints at future events. Based on this first section, what is foreshadowed for the next section of the story?

### Synopsis Part 3

When **Salome** finishes dancing, she shocks everyone by demanding **Jochanaan's** head on a silver platter. **Herod** tries to change her mind, offering jewels, rare birds, and even a sacred veil, but she refuses. Overcome with fear, **Herod** finally gives in.

After a long, tense moment, **Salome** receives **Jochanaan's** severed head and triumphantly kisses his lifeless lips. Horrified, **Herod** orders her execution.

### Step 2: Examining Important Themes in the Opera

- Obsession is a powerful theme in *Salome*. How does it drive the characters' actions? Does obsession lead to power, destruction, or both?
- Though **Herod** is a king, he is powerless over **Salome**. Imagine you are a historian, storyteller, or playwright retelling this moment. What motivates **Herod** to seek **Salome's** approval? How might he try to impress her? What are the consequences of his actions? Write a short narrative, script, or analysis exploring this dynamic.
- **Salome** manipulates the men in the opera to get what she wants. How does her behavior challenge moral and social boundaries?
- Does the opera suggest a sense of inevitability? Examine each character and how their desires lead to ruin. What message do the composer and librettist convey?

### Wrap Up

After attending Student Night at the Opera, discuss the impact of Dramatic Irony. How did knowing information that the characters did not affect your experience of the opera?

## HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #2: UNDERSTANDING CHARACTERS THROUGH KEY QUOTES

### Common Core Standards: High School

#### Key Ideas and Details Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

#### Overview

In this lesson, you will:

- **Make predictions** about characters by reading and discussing short excerpts from the opera *Salome*.
- **Support your predictions** using evidence from the text.
- **Look for clues** in the writing that reveal details about the opera's world.
- **Write down your predictions** and reflect on them after watching *Salome* live.

#### Key Vocabulary

- **Opera** – A stage performance that combines singing, music, and drama.
- **Libretto** – The “little book” containing the words and story of an opera, often written poetically.
- **Character** – A person in the story of an opera.
- **Poetic Devices** – Techniques used by writers to add meaning and provide clues about the story and characters (e.g., repetition, imagery, symbolism).

#### Activity

##### Step 1: Read and Predict

Carefully read the following three quotes from *Salome*. In small groups, discuss:

- What do these lines reveal about the characters?
- How do the characters feel about one another?
- What words or phrases stand out to you?

##### Quote from *Salome*:

"I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does The Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means.... In truth, yes I know it."

### Quote from Jochanaan (John the Baptist):

"Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore does she look at me with her golden eyes under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is, I do not wish to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not with her I would speak."

### Quote from Herod (Salome's stepfather):

"The moon has a strange look tonight. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman. A mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman.... I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a madwoman, is she not?"

## Step 2: Discuss Character Clues

In your groups, answer:

- What does each character's speech reveal about their personality?
- How do they feel about each other?
- Do they seem powerful, afraid, confused, or in control?

## Step 3: Find Poetic Language

Look at the text for poetic elements that add meaning, such as:

- **Repetition** – Do characters repeat words or phrases?
- **Imagery** – Are there vivid descriptions that help you visualize emotions or scenes?
- **Symbolism** – Does anything in the text represent something deeper (e.g., the moon in Herod's speech)?

Think about why the librettist (the writer of the opera's text) used these techniques. What might they be trying to tell the audience?

## Step 4: Write Predictions and Reflect

- Write down your thoughts on the characters and the opera's world based on the quotes.
- After watching *Salome* at Student Night at the Opera, compare your predictions with what actually happens in the performance.
- Discuss in your group:
  - What surprised you?
  - Did the opera give you new insights about the characters?
  - How did the music and performance enhance the meaning of the libretto?



## HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #3: THE COMPOSER

### Common Core Standards

#### Key Ideas and Details Grade 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### Craft and Structure Grade 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.5 Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

#### Key Ideas and Details: Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#### Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

### Standards-Based Learning Music

#### Demonstrate Connections Proficient High School Years 1-2

Prof. PAE1 Demonstrate connection with an audience with a varied repertoire in performance

#### Accomplished High School Years 3-4

ACC. CS2 Identify the theoretical structure of or compositional devices used in a piece of music

ACC CS3 Explain how these structures inform the listener's response to music

### Vocabulary

- **Opera Composer** – A person who writes music for an opera.
- **Orchestra** – A large group of musicians who play different instruments together.
- **Aria** – A solo operatic piece written for one singer.
- **Duet** – An operatic piece written for two singers.
- **Ensemble** – An operatic piece written for a group of singers.
- **Orchestration** – The assignment of musical instruments in an opera. Orchestration is a powerful tool that composers use to enhance the storytelling in an opera.

## Background

Opera composers use music to tell a story. They work with both singers and an orchestra to create an immersive experience that goes beyond the words of the libretto. Their goal is to deepen the audience's emotional connection to the story.

## Lesson Aim

Students will listen to two musical selections from *Salome* by Richard Strauss. They will identify the differences between an aria, a duet, and an ensemble, while also analyzing the moods, conflicts, setting, and relationships portrayed through the music.

## Materials Needed

Paper and pen or pencil

## Lesson Steps

### Step 1: Listen and Reflect

- Listen to the first four minutes of the opera. (<https://youtu.be/mduax1upPUk>) The opera is in German, so you may not understand the words, but you can still pay attention to the emotions conveyed.
- This section starts with a duet, followed by an ensemble, and ends with an aria. As you listen, consider:
  - How does each section make you feel?
  - What images or scenes come to mind?
  - How do the emotions in the aria and duet compare to those in the ensemble?
- Write down your thoughts using words, images, or designs to describe your experience.

### Step 2: Share and Discuss

- Discuss your reflections with a partner or a small group.
- Compare your observations—were there any common themes? Any differences? Take note of these to revisit after attending the opera.

### Step 3: Listen to Another Section

- Listen to a second four-minute section from *Salome* (<https://youtu.be/B23KaF6CFYE>) (<https://youtu.be/Omlx6K7Tbw0>) This scene includes three characters:
  - **Herodias** (Salome's mother)
  - **Jochanaan**
  - **King Herod**
- As you listen, focus on the following questions:
  - What emotions are the singers conveying?
  - How does the intense music affect you as a listener?
  - Even without understanding the language, what do you think is happening between the characters?

#### Step 4: Listen Again and Analyze

- Compare how Strauss structured this section versus the first one you heard.
- What do you think Strauss is trying to communicate about the story at this moment?
- Pay attention to the music that plays between the singing (orchestration).
  - What clues does Strauss give us through the orchestration?
  - How does it support or contrast with the singing?

#### Expand the Idea

When you attend *Student Night at the Opera*, the first selection you listened to will occur at the beginning of *Salome*, while the second selection happens about an hour into the performance.

Compare listening to a recording versus experiencing the opera live. Consider how different elements—such as the orchestra, conductor, singers, and scenic design—affect your experience. How does seeing the opera performed change the way you connect with the music?

#### Wrap Up

After attending *Student Night at the Opera*, compare the two experiences and discuss them with your class. Which experience had a stronger impact on you as an audience member? Defend your opinion with specific examples.

## HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #4: PREPARING TO ATTEND THE OPERA

### Standards-Based Learning

7. Music Evaluation. Justify evaluation using criteria context, and research.
8. Connections Advance: Combine intersections of music, oneself and music context, possibly using research.

### Outcome

Students will brainstorm the jobs (roles) necessary to create a live performance, research the expertise required for these roles, and discuss the goals associated with each role.

### Activity

Preparing for *Student Night at the Opera*

#### Step 1:

Imagine you and your classmates are tasked with creating a live performance. In small groups, list all the roles you think are needed for the performance. Remember, many of these roles are not on stage.

#### Step 2:

As a group, analyze the expertise required for each role on your list. Each group member should choose a role to research, then present a description of that role to the group. (Resource links are provided below.)

#### Step 3:

Discuss how people acquire the skills needed for these roles. Do you think they learn these skills independently, or do they attend a trade school, college, or conservatory program? Compare the time required for training in different fields.

#### Step 4:

Create a Venn diagram with your group to identify the common goals shared by everyone involved in a live performance. Discuss how understanding these shared goals affects the audience's experience. Also, consider how the audience's response might influence the goals of those working on the performance.

#### Step 5:

Choose one role from your discussion that interests you. During *Student Night at the Opera*, observe and identify evidence of that role in action. Share your observations with your group and teacher.

Resources and information about careers in opera

<https://www.sfopera.com/learn/about-opera/people-at-the-opera/>

<https://www.berklee.edu/careers/communities/opera>