

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)

Romantic Music (Italian Operas)

Types of operas

Italian	French	Germany
Opera seria (“serious opera”) based on a tragic story, featuring heroes, rulers, and gods; often drawn from ancient history or mythology	Grand opéra based on historical subjects; featured expensive stage designs, ballets, and large choral numbers	Singspiel included spoken dialogues accompanied by the orchestra (melodrama)
Opera buffa (“comic opera”) based on a comedic story and humorous subjects, featuring everyday characters	Opéra comique included spoken dialogue	

Types of musical writing

recitative	▪ come from the word <i>récit</i> ▪ a declamatory syllabic style of singing that approximates the inflections of spoken speech ▪ used to deliver the story and move the plot forward (through large quantities of text) ▪ often used when the characters are engaged in action ▪ two types of recitatives 1. secco (“dry”) recitative: accompanied only by the basso continuo; 2. accompanied recitative: accompanied or punctuated by the full orchestra; reserved for moments of high emotion and drama
aria	▪ come from the word <i>air</i> ▪ a lyrical song in a well-defined formal structure ▪ used to express the emotions of the characters when they reflect upon their circumstances ▪ often used when the characters are disengaged from action
ensemble	▪ more than one character singing on stage at the same time ▪ example: duet, trio, quartet, chorus

Overture

- a single-movement orchestral work that sets the tone for the action to come
- (Baroque) **French overture**: a slow section with dotted rhythm followed by a fast section with imitative entries
- (Classical and Romantic) the fast section is often structured in **sonata form**, featuring two contrasting themes first presented in different keys

Entrance aria

- the first aria performed by a lead character in an opera
- used to portray the personality of the character

Double Aria

- a lyrical **cantabile** followed by a more virtuosic and brilliant **cabaletta**
- often preceded by a recitative
- sometimes a recitative, called **tempo di mezzo**, occurs between the two arias, functioning as some kind of transition or interruption

ARIA (SOLO OR WITH CHORUS)

Orchestral introduction	<i>Scena</i>		<i>Cantabile</i>	<i>Tempo di mezzo</i> (middle section)	<i>Cabaletta</i>
	recitative		usually slow	changes tempo, modulates; may be transition, ensemble, or chorus	usually fast

DUET OR ENSEMBLE

Orchestral introduction	<i>Scena</i>	<i>Tempo d'attacco</i> (opening section)	<i>Cantabile</i>	<i>Tempo di mezzo</i>	<i>Cabaletta</i>
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Bel canto

- meaning “beautiful singing”
- refers to the glorification of beautiful singing in an elegant style characterized by lyrical lines, seemingly effortless technique, and florid delivery
- the voice is sometimes more important than the story, the orchestra, and the staging

Patter aria

- characterized by rapidly delivered clever lines, sometimes mixed with nonsense syllables, that are repeated often and must be sung with incredible speed and precision
- mainly for comedic characters