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**Italy – The Mother of Opera**

**By Armando Escaduti**

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The story of Italian opera begins around the turn of the 17th Century and depicts an important piece of Italian culture. Divided into two periods, the Baroque and the Romantic, opera displays tragic-comedy that was adorned with beautiful scenes and breathtaking music. Historians across the world recognize the significance these periods have had on Italian culture.

The art of opera is derived from Italy. Baroque was the first period recognized in the Italian culture. Over two centuries, it grew in popularity. In the 1600's, music enhanced the Romantic period. Henry IV of France and Marie de Medici loved opera music and requested that it be played at their wedding in Florence.

Orpheus and Euridice were both composed from a poem written by Ottavio Rinuccini and Jacobo Peri. Giulio Caccini wrote the music that brought their poem to life, completing the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. This opera was dynamic in musical instruments and successfully portrayed the Italian culture.

In 1607, Claudio Monteverdi wrote La Favolo d'Orfeo (The Fable of Orpheus). This spectacular opera was Claudio Monteverdi's first, which elevated the importance of dramatic instrumental music in the Italian culture. Now, 400 years later, The Fable of Orpheus is still performed on stages across the world.

In 1613, St. Mark's in Venice made Monteverdi the "maestro da cappela". Monteverdi wrote elaborate madrigals during his tenure. In 1637, Venice opened the first public opera house, Teatro San Cassiano. The public's enthusiasm drew a more chic audience through the opera doors.

Shortly before Monteverdi's death, he began to write again. From 1637 to 1642, he wrote two beautiful operas, I Ritorno d'Ullise (The Return of Ulyses) in Patria and L'Incoronazione di Poppaea (The Coronation of Poppaea). Both were exceptional musical mixtures of recitatives, solos, duets and

ensembles.

Monteverdi was responsible for setting the standards for operatic composers to follow. He was responsible for the introduction of bel canto and buffa styles of opera. Bel canto consisted of operatic singing that was pure and even toned. Buffa style referred to the very unusual and unexpected comic complications or burlesque elements in the scene.

Within forty years, the popularity of opera grew so rapidly that Venice opened ten opera houses to accommodate the demand. More than 350 operas had been performed near the end of the 18th century in Venice, as well as many by other Venetian composers in other areas of Italy. Numerous spectators traveled into Venice for the music and individual artists gained recognition through their performance in opera.

Gioacchino Rossini wrote serious and humorous operas. In 1810, *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*, a comic

(buffa) opera, became Rossini's first hit. In early 19th century, romantic opera gave more dimension to the extreme emotions which were typical of that era.

Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, and Giuseppe Verdi were Rossini's successors in the Italian bel canto. During the course of Giuseppe Verdi's career, he transformed the nature of operatic writing with vigorous music. His contribution to the opera was done with such enthusiasm and it created a threshold for a new operatic era.

Many forms of opera blended with fine art, musical drama, song, elaborate scenery, and artistic scenery by the 20th century. It was the medium through which tales and myths were fabricated, leaving the audience to their imagination. Today, opera is the essence of Italian culture.

Armando Escaduti is the owner and CEO of ALO Italy which is a great resource for lovers of all thing Italian. If you would like to know more about ALO Italy or read more of Armando's articles, please visit:

## **The Opera alternative**

**By Jakob Jelling**

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<http://www.sitetube.com>

Security flaws have long plagued Internet Explorer (IE), the market-dominating web browser from Microsoft. IE won the early browser wars, not only because it was free and bundled with Windows, but because it had some features and capabilities that its only real competitor, Netscape, didn't have. But

the behind-the-scenes programming that makes those features possible is the very coding that also leaves wide gaps in IE's defenses against viruses and malicious scripting. Among several browser alternatives for Windows users, the Opera browser stands out in functionality and integration, and is gaining a wider following as a safer surfing alternative to Internet Explorer.

To be sure, there are other browsers such as the one from Mozilla and their newest release, Firefox. There are several flavors of IE "overlays", which use the core IE programming for web page display, and thus aren't any safer than the original IE. (You should of course always use anti-virus software to protect your PC, regardless of browser. Many viruses arrive as email attachments, and opening those on a Windows-based PC will cause problems). Among non-IE browsers, it seems to be down to a two-horse race between Mozilla and Opera.

Opera, from Oslo, Norway, based Opera Software ASA, provides many popular features. An integrated email client, contact book, bookmarks with searchable notes, tabbed multiple windows, a built-in password manager, a pop-up blocker, multiple language support, saved sessions, privacy controls, built-in chat, and the ability to read RSS feeds from within Opera mail make the Opera browser a very powerful and worthwhile IE replacement candidate.

Unless you have special need for IE, such as a browser toolbar or web interaction software that you use, there is really no reason not to give Opera a try if you're worried about safe surfing. While Opera does have a paid version, you can also download a sponsored version (with ads unobtrusively placed in the browser control area), which is free.

Jakob Jelling is the founder of <http://www.sitetube.com>. Visit his website for the latest on planning, building, promoting and maintaining websites.

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