

Romantic Opera

Essay Questions

- 1. Romantic Opera, p. 260**
Describe the change in the purpose of opera from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century.
- 2. Verdi and Italian Opera, p. 261**
Why was Verdi considered the dominant composer in nineteenth-century opera, as opposed to Wagner?
- 3. Verdi and Italian Opera, p. 261**
How did Verdi view drama in opera? What sorts of characters did he include in his operas? How did he handle emotional expression?
- 4. Recitative and Aria: The Orchestra, p. 261**
Describe the relationship between the vocal lines and the orchestra in the operas of Verdi.
- 5. Recitative and Aria: The Orchestra, p. 261**
Compare and contrast the recitatives of Verdi with those of earlier Italian composers of Romantic opera.
- 6. Recitative and Aria: The Orchestra, p. 261**
Briefly describe the style of Verdi's arias.
- 7. Early Romantic Opera, p. 262**
Where did Romantic opera first develop? Who was one of the first composers in this new style?
- 8. Early Romantic Opera, p. 262**
What does *bel canto* mean? Briefly describe this Romantic style. How did it affect the role of the human voice in Italian opera?
- 9. Gaetano Donizetti, p. 262**
Who was Gaetano Donizetti? Briefly describe his compositional style and name one opera he composed.
- 10. Vincenzo Bellini, p. 262**
Who was Vincenzo Bellini? Briefly describe his compositional style and name one opera he composed. Which musical element did he treat with an especially Romantic flair?
- 11. Carl Maria von Weber, p. 262**
What were the main contributions of Carl Maria von Weber to early Romantic opera?
How is his compositional style different from the styles of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini?

12. **Rigoletto, p. 263**
Name the five main characters in *Rigoletto* and briefly describe the plot and location of the opera.
13. **Giuseppe Verdi, p. 265**
Briefly describe the political views of Giuseppe Verdi. How was Verdi viewed by his fellow Italians? Name one opera in which his political views are evident.
14. **Rigoletto, Aria and Quartet (Act III), p. 266**
Briefly describe the events of the vocal quartet in Act III, scene i of *Rigoletto*. Discuss how the drama is heightened with musical elements such as dynamics, and orchestral tone colors.
15. **Wagner and Music Drama, p. 268**
Describe some of Richard Wagner's innovations and explain why they had far-reaching effects on composers for many years.
16. **Wagner and Music Drama, p. 268**
Briefly describe Wagner's views on French and Italian opera.
17. **Richard Wagner, p. 269**
Briefly describe the personality and political views of Richard Wagner. How did he get along with other people? Refer to Mendelssohn and King Ludwig II of Bavaria in your answer.
18. **Richard Wagner, p. 269**
What is the significance of Bayreuth with regard to Wagner's operas?
19. **The Total Work of Art, p. 270**
Define *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Briefly describe how Wagner worked with this concept in his operas.
20. **The Total Work of Art, p. 270**
What sort of material did Wagner use for the story lines of his operas?
21. **The Total Work of Art, p. 270**
Discuss the growing role of the orchestra in both German and Italian opera.
22. **Leitmotifs, p. 270**
Define *leitmotiv*.
23. **The Nibelung's Ring, p. 272**
Name the four parts of *The Nibelung's Ring* and *The Valkyrie's* place in the music drama cycle.
24. **The Nibelung's Ring: The Valkyrie, p. 273**
Outline and describe three primary features of Wagner's music dramas. Refer to examples from *The Valkyrie* in your answer.
25. **The Nibelung's Ring: The Valkyrie, p. 273**
Briefly describe the events of Act I, scene i of *The Valkyrie*.
26. **Late Romantic Opera, p. 278**
How do the music dramas of Wagner differ from other late Romantic operas? Why is that?
27. **Madame Butterfly, p. 279**

Outline the plot of *Madame Butterfly* and the place that the aria “Un bel di” has in the drama. How does the orchestra contribute to the aria?