



## CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

**George Bizet (1838–1875)** <https://www.eno.org/composers/georges-bizet/>

*Carmen* is an opera composed by Georges Bizet with a libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. The story is set in Seville, Spain, and follows the passionate and tempestuous relationship between the soldier Don José and the fiery gypsy Carmen. Don José becomes obsessed with Carmen, but she grows tired of him and falls in love with the toreador Escamillo. In a fit of jealousy, Don José kills Carmen and is arrested. The opera is known for its memorable arias and duets, including the famous "Habanera" and "Toreador Song." It premiered in Paris in 1875 and has since become one of the most popular operas in the world.

"Carmen Fantasie" by François Borne

French flautist and composer François Borne was born in Toulouse on 30 August 1840. He is known particularly for his 'Fantaisies brillantes on *Bizet's Carmen* of 1900 and for some technical modifications to the Boehm system flute. He played with the orchestra of the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux and was a professor at the music high school in the same city. François Borne died on 5 February 1920, aged seventy-nine.

**Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835)** <https://interlude.hk/vincenzo-bellini-composer/>

*Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini is an opera in two acts composed by Vincenzo Bellini. The libretto was written by Felice Romani and is based on a play by Alexandre Soumet. The opera premiered in Milan in 1831. The story is set in ancient Gaul, where the Druid priestess Norma is torn between her duty to her people and her love for the Roman proconsul Pollione. Norma has secretly borne two children with Pollione, but he has now fallen in love with Adalgisa, a young priestess in Norma's temple.

Norma is devastated by Pollione's betrayal and contemplates killing her children and herself. However, Adalgisa convinces Pollione to return to Norma and confess his love for her. Norma forgives Pollione and decides to sacrifice herself to the gods as atonement for her sins. The opera is known for its beautiful melodies and vocal pyrotechnics, particularly in Norma's famous aria "Casta Diva." It is also notable for its exploration of themes such as love, duty, and sacrifice.

This particular theme and variations for harp was composed by Elias Parish-Alvars, who was a prodigy in his time and composed a variety of etude-like variations to operatic themes meant to show off the range and versatility of the harp as well as his own technical prowess. It has stayed in the repertoire since its composition allowing performers to show off their rubato, understanding of phrasing, and sheer technique.



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**Librettist W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and composer Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900)**

[https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gilbert\\_and\\_Sullivan](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gilbert_and_Sullivan)

*The Gondoliers*, also known as *The King of Barataria*, is a comic opera composed by Arthur Sullivan with libretto by W.S. Gilbert. It premiered in London in 1889 and became one of Gilbert and Sullivan's most popular works. The opera combines romance, mistaken identity, and political satire to create a delightful and entertaining story.

The plot revolves around two gondoliers, Marco and Giuseppe, who are informed that one of them is the long-lost heir to the throne of Barataria, a fictional kingdom. However, the identity of the true heir is unknown as the infant prince was entrusted to the care of a drunken gondolier who mixed him up with his own son.

To determine which of the gondoliers is the rightful king, they are both taken to Barataria and presented to the beautiful princesses of the kingdom, Casilda, and her childhood friend, Gianetta. The gondoliers must marry the princesses, but the situation becomes complicated when it is revealed that Casilda is already married to the true heir, who is neither Marco nor Giuseppe.

In the midst of the confusion, various romantic entanglements arise. Tessa, a gondolier's daughter, is in love with Marco, while Gianetta falls for Giuseppe. The gondoliers and the princesses struggle with their newfound royal roles and grapple with their personal feelings.

Meanwhile, the Duke and Duchess of Plaza Toro, an extravagant Spanish couple, arrive in Barataria seeking prestige and advantageous marriages for their daughter, Casilda. The Duke mistakenly believes that he is the king and attempts to assert his authority, leading to humorous situations and misunderstandings.

In the end, the true identity of the prince is discovered. It turns out that he is Luiz, the drummer boy in the Duke and Duchess' band. Casilda and Luiz are happily reunited, while Marco and Giuseppe renounce their claims to the throne and are content to return to their gondolier lives. The opera concludes with a celebration of love, happiness, and the joy of being a gondolier.

*The Gondoliers* is a lighthearted and satirical work that pokes fun at social hierarchies, monarchy, and the complexities of love. The opera features catchy melodies, witty dialogue, and Gilbert and Sullivan's trademark humor, making it a beloved and enduring piece of musical theater.



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*Iolanthe*, also known as *The Peer and the Peri*, is a comic opera composed by Arthur Sullivan with libretto by W.S. Gilbert. It premiered in London in 1882 and quickly became a popular success. The story combines elements of fairy tales, politics, and satire to create a humorous and light-hearted theatrical experience.

The opera begins with a group of fairies, led by their Queen, Iolanthe, who has been banished from fairyland for the crime of marrying a mortal. She has a son named Strephon, who is half-fairy and half-mortal. Strephon is in love with Phyllis, a ward of the Lord Chancellor.

The Lord Chancellor and the members of the House of Peers, who are all older gentlemen, are attracted to Phyllis as well. When Phyllis sees Strephon embracing Iolanthe, whom she mistakes for a young woman, she becomes jealous and breaks off their engagement. Strephon explains that Iolanthe is his mother, but Phyllis finds it hard to believe.

Strephon, desperate to win back Phyllis's love, seeks the assistance of the fairies. Iolanthe uses her magical powers to help him, causing various comical situations. The fairies eventually intervene in the political realm and decide to assist Strephon by enchanting the House of Peers. The Peers, under the spell, begin to act irrationally, leading to chaos and confusion.

As the story progresses, it is revealed that Iolanthe's banishment from fairyland has been rescinded. The fairies and the Peers eventually come together and reconcile their differences. Strephon's true parentage is revealed, proving his noble lineage, which resolves the conflict and allows him to marry Phyllis.

*Iolanthe* is a witty and satirical work that humorously explores themes of love, politics, and the clash between the supernatural and the human world. The opera is known for its catchy tunes, clever lyrics, and its clever commentary on society and the absurdities of the British political system.

**Léo Delibes** (1836–1891) <https://mahlerfoundation.org/mahler/contemporaries/leo-delibes/>

*Lakmé* is an opera composed by Léo Delibes with a libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Philippe Gille. Premiering in 1883, *Lakmé* is set in 19th-century India during British colonial rule and tells a story of love, cultural clash, and tragedy. The opera revolves around the title character, Lakmé, the daughter of a Brahmin priest in a secluded temple in the mountains. Lakmé lives a sheltered life with her servant, Mallika. One day, Lakmé encounters a British officer named Gerald, who has become separated from his fellow soldiers. They are immediately drawn to each other and develop feelings of love.



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However, their relationship faces challenges due to the cultural divide and the British presence in India. Lakmé's father, Nilakantha, harbors resentment towards the British and seeks to protect the sanctity of their temple. He discovers the presence of the British officer and swears revenge. While Lakmé and Gerald continue their secret meetings, Nilakantha sets a trap for the British officer. Lakmé, torn between her love for Gerald and her loyalty to her father, decides to save him. She drinks a poisonous infusion made from a sacred plant, leading to her slow and tragic death.

Gerald, devastated by Lakmé's sacrifice, mourns her loss and vows to remember her forever. The opera ends with Gerald leaving India, haunted by the memory of his lost love. *Lakmé* is known for its beautiful and evocative music, including the famous "Flower Duet" and Lakmé's delicate aria, "Bell Song." The opera explores themes of forbidden love, cultural clash, and sacrifice, set against a backdrop of colonialism and the clash of Eastern and Western cultures. It remains a popular and emotionally captivating work in the operatic repertoire.

### **Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)**

<https://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/composers/camille-saint-saens/biography>

Une Flûte Invisible for Voice, Flute and Piano (1885)

Victor Hugo published this little poem without title in an 1856 collection, *Les contemplations*. Since then it has been set to music as both a solo song and a choral piece by a long list of composers, including André Caplet, Leo Delibes, Benjamin Godard, Georges Bizet, Gabriel Pierné and Camille Saint-Saëns. Saint-Saëns, in fact, set it twice – in 1856 as a vocal duet, and in 1885, the year of Hugo's death, for voice, flute and piano. This is his second version.

The words are simple and a little sentimental: A young man declares his love while “a flute unseen sighs in the orchards.” The song is “most joyful” like the song of the birds, and “most charming” like the song of love. The flute sings along with the soprano, and has the last word.

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)** <https://www.biographyonline.net/music/mozart.html>

*The Magic Flute* is an opera in two acts composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The libretto was written by Emanuel Schikaneder and the opera premiered in Vienna in 1791. The story follows the adventures of Prince Tamino, who is tasked with rescuing the Queen of the Night's daughter, Pamina, from the evil sorcerer Sarastro. Tamino is given a magic flute to help him on his quest, and he is accompanied by the bird-catcher Papageno.



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As Tamino and Papageno journey to Sarastro's temple, they encounter various trials and obstacles, including a series of tests that they must pass in order to prove their worthiness. Along the way, Tamino falls in love with Pamina, and Papageno finds his own love interest in the form of Papagena. In the end, Tamino and Pamina are united, and Sarastro is revealed to be a benevolent ruler who has been working to bring enlightenment to his people. The opera concludes with a celebration of love and unity.

*The Magic Flute* is known for its beautiful music, including the famous aria "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" ("The vengeance of Hell boils in my heart"), sung by the Queen of the Night. It is also notable for its use of Masonic symbolism and themes of enlightenment and brotherhood.

### **Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)**

<https://www.biography.com/musicians/giuseppe-verdi>

*Rigoletto* is an opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi with a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave. It premiered in 1851 and has since become one of Verdi's most popular and frequently performed works. The opera is a tragic tale of love, betrayal, and vengeance set in the court of the Duke of Mantua during the Renaissance.

The story revolves around the character Rigoletto, a hunchbacked jester in the service of the Duke. Rigoletto is known for his sharp wit and biting humor, but he is also a deeply flawed and complex individual. He harbors a bitter and vengeful nature due to the fact that his own daughter, Gilda, is the product of a previous love affair.

The Duke is a notorious womanizer who seduces and discards women at will. Rigoletto becomes increasingly concerned for his daughter's safety, knowing the Duke's lascivious nature. He tries to keep Gilda sheltered and hidden from the world, but she falls in love with the Duke after catching a glimpse of him at the court.

In a cruel twist of fate, Rigoletto's efforts to protect Gilda backfire when the Duke, disguised as a commoner, manages to woo her, leading to their secret affair. Rigoletto becomes aware of their relationship and, consumed by rage and despair, seeks revenge. He hires an assassin named Sparafucile to murder the Duke.



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As the story unfolds, Gilda, unaware of her father's plot, sacrifices herself to save the Duke. She disguises herself as a man and enters Sparafucile's house, where she is fatally stabbed by the assassin. In the tragic climax, Rigoletto discovers his daughter's lifeless body and realizes the consequences of his actions.

*Rigoletto* is a powerful and emotionally charged opera that explores themes of betrayal, parental love, and the destructive nature of vengeance. It is renowned for its rich and dramatic music, including the famous aria "La donna è mobile," as well as its complex characters and poignant storytelling. The opera remains a cornerstone of the operatic repertoire and continues to captivate audiences worldwide.

**Franz and Karl Doppler** <https://interlude.hk/franz-and-karl-doppler/>