

PARTS of an OPERA, ORATORIO, and CANTATA!

These large compositions were divided into smaller pieces; all words were sung. An Opera and Oratorio were very large scale compositions (unlike a Cantata); an Opera involves sets, scenery, costumes and acting. An Oratorio is a non-staged Opera. A Cantata (generally much smaller than an Opera/Oratorio) could be intended for the protestant church (Sacred Cantata) or for public events (Secular Cantata).

LIBRETTO – story/script for the opera (never created by the composer)

OVERTURE (Sinfonia, Prelude) – orchestra only

ARIA (solo, duet, trio) – singers/actors and orchestra

RECITATIVE (solo, duet, trio) – singers/actors with orchestra, sung speech promoting the story of the OPERA

RITORNELLO – orchestra interlude between scenes

DANCE – orchestra and dancers/actors; NOT IN ORATORIO or Cantata!

CHORUS – orchestra and many singers/actors

CHORALE – orchestra, many singers, and congregation; IN A SACRED Cantata ONLY!

SINFONIA – complete orchestra piece WITHIN an OPERA, ORATORIO, or Cantata