

# AUSTIN OPERA

Interactive Resource Guide  
Access Opera Final Dress Rehearsal  
January 30, 2025

# VERDI'S REQUIEM



OPERA UNLEASHED



EPIC  
MASTERPIECES  
with  
TIMOTHY MYERS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Table of Contents
3	Welcome
5	TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills
6	Cast & Creative Team
7	Composer, Giuseppe Verdi
8	What is Opera?
9	Meet some key players
11	Guided Listening – Dies Irae.
12	Let's memeify it!
13	The Requiem's meaning
14	Timeline of Catholic Church Music
15	What to expect at the opera

## AUSTIN OPERA STAFF

Annie Burrridge, General Director & CEO  
Timothy Myers, Sarah & Ernest Butler Music Director  
Jennifer Basten, Chief Advancement Officer  
Clauda Chapa, Associate Director of Artistic Administration and Curator of Hispanic & Latinx Programming  
Andréa Ochoa, Director of Education & Community Impact  
Melissa Bartling, Director of Business Operations  
Dr. Charles D. Carson, 2024-2025 Season Scholar-In-Residence

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

Andréa Ochoa, Curriculum Design  
Playground Studio, Graphic Design  
Laura Carrisosa, Graphic Design



# Welcome to the Interactive Resource Guide for Verdi's Requiem!

We are thrilled to welcome you to this exploration of one of Giuseppe Verdi's most profound and powerful works, the *Messa da Requiem*. Though this sacred work is not an opera, this monumental piece is operatic in its stature, drama, and energy—a true testament to Verdi's genius and ability to evoke emotion through music.

The *Requiem* is the first production in Austin Opera's new series, *Opera Unleashed: Epic Masterpieces with Timothy Myers*. This series is a celebration of Timothy's 2023 appointment as the Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director, and will offer company premieres over the coming seasons featuring some of the most historically significant works composed for the operatic voice. In addition to serving as the launch for *Opera Unleashed*, the Austin Opera premiere of Verdi's *Requiem* will mark the 150th Anniversary of the work's premiere and the 60th Anniversary of our production partner, Chorus Austin.

Before you join us for this timely and powerful work at the Long Center, we invite you to dive into this guide to discover the meaning behind the magic you'll witness on stage. This TEKS-aligned Interactive Resource Guide provides a wealth of information for you to explore, including:

- Insights from cast and creative team members,
- A closer look at Verdi's life and legacy,
- An exploration of the historical and musical significance of the Requiem mass, and
- Discussions about the emotional power of this sacred text brought to life through music.

Whether you're new to opera or a devoted fan, this guide is designed to teach you something new, and I'm confident it will enhance your full Access Opera experience.

Thank you for joining us on this musical adventure. I look forward to seeing you at the opera!

Warm regards,



Andréa Ochoa

Director of Education & Community Impact





First edition title page, Ricordi, 1874

# TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills

## Music, High School (I-IV)

### Foundations: Music Literacy

- §117.312(c)(1)(B): Distinguish among the elements of music such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture using music terminology.

### Creative Expression

- §117.312(c)(2)(E): Demonstrate appropriate cognitive and kinesthetic responses to the music and music performances.

### Historical and Cultural Relevance

- §117.312(c)(3)(A): Identify the characteristics and defining traits of music representative of diverse cultures, including historical periods.
- §117.312(c)(3)(C): Identify and explain how music and culture interact.

### Critical Evaluation and Response

- §117.312(c)(4)(A): Evaluate musical performances and compositions using specific criteria appropriate for the style or genre.
- §117.312(c)(4)(C): Justify personal preferences for specific musical works and styles using music terminology.

## Languages Other Than English (Latin)

### Interpretive Mode

- Level I: 114.42(c)(1)(A): Demonstrate understanding of Latin phrases and passages from Verdi's Requiem through translation and context.
- Level II: 114.43(c)(1)(C): Analyze the meaning of Latin phrases in context, such as Dies Irae ("Day of Wrath") and Agnus Dei ("Lamb of God").
- Level III-IV: 114.44(c)(1)(B): Interpret more complex Latin passages, identifying themes of judgment and redemption in the Requiem's text.



# Cast and Creative team



Conductor  
**Timothy Myers**  
Sarah and Ernest  
Butler Music Director



Soprano  
**Leah Crocetto\***



Mezzo-Soprano  
**Daryl Freedman\***



Tenor  
**Limmie Pulliam\***



Bass  
**Wei Wu**

## CREATIVE TEAM

Giuseppe Verdi - Music  
Cina Crisara - Chorus Conductor  
Jim Sale - Lighting Design

## CHORUS

Austin Opera Chorus  
Chorus Austin



Notes

\* Austin Opera debut

# Giuseppe Verdi



(1813–1901) was an Italian composer celebrated for his profound contributions to opera and his ability to blend dramatic storytelling with deeply emotional music. Born in Le Roncole, a small village near Busseto, Verdi rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most influential figures in classical music and a symbol of Italian nationalism.

## Early Life and Career

Verdi showed musical talent from a young age, receiving local support to pursue his studies. He trained in Milan, where his first opera, *Oberto* (1839), was performed with moderate success.

Tragedy struck early in his career: in the 1830s, he lost his wife and two young children within a short period. Overwhelmed with grief, he considered abandoning composition but was persuaded to continue by the success of his opera *Nabucco* (1842), which became a sensation.

## Operatic Masterpieces

Verdi's operas are known for their emotional intensity, memorable melodies, and rich character development. Throughout his career, he composed 26 operas, which included many rereleased revisions. Additionally, he composed art songs, sacred works, and instrumental and chamber works, leaving an extensive and prolific catalogue.

Among his most famous operas are:

- ***La Traviata*** (1853) – A tragic tale of love and sacrifice, featuring some of his most beloved arias.
- ***Rigoletto*** (1851) – A dark story of vengeance and betrayal, including the iconic aria “La donna è mobile”.
- ***Il Trovatore*** (1853) – A dramatic opera known for its fiery music and the famous Anvil Chorus.
- ***Aida*** (1871) – A grand opera set in ancient Egypt, commissioned for the opening of the Cairo Opera House.
- ***Macbeth***, (1847) ***Otello*** (1887), and ***Falstaff*** (1893) – Masterpieces based on Shakespeare's works.

## The Requiem

Verdi's ***Messa da Requiem*** (1874) was composed to honor the memory of **Alessandro Manzoni**, a celebrated Italian writer and national hero whom Verdi deeply admired. Manzoni, known for his novel “*I Promessi Sposi*” (The Betrothed), symbolized the ideals of the Italian Risorgimento (unification movement).

Manzoni's death in 1873 deeply affected Verdi. Though initially reluctant to write religious music, Verdi decided to compose a requiem in tribute. The work premiered on **May 22, 1874**, the first anniversary of Manzoni's death, in Milan's Church of San Marco.

## Legacy

Verdi's music has endured for over a century, celebrated for its emotional depth, melodic beauty, and dramatic power. A humanitarian, he used his fame to support causes like education and healthcare, founding a home for retired musicians in Milan (Casa di Riposo per Musicisti), which still operates today.

Verdi remains a towering figure in classical music, beloved for both his operatic works and his unparalleled ***Requiem***.



# What is Opera?

For many of us, the word opera conjures up pictures of women singing in Viking helmets or—let's be real—the over-the-top drama of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd cartoons. Well, to be honest, those cartoons aren't that far off. Operas are supposed to be dramatic! But what is opera, actually?

The word “opera” comes from the Latin word for “work,” and that's what it is—all of the arts (music, singing, acting, movement, and design) combined to give you larger-than-life characters and dramatic situations in fantastic locations. (It's like TikTok but live!)

Opera as we know it today began in 16th Century Italy, when musicians, scholars, and philosophers got together to try to re-create the “pure” drama of Ancient Greece. For them, this meant blurring the lines between singing and speaking, and using instruments to help singers communicate deeper meanings than acting alone could. They thought this unified approach would speak more directly to audiences. *What do you think?*

The flexibility of opera means that these elements can be combined to tell many different kinds of stories in many different ways—from hilarious comedies, to heartbreaking tragedies. This flexibility also means that some works we might not typically think of as being an opera can actually be quite operatic. One example is Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*, in which he uses operatic-style music and singing to stage a sort of musical funeral (a requiem mass) in honor of his close friend who had recently died. Though there are not actors, characters, or even a plot in the normal sense, Verdi's version of the requiem is highly theatrical, and paints a vivid musical picture of life, love, and loss.



# Meet some key players



## Conductor Spotlight with Timothy Myers

1. What inspired you to take on the monumental task of conducting Verdi's *Requiem*, and what does this work mean to you?
2. Can you share insights into your life as a conductor? What aspects of the role do you find most rewarding and most challenging?
3. Could you tell us about your career journey? What pivotal moments shaped your path, and what advice would you offer to young, aspiring conductors?
4. What makes Verdi's *Requiem* different than opera? How are they similar?
5. Is there a moment/moments in *Requiem* that stand out, why? Musically, vocally, etc?
6. Describe the feeling of standing in front of a full orchestra, soloists, and chorus for a monumental piece.



## Chorus Section Leader Spotlight with Annisha Mackenzie and Teddi Iley

1. What is it like to sing in the Austin Opera Chorus, and how does performing Verdi's *Requiem* differ from other works you've sung?
2. What are the responsibilities of a section leader, and how did your journey lead you to this role?
3. What is one piece of advice you would offer to young singers who aspire to perform in professional opera choruses?



# Guided Listening – Dies Irae

One of the most iconic and powerful sections of Verdi's *Requiem* is the *Dies Irae*, which opens the second movement with an unforgettable burst of drama. The title "Dies Irae" translates to "Day of Wrath," vividly portraying the chaos and terror of the final judgment. Verdi masterfully uses music to evoke the overwhelming emotions of this apocalyptic scene.

As you watch and listen to the music map, focus on how Verdi brings this moment to life through specific musical elements. Pay close attention to the video's visualizations — they provide helpful clues to answer the following questions!

## A. Dynamics (Loud vs. Soft)

- What happens at the beginning of the piece?
- How does the loud music make you feel?

## B. Rhythm (Fast vs. Slow)

- Notice the fast-moving strings in the background. What does it sound like?
- How do the drums add to the excitement?

## C. Orchestration (Which Instruments Do You Hear?)

- What instruments stand out the most in this music?
- Why do you think Verdi used those instruments for this piece?

## D. Choir

- The choir sings very forcefully. How do their voices add to the drama?
- What words do you hear repeated?

## E. What else did you notice?



Music Map by Mighty Music Publishing

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# Let's memeify it!

You may remember this painting, *The Hesitant Fiancée*, making it's rounds as a TikTok meme in late 2023. The meme, accompanied by a recording of *Dies Irae*, depicts the concept of female rage. Painted by Auguste Toulmouche in 1866, the subject of the painting is a reluctant bride who is unhappy about her arranged marriage.



*The Hesitant Fiancée* depicts a person who is defiant, livid, and tired. How would you memeify this painting to express some of your own frustrations?

Learn more about *The Hesitant Fiancée* and the meme [at this link](#).

# The Requiem's Meaning

Verdi's *Messa di Requiem* is based on the text of the **Requiem Mass**, a traditional Roman Catholic liturgical service in seven movements (or musical sections) dedicated to praying for the souls of the deceased. It is typically celebrated during funeral rites but can also be performed on certain days in the liturgical calendar, such as All Souls' Day (November 2). The term Requiem comes from the Latin word "requies," meaning rest, and the Mass itself focuses on the theme of eternal rest for the departed.

Below, you can find a brief description of each movement and its sections. To find a full translation of the Requiem from Latin to English, [visit this link](#).



Requiem Mass. Artist unknown.

## I. Requiem and Kyrie (Solo Quartet, Chorus)

A prayer for eternal rest and light for the departed souls, embodying quiet reflection and supplication.

## II. Dies irae (Chorus)

This movement vividly portrays the fearsome Day of Judgment, full of divine power and awe, marking the final reckoning of all souls.

- **Tuba mirum (Chorus):** The trumpet summons all souls to the judgment seat, emphasizing the power and universality of resurrection.
- **Mors Stupebit (Bass):** The bass solo reflects on the awe and terror of death, as the moment of judgment stuns all creation.
- **Liber scriptus (Mezzo-soprano and Chorus):** The mezzo-soprano and chorus solemnly describe the 'book of life,' where all deeds are recorded and will be judged.
- **Quid sum miser (Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, and Tenor):** A poignant trio expresses the anguish and helplessness of sinners standing before God's judgment.
- **Rex tremendae (Quartet and Chorus):** A plea for mercy to the King of tremendous majesty who judges the world.
- **Recordare (Soprano and Mezzo-soprano):** A gentle and heartfelt prayer asking Christ to remember His mercy and compassion for humanity.
- **Ingemisco (Tenor):** The tenor sings a heartfelt plea for mercy, trusting in God's forgiveness and redemption for the remorseful.

• **Confutatis (Bass and Chorus):** Contrasts the fate of the damned with the hope of the saved, calling for salvation and divine mercy.

• **Lacrimosa (Solo Quartet and Chorus):** A mourning lament for the dead, reflecting sorrow and the fragility of life.

## III. Offertorium (Solo Quartet)

A plea for redemption, reflecting hope amid despair.

## IV. Sanctus (Double Chorus)

A celestial celebration of God's holiness, symbolizing divine glory and the transcendence of earthly fears.

## V. Agnus Dei (Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Chorus)

A plea for peace and rest for the departed souls, emphasizing purity and grace.

## VI. Lux aeterna (Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Bass)

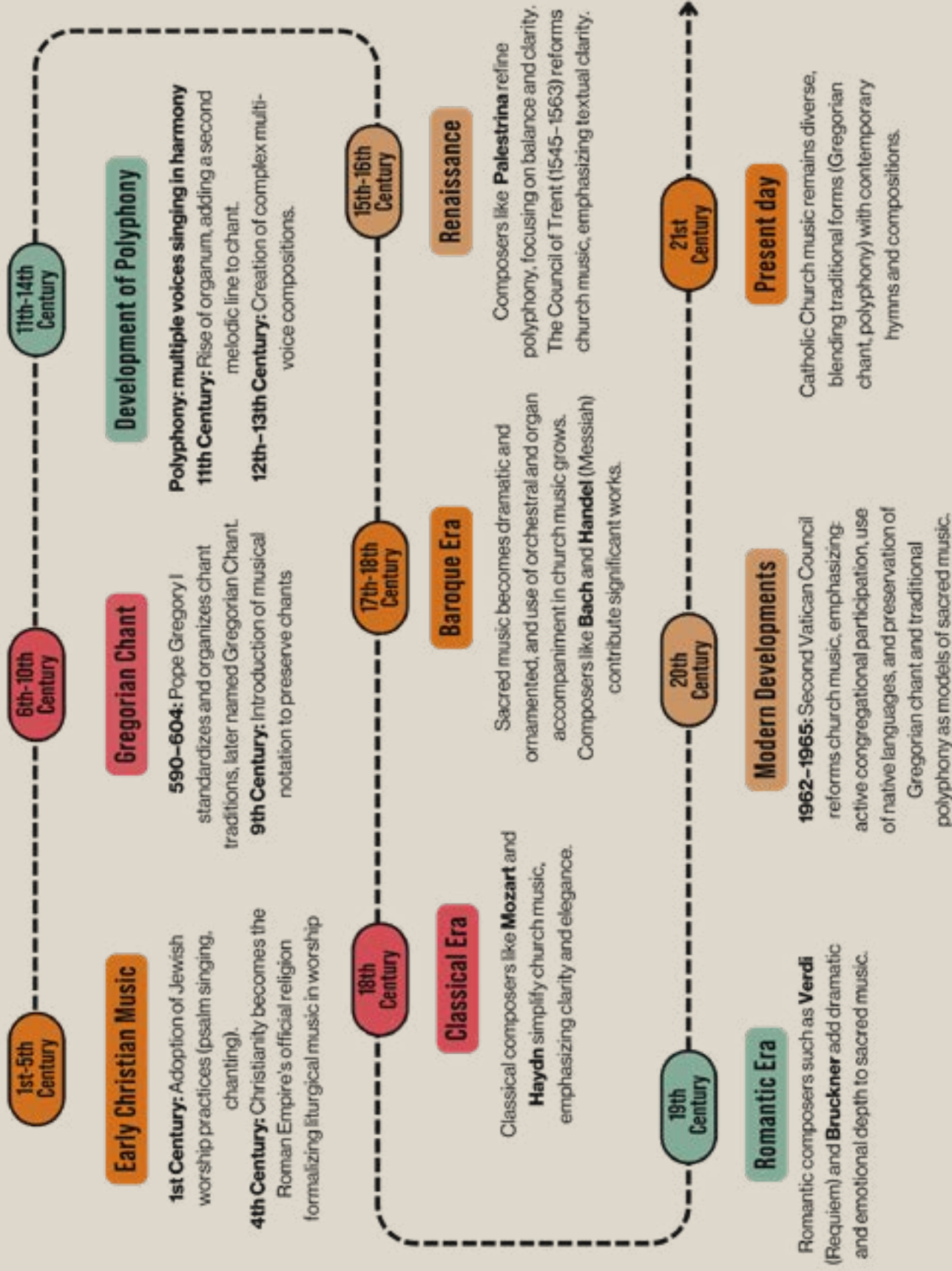
A serene and luminous prayer asking for eternal light and peace to shine upon the departed souls.

## VII. Libera me (Soprano, Chorus)

A powerful and dramatic plea for deliverance from eternal death, culminating in a vivid depiction of the Day of Judgment.



# Timeline of Catholic Church Music



To listen to examples of the music highlighted in this timeline, visit [this YouTube playlist](#).



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Whether it's your first time at the opera, or you've been more times than you can count, these tips and tricks for your visit will help you feel comfortable and help Access Opera run smoothly.

## **Final Dress Rehearsal**

Because this is a final dress rehearsal, there will still be elements of the production that are in process. There may be stopping to fix mistakes, or singers "marking," which means singing lightly to save their voices. There will also be a tech table in the middle of the audience where the production team, including the director, costume, lighting, and set designers, are working hard to make sure all of the finishing details are in place.

## **Be quiet and courteous**

Be quiet and courteous to the actors on stage. Since a night at the opera is a live theater experience, things work a little differently than they would at a movie theater or school assembly. Since there are singers on stage actively working, our audience needs to be as respectful as possible.

## **Applaud after arias**

Let the singers know that you love the work they're doing. You can say "bravo" for men, "brava" for women, and "bravi" for a group!

## **No food allowed**

No food is allowed in the theater. Concessions will be open for purchase before the show and during intermission, and you can enjoy your treats in the lobby. Drinks are allowed in the theater as long as they have a covered lid, which the concession stand will provide.

## **Don't leave the theater**

Whether you wear that dress or suit you've been saving for a special occasion, or you're more comfortable going out in jeans or basketball shorts, dress like yourself at the opera!

## **Dress like yourself**

Whether you wear that dress or suit you've been saving for a special occasion, or you're more comfortable going out in jeans or basketball shorts, dress like yourself at the opera!

And finally... **Have fun!**





# AUSTIN OPERA

Interactive Resource Guide  
Access Opera Final Dress Rehearsal  
January 30, 2025

# VERDI'S REQUIEM



OPERA UNLEASHED



EPIC  
MASTERPIECES  
with  
TIMOTHY MYERS