

Music for Voice and Guitar

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The **operatic voices** are six:

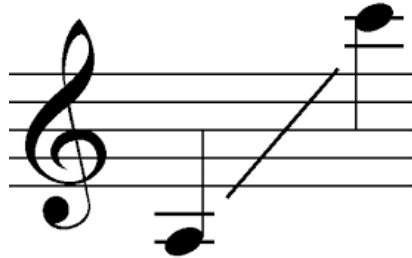
- SOPRANO, MEZZO SOPRANO, and CONTRALTO are the **female** voices.
- TENOR, BARITON, and BASS are the **male** voices.

While all the voices always appear in the **OPERA**, often few of them are also paired with other instruments in more intimate performances (chamber music). The most common are soprano, tenor, and – sometimes – baritone.



Figure 1 - Singers performing the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* by W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)

The **SOPRANO** is the highest among the operatic voices. The range of the soprano is usually as follows:



This is an **overall range**. In fact, many sopranos can reach notes higher than the high C (up to E, or F), or lower than the lowest A in the picture.

In such cases, and also according to their specific “color,” the soprano voices can be also called **lyric**, **coloratura**, **spinto**, or **dramatic**.



The **CLASSICAL GUITAR** is a string instrument, in which the six strings are plucked using fingers (and fingernails). Its current shape and construction technique were developed at the beginning of the 20th century by the Spanish guitar maker Antonio de Torres. Previously, the guitar had a smaller body, a variable number of strings, and several but similar shapes.



Figure 2 A modern Classical Guitar



Figure 3 - A Romantic Guitar (19th Century)

The guitar is a relatively **low** instrument. It is called “transposing instrument” because it produces sounds that are actually lower than the one written on the music staff.

Furthermore, the guitar produces **a variety of colors and nuances** (harmonic sounds, percussions on the guitar body, etc.).

VOICE and GUITAR form a very common duo, as they integrated perfectly in the creation of beautiful harmonies.



Figure 4 - Jean Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), *The Scale of Love* (1715-18)
National Gallery, London

Many composers have written **original music for voice and guitar**, especially starting from 19th century, and up to the 21st century. Together with piano, guitar has been the preferred instrument chosen for accompanying amateurs and professionals.

Sometimes, the guitar also accompanies the voice playing **arrangements** of music originally written for other instruments (usually piano).

Music examples:

- “Di due bell’anime,” by Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZDki7PhaP0>
- “Zorongo,” Spanish Popular Song
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1SDZ3mfWWc>
- “Sento che’l cuor me manca,” Venetian Boat Song of the 18th century
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZyuQQ2q-a0>