

## Voice and Vocality in Opera

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The Opera, which was born in 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy, is considered to be the peak point of human voice. Singing is the major component of Opera, and actors who act in the opera are special group of people who have trained their voices by using special voice techniques. “*Bel canto*” is one of its special voice techniques developed in Italy. Once the Opera became popular in Italy, it was spread to other adjacent countries like France, Germany, England and it was recognized and developed as a separate entity of western music. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of the music creations in Sri Lanka, was also influenced by Opera, and during its early stages, it was called “*Geetha Nataka*.” It was recognized as Opera by Sri Lankan audience because of the immense effort made by musicians ie: Maestro Premasiri Kemadasa. However, in the Sri Lankan context, the contribution of real operatic singers is questionable when a creative work is defined as and “Opera” due to the simple fact: the lack of proper voice techniques. This arises the question; Are there operatic singers in Sri Lanka? If so, are they really contributing to Sri Lankan Opera. These are the questions which seek answers by the present study. Data was collected through interviews with Opera composers, Singers and archival materials referencing to Opera compositions. Maestro Kemadasa and Darshana Ruwan Dissanayake are two main musicians who were involved in composing Sri Lankan Opera. There are several singers who trained were under them, but only few of them have gained higher operatic skills. Only very few of them are engaged in Sri Lankan opera music as industry practitioners. The survey results portrayed that the trained and successful singers are required to compose Opera and establish opera as a recognized music medium in Sri Lanka. The present study followed the qualitative research approach in order to investigate the present status of Opera industry in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Voice, Opera, Singers, Musician