

FAST FACTS

MET HISTORY

- The first Met Opera was located at Broadway and W39th Street and opened in 1883.
- The ‘old Met’ was built for the benefit of the newly wealthy –Vanderbilt, Astor, and Morgan— who were turned down for boxes at the New York Music Academy.
- At the Old Met, scenery was often stored on Seventh Avenue protected only by a tarp. By the mid-20th century, it was clear the Met needed a new home.
- The ‘new Met’ was designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison and opened at Lincoln Center in 1966.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

- Each Met season first starts to come together five years in advance.
- The amount of rehearsal time allotted each production depends on the difficulty of the work, technical requirements, and how familiar the artists are with the piece.
- Regular technical rehearsals for new productions can begin as early as a year before the premiere.

DRESSING ROOMS

- The windows in the eight principal artists' dressing rooms are some of the only ones in the entire building that can be opened.
- Dressing rooms are assigned by Stage Management, with women in rooms to the left of the clock, men to the right. Rooms are usually then assigned in descending vocal order.
- Each room is equipped with a piano, dressing table, couch, bathroom, and intercom linked to the Stage Manager.

C-LEVEL STORAGE

- All Met productions make their way to the stage by way of C-Level rehearsals.
- C-Level storage was originally designed to hold an entire season’s worth of scenery, but actually holds much less than that, as designs and sets have gotten much bigger over time.
- Scenery is brought from C-Level to the stage by a 25’ x 27’ platform elevator, which has the same approximate square footage as a sizeable single bedroom apartment in Manhattan.

ORCHESTRA ROOM

- Used for mainly for orchestra and seated rehearsals; also rehearsals will full orchestra, chorus and soloists.
- Rehearsals are typically held from 11am to 2:30pm.
- Maple wood flooring is set to spring so the room can also be used by dance companies.

C-LEVEL STAGE

- Named for being the approximate size of the main stage.
- Operas typically get about 6 weeks of rehearsal. A production regularly in the repertory may receive less (such as *La Boheme*); a world premiere like Tan Dun's *The First Emperor* received 8 weeks of rehearsal.
- Often, the chorus will rehearse in List Hall in preparation for and during the season.

CARPENTRY SHOP

All productions are designed to last 20 years.

All set pieces are labeled with the name of the opera along with act and scene numbers to enable quick and easy set-up.

Scenic elements must be moved and stored easily and quickly; most pieces are made of hinged wood, connected by bent nails.

SCENIC SHOP

99% of the paint used is water-based, both for safety and convenience of clean-up.

Both horizontal and vertical painting techniques are employed, as are a wide variety of both standard and unconventional tools and techniques. Horizontal painting is often done from a ladder and is best for architectural drawing and painting. Vertical painting is done at eye level, typically from the paint bridge, and best for detail and repairs.

PROP SHOP

Most props are made by the Prop Shop; other (small) props are purchased and adapted to fit the production.

Props are constructed to be lightweight, as they must be moved frequently on- and off-stage. As such, tricks of the trade, such as forced perspective, are used to give a relatively compact, lightweight piece the illusion of being a big, heavy, object.

MAKE-UP

Pre-curtain makeup of a single principal artist may take anywhere from fifteen minutes to one hour, depending on the complexity of the design.

Chorus and ballet members are responsible for supplying and applying their own makeup.

Specialized makeup pieces (beards, moustaches, scars, facial prosthetics, etc) are prepared, styled, and maintained by the Makeup Department.

Photographic records are kept to facilitate revivals and assist substitute staff members in applying makeup.

WIGS

Each wig requires 35 hours of patient work, and uses four to five ounces of hair at \$90 per ounce.

- Almost all of the wigs are made of natural human hair. Synthetic hair is also used, though not often in the same wig.
- Each wig is made with 3 to 4 colors of hair to give a natural appearance.
- All white wigs are made with hair from a yak – the Tibetan ox.

COSTUMES

Designs typically go from sketch to paper pattern to muslin before the final costume is prepared. The Met's cutters and drapers are so skilled that the design may go directly to fabric.

Costumes are built to have a life of 25 years. Constructing each costume can take as little as two days, or as long as two weeks, depending on the complexity of the design.

Approximately 1,600-2,000 new costumes are built in the Costume Shop each season. (4,000 pass through the shop either by creation or alteration.)

After 25 years, costumes are donated to Costume Collections, a charity run by the Theatre Development fund that rents costume out inexpensively to community theaters and schools.

STAGE

Main stage is 80 ft. x 101 ft (same as two basketball courts side by side)

The main stage is made up of seven hydraulically operated elevators, each 60 ft. wide and 8 ft. deep.

The rear wagon has a turntable 57 ft. in diameter. It can revolve in as little as 30 seconds.

The flies system is 110 ft. above the stage. It uses 95 pipes to fly curtains, scrims, drops and scenery.

LIGHTING

Lighting design begins 1-2 years before the premiere of a new production.

During a performance, lighting changes are run by an electrician in the control booth at the rear of the auditorium. The electrician receives cues from the Stage Manager, according to the pacing of the performance.

The Electrics Department is responsible for effects and props as on stage like torches, candles, lamps, lightning and explosions.

Annually the electricians replace over 3,000 bulbs.

AUDITORIUM

3,800 seats on five tiers, 195 standing spaces on various levels, and 24 viewless score desk seats (4,019).

The proscenium opening is 54 ft. x 54 ft.

Orchestra pit can hold up to 110 musicians. The pit can be raised to extend the stage.

The chandeliers were made by J. & L. Lobmeyr of Vienna, and were a gift of the Austrian government. The central chandelier is 17 ft. in diameter.

Met Titles, the Met's system for translating the opera's text, was developed in house and installed in the summer of 1995 at a total cost \$2.7 million.

The walls of the auditorium are covered by wood paneling made from the trunk of a single African rosewood tree found in London. It was nearly 6 ft. in diameter and nearly 100 ft. tall.

The Met has two house curtains: a guillotine curtain, which rises and descends vertically; and a Wagner curtain which is a motorized tableau drape with adjustable speed. The Met's is the largest Wagner curtain in the world and was most recently replaced in 2004 at a cost of \$350,000.