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## HOW TO SURVIVE A TRIP TO THE OPERA

For some, opera is just a fat lady, wearing a horned helmet, singing in a language they don't understand. But, if you know what you're watching, it can be a powerful experience.

**1** Start with the ABC of opera: *Aïda*, *La bohème* or *Carmen*. These are the three most produced and lauded operas in the world, with iconic storylines and songs – if one of these doesn't get you hooked, nothing will.



**2** Put the music on your sound system. In the same way a concert is more fun when you know the songs, an opera will be less intimidating if you recognise some of the tunes. Read the plot before the performance and it will be easier to sit back and enjoy the show.



**3** Don't worry about brushing up on your Italian. Most opera houses these days have sur- or supertitles – translations that run above the stage or on the back of the seat in front of you. They sometimes also sing them in your language instead of the original, although some things can get lost in translation if you are used to the classic version.



**4** Pick the right seat. Too close to the orchestra and the singing can be washed out by the music; too far away and it's hard to see the expressions on the singers' faces and really understand the emotion and nuance of their performances.

**5** Bring binos. If all you can afford are the nose-bleed seats way up in the gods, bring a pair of binoculars. Tiny hi-tech ones are preferable to those gold antique specs on a stick you see in movies and many venues even sell or rent top-of-the-line models.

