

**SEATTLE
OPERA.**

**X THE LIFE &
TIMES OF
MALCOLM X**

FEB. 24–MAR. 9



SENSORY GUIDE

Runtime

X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X takes place in three acts with an intermission in the middle of Act II. The first and second half are both approximately 1 hour 15 minutes long, with a 25-minute intermission in between.

Environmental Considerations for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*

1. McCaw Hall is an expansive, 2,900 seat auditorium. The sensory experience is very much affected by the seat chosen in the performance space. There are three main seating areas, orchestra, first tier and second tier. Generally, the orchestra section is closer to the stage and feels more open with the ceiling rising over 100 feet above the seats. The first tier starts approximately 85' feet from the stage. All seats in this section look down on the stage. The second tier starts approximately 120' from the stage. This section feels more sheltered as it is closest to the ceiling and farthest from the stage. Please see the sensory seating guide for more specific information.
2. *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* features a 52-piece orchestra with 28 stringed instruments (violin, viola, cello, and bass), 7 woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon), 5 brass (horn, trumpet and trombone), 3 percussionists, a celeste, and an 8 piece jazz combo .
3. The lyrics are projected above the proscenium.
4. The set features large concentric ovals onto which images and lighting effects are projected, increasing the visual intensity of the opera.
5. At times, light theatrical fog is used.

Performance Content Considerations for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*.

1. *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* follows a series of biographical vignettes from Malcolm's interrupted childhood in Lansing, Michigan to his tragic murder in Harlem. At times these vignettes include racist language, violence, depictions of terrified black men being arrested and other emotionally intense content. There are multiple amplified gunshots and an explosion heard in the opera.
2. Each of the main characters in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* has a distinct vocal type. This impacts the type of sound you will hear from the performer.
 - Malcolm X, written for a baritone. The middle range for males. Powerful and full in tone.
 - Elijah/Street, tenor. The highest range for males. Warm and full in tone.
 - Louise/Betty, soprano. The highest range for females. Rich in tone, powerful and warm, emotive.
 - Ella/Queen Mother, mezzo-soprano. The middle range for females. Strong, flexible in tone.
 - Reginald, written for a bass. The lowest range for males. Deep, rich and full
3. Volume ranges as heard from the front row of the orchestra level average around 82 dB and reach up to 95 dB briefly during some songs.

The dB scale does not take into account the timbre and resonance of a sound and is only one component of how pleasant or unpleasant one might experience a sound. Moments of music with outstanding timbre or resonance are noted below. Those who are sensitive to loud sustained notes from singers and orchestra may wish to wear noise dampening headphones. 70 dB is about the volume of a noisy restaurant. 80 dB is about the volume of a vacuum cleaner. 90 dB is about the volume of a lawn mower.

In the following guide, the performance is divided by scenes, and moments of heightened sensory intensity are noted by song.

Key to Symbols
















Visual intensity














Auditory intensity



Emotional intensity

Scene	Sensory Category	Heightened Sensory Moments
ACT I <i>Scene I</i>		
Africa for Africans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rippling waves and images on the projection surfaces
Louise's Aria	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lightening effects, images of horses and fire - Louise sings about the Klu Klux Klan coming and burning down their house - Three, distinct sharp drum beats at the end of the song
Reverend Little is dead		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Louise is distraught, and has a panic attack
<i>Scene II</i>		
I see...		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Police enter, use the "N" word
Malcolm's Aria		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During this song the houselights come up over the audience
ACT II <i>Scene I</i>		
You are not empty	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As Elijah and Malcolm praise Allah, there are lighting effects overhead - As Malcolm, Elijah and the Chorus sing about freedom, justice and equality, the music becomes complex, dissonant and polyrhythmic - The song concludes with a full orchestra crescendo up to 95 db
INTERMISSION		
<i>Scene II</i>		
When I was little		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Malcolm sings of being called the "N" word. The diminished chords in the music heighten the intensity of his words.
The chickens come home to roost	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As the reporters enter the room to get comments from Elijah and Malcolm X about Kennedy's assassination, the Zapruder film plays on the set. Musically, tension builds. Elijah is angry with Malcolm's remarks.

ACT III <i>Scene I</i>		
Betrayal is on his lips	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is tension between Elijah and Malcolm. This is reflected musically in prominent brass orchestration, minor chords and dissonance, with crescendos peaking at 95 db.
<i>Scene III</i>		
Riot	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A police officer confronts a boy whom he believes was stealing. The boy runs from the officer. A single gunshot rings out. The dancers depict terrified black men being arrested, afraid for their lives. The music crescendos at 95 db.
<i>Scene IV</i>		
I have learned so much in Africa	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As Elijah and the Fruit of Islam sing about the house collapsing, there is the sound of multiple explosions. Lights flash on stage. A red explosion is projected on the scrim. Large glass shards float from right to left across the scrim. - Reginald and the chorus sing about Malcolm's life being continually threatened as ominous music plays.
Audubon Ballroom	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projected words and images soar across the set. - As Malcolm takes lectern and greets the assembled crowd, multiple gunshots ring out.