

## Opera (Music 11)

Spring 2014 @ 2A (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00–3:50 P.M.; x-hour, Wednesdays, 4:15–5:20 P.M.)

Faulkner Hall, Hopkins Center

Prof. Steve Swayne

### *General information*

This course looks at the history of Western opera over the past 400 years. We start from the perspective of our modern American culture, one that has developed a bemused respect for an art form that strikes many as very European and very antiquated. The intersections of popular American culture and opera, however, are considerable and provide a point of departure to examine opera for what it was for much of its history: an art form for and about the people. Our survey is part chronological, part linguistic. Our focus will begin with opera in Italian and then will encompass other language groups and countries, with a final destination of the United States in the early twentieth-first century. Throughout the course, connections will be drawn across language groups and across decades and centuries, showing similarities and divergences from the various times and places where opera occurs.

### *Texts and materials*

The required textbooks are:

Richard Somerset-Ward, *The Story of Opera* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2006)  
Piero Weiss, ed., *Opera: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Other books that contain required reading are on reserve in Paddock Library. Please check the attached bibliography for the long titles and call numbers for other readings listed in the syllabus. The required viewing for the course, which is considerable, has also been put on reserve.

The schedule for the coursework is constructed with the idea that you will *do the reading prior to the class meeting and the listening and viewing after the class meeting*. Each quiz covers the materials for the class dates preceding the due date of the quiz; they do not cover materials listed on the same day as the quiz itself.

### *Grades for the work in this course*

Your grade will be determined by your performance on quizzes, a final, your three viewing reports, and your attendance and participation in class. The relative weight of these assignments is:

Quizzes (8 @ 50 pts. each)	400 pts.
Final (100 points)	100 pts.
Viewing reports (3 @ 150 pts. each)	450 pts.
Class attendance and participation	100 pts.

I do not assign letter grades until the very end of the course. I will, however, keep all students informed about their individual progress relative to their peers. In my experience of teaching this class, students with extensive musical knowledge have no immediate advantage over students with little or no musical knowledge. The students who tend to do the best are the students who tend to work the hardest.

### *The course website*

Nearly all of the documents that you will need for the course can be found at on the course's Canvas website. All students should access the website before the second meeting of the course to insure that they can in fact gain access to the website. I recommend you check at the Student Computer Help Desk if you have difficulties logging into Canvas. Anyone who has difficulty in accessing the website should contact me to be sure that they have been enrolled as a valid student in this course. If you still have difficulty accessing the website after I verify that you are enrolled in the course, you should contact <Canvas.Support@Dartmouth.edu> and copy me.

All listening and viewing assignments are available through the course website.

On the website you will find a sample quiz as well as a survey about your exposure to opera. Please take both the quiz and the survey. (This quiz will not count toward your final grade.) The weekly quizzes will be given only through the website. It is expected that you will take the quizzes as closed-book, closed-note assessments. With the exception of the first quiz, all quizzes for the course will be posted on the website on Tuesdays by 10 P.M. and must be taken before Thursday at 2 P.M. After that time, the quiz will require a password in order for you to gain access. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THE QUIZZES IN THE TIMEFRAME SPECIFIED FOR EACH QUIZ.

### *Some personal words*

The single most difficult aspect of studying music is that music is fundamentally an aural art. One cannot "speed up" hearing a piece; such an activity would distort both the piece and one's understanding of the piece. Neither can studious listening be treated as a background activity that accompanies other tasks. Many, if not all, of these pieces may require more than one hearing for you to be able to remember them or to talk knowledgeably about them. The serious student will allocate both the necessary time and concentration not only to the reading but also to the listening.

Fundamental to this emphasis on listening is a *commitment* to remain attentive. Music in our society functions as a background activity; we are socialized to talk when we hear music. I have discovered that students often have a difficult time remaining attentive to listening, especially when examples are played in class. Because of this, I have adopted the following guidelines for in-class listening:

1. When music is played in class, it is expected that there will be no talking.
2. If there is talking while music is playing (or while a video is being viewed), I will stop the music and wait for the talking to cease.
3. If, when the music begins again, there continues to be talking, I will ask the parties who are talking to leave the room.
4. If any student is asked more than once to leave the room, I will meet with that student and counsel him/her to consider withdrawing from the class.

I recognize that this is a strong stance, but I know of no other way to stress the importance of *active attentive listening*, and I invite all students to engage in active, attentive listening with me.

In the same vein, I ask you to give careful consideration to how you listen to and view your assignments outside of class. You and I live in a world that is supersaturated with music and video. For many of you, music has become an inseparable part of your life, serving as sonic and visual wallpaper to your everyday activities. All of us will be tempted to treat the assignments less seriously than we would treat reading assignments in a history course or a laboratory experiment in chemistry. In many ways, however, the assignments closely parallel these other study efforts. At a minimum, they require your focused attention. You may need to listen to/watch some things more than once to capture the salient musical moments. And you may need temporarily to limit or eliminate entirely your other listening and viewing in order to keep your ears and eyes “fresh” for this class. I cannot police your activity outside of the classroom. I can only recommend study strategies that I know will enhance your learning experience. Caveat auditor.

Our primary focus in this class is on the music. Opera is a dramatic form, and much can be learned from watching it. But great acting and singing and staging and costumes rarely redeem a flimsy score. Our goal in this class is to learn to hear and respond to the music first and to allow our imaginations to provide many of the visual images that the music elicits, even — and sometimes especially — when the visual component is present.

My office is in the Hop down the narrow hallway near the entrance to Paddock Library; my regular office hours are Tuesdays, 9–noon. While I hope to be in my office during these times, it is best to contact me via BlitzMail before you drop by. If you are not available at that time, we can schedule an appointment that is mutually convenient. I will answer your BlitzMail in as timely a fashion as I can. And I encourage you to seek me out if you are having difficulty, if you encounter any physical, medical or psychiatric impediments to your learning, if you are having success, or if you just want to talk.

I am looking forward to learning with you.

# Music 11 — Opera

## Spring 2014, 2A, Faulkner

**Oxford** — Roger Parker, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) (on reserve)  
**SW** — Richard Somerset-Ward, *The Story of Opera* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998, 2006)  
**Weiss** — Piero Weiss, ed., *Opera: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)  
**Crosten** — William L. Crosten, *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972) (on reserve)  
**Dizikes** — John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) (on reserve)

Dates	Topic	Reading assignment	Listening assignment (I = Act I; II = Act II, etc.)	Other assignments
Week 1				
3/25	introduction and class mechanics; “Why opera?”; opera and the popular imagination	Oxford, 450–82		
Opera in Italian				
3/27	opera’s birth; Monteverdi and the Venetians; codification of conventions	Weiss, sec. 1–7; SW, 13–36	Monteverdi, <i>L’incoronazione di Poppea</i> , III Handel, <i>Giulio cesare</i> , I	
Week 2				
4/1	from Handel to Mozart ( <i>seria</i> and <i>buffa</i> )	Weiss, sec. 13–15 & 18; SW, 43–50; 53–81	Pergolesi, <i>La serva padrona</i> (all) Gluck, <i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> , II	
4/3	the Mozart/da Ponte operas	Weiss, sec. 22 & 23; SW, 68–75	Mozart, <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> , I & II; <i>Don Giovanni</i> , II	Quiz 1 completed
4/5	Opera at the Met: <i>La bohème</i> (Puccini) (see 4/17), Loew Auditorium, 12:55 P.M.			
Week 3				
4/8	Rossini and the beginning of <i>bel canto</i>	Weiss, sec. 27; SW, 83–103	Rossini, <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> , I	
4/10	Bellini, Donizetti, and early Verdi	Weiss, sec. 30, 31; SW, 103–117	Donizetti, <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> , II; Verdi, <i>Nabucco</i> , sinfonia and III & IV	Quiz 2 completed

Week 4				
4/15	Verdi (cont.)	Weiss, sec. 37	Verdi, <i>La traviata</i> , I & III; <i>Aida</i> , IV; <i>Otello</i> , IV; <i>Falstaff</i> , II	
4/17	<i>Il giovane scuola</i> (Puccini and his confrères)	Weiss, sec. 38 & 39; Dizikes, 337–44; SW, 199–215	Puccini, <i>La bohème</i> , III & IV; <i>Turandot</i> , III (to Liù's death)	Quiz 3 completed
Week 5				
Opera in French				
4/22	from Lully to the Revolution;	Weiss, sec. 8–10, 16, 17, 19, 21 & 25; SW, 37–43, 147–71	Rameau, <i>Hippolyte et Aricie</i> , I & II	First viewing report due
4/23 (x-hour)	grand opera	Crosten, 41–69	Gounod, <i>Faust</i> , IV & V	
4/24	grand opera (cont.); from <i>Faust</i> to <i>Pélleas</i> and <i>Dialogues</i>	Weiss, sec. 29, 40 & 50	Bizet, <i>Carmen</i> , II Massenet, <i>Werther</i> , III & IV Debussy, <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> , II & III	Quiz 4 completed
4/26	Opera at the Met: <i>Così fan tutte</i> (Mozart) (see 4/3), Loew Auditorium, 12:55 P.M.			
Week 6				
Opera in German				
4/29	<i>Singspiele</i> and Mozart; <i>Fidelio</i> and the emergence of German Romantic opera; Wagner before 1850	Weiss, sec. 20, 24 & 28; SW, 119–26	Beethoven, <i>Fidelio</i> , II Weber, <i>Der Freischütz</i> , II; Wagner, <i>Lohengrin</i> , III	
5/1	Wagner (cont.)	Weiss, sec. 32, 33 & 36; SW, 126–45	Wagner, <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , II; <i>Die Walküre</i> , I; <i>Parsifal</i> , III	Quiz 5 completed
Week 7				
5/6	Strauss; Berg and Schoenberg; modern German opera	Weiss, sec. 41, 43, 45 & 46; SW, 239–59	R. Strauss, <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> , II; R. Strauss, <i>Elektra</i> , first 30 min.; Berg, <i>Wozzeck</i> , II	

Opera in Slavic languages				
5/8	Russian and Czech opera	Weiss, sec. 34, 35 42, 44 & 47; SW, 183–97	Musorgsky, <i>Boris Godunov</i> , prologue and IV Tchaikovsky, <i>Yevgeny Onegin</i> , I	Quiz 6 completed
5/10	Opera at the Met: <i>La Cenerentola</i> (Rossini) (see 4/8), Loew Auditorium, 12:55 P.M.			
Week 8				
5/13	Russian and Czech opera (cont.)		Janacek, <i>Kata Kabanova</i> , I Shostakovich, <i>Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District</i> , I & II	Second viewing report due
Opera in English				
5/15	Purcell and the hiatus; Britten; on the road to <i>Porgy</i>	Weiss, sec. 11 & 12; SW, 43–45, 259–66	Britten, <i>Peter Grimes</i> , I; <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , I	Quiz 7 completed
Week 9				
5/20	American opera and opera in America	Weiss, sec. 48, 49, 51 & 52; Dizikes, 382–94, 448–61 & 546–54; SW, 230–37 & 266–83	Gershwin, <i>Porgy and Bess</i> , II; Beeson, <i>Lizzie Borden</i> (all)	
5/22	NO CLASS		Ashley, <i>Perfect Lives</i> (TBA) Glass, <i>Satyagraha</i> , I	Quiz 8 completed
Week 10				
5/27	summary; the future of opera		Heggie, <i>Moby-Dick</i> (all)	
5/29 @ 5:00 P.M.				Third viewing report due
6/2 @ 1:00 P.M.				Final completed