

William Shakespeare and the World of Opera

Start date	2 April 2017	End date	3 April 2017
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Robert Letellier	Course code	1617NTX003

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings
For further information on this course, please contact Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Robert Ignatius Letellier is a lecturer and author and has presented nearly 30 courses in music, literature and cultural history at ICE since 2002. Educated in Grahamstown, Salzburg, Rome and Jerusalem, he is a member of Trinity College (Cambridge), the Meyerbeer Institute Schloss Thurmau (University of Bayreuth), the Salzburg Centre for Research in the Early English Novel (University of Salzburg) and the Maryvale Institute (Birmingham) as well as a panel tutor at ICE.

Lectures given by Robert include copious audio-visual examples, utilising CD, DVD and PowerPoint. He encourages the exchange of ideas among the participants, with as much interaction and discussion as possible.

Robert's publications number over 100 items, including books and articles on the late-seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novel (particularly the Gothic Novel and Sir Walter Scott), the Bible, and European culture. He has specialized in the Romantic opera, especially the work of Giacomo Meyerbeer (a four-volume English edition of his diaries, critical studies, and two analyses of the operas), the opera-comique and Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, Operetta, the Romantic Ballet and Ludwig Minkus. He has also worked with the BBC, the Royal Opera House, Naxos International and Marston Records, in the researching and preparation of productions.

Course programme

Sunday

Please plan to arrive between 10:00 and 12:00. You can meet other course members in the bar. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

13:00	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Session 1 Chronological Introduction
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 2 Comedies 1 (Purcell, Mendelssohn, Britten, Berlioz, Goetz, Balfe, Nicolai, Verdi, Vaughan Williams, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers)
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 3 Comedies 2

Monday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 4 Tragedies 1 (Thomas, Verdi, Rossini, Vaccai, Bellini, Gounod, Berlioz, Delius, Sutermeister, Rota, Barber, Riemann)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 5 Tragedies 2
12:45	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Session 6 Problem Plays & Romances (Wagner, Walton, Purcell, Sibelius)

Course syllabus

Aims:

- 1) To explore the plays of William Shakespeare and deepen knowledge of their universal appeal.
- 2) To examine musical responses to his work, especially in the musico-dramatic form of opera.
- 3) To sharpen critical reaction to both the poetry of the plays and the language of opera

Content:

The plays of the Bard are cherished throughout the world, and have served to inspire more operatic compositions than any other author's. The course will explore some of the treasures resulting from the musical adaptations of Shakespeare's immortal plays to the opera stage. The eternal love story of *Romeo and Juliet* has inspired Bellini, Gounod, Delius, Sutermeister; the dark existential questioning of the tragedies of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* have produced powerful operatic adaptations by Thomas, Verdi and Rossini. The larger than life character of Falstaff and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* have been a recurrent source of fascination to composers like Balfe, Nicolai and Verdi, as have the teasing ambiguities of the problem plays (like *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*) for Wagner and Walton. The wit of the comedies (like *Much Ado About Nothing*) and the magical enchantment of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have inspired masterpieces by Purcell, Berlioz and Britten. The course aims to capture something of the eternal outreach of the poet's unsurpassed knowledge of life and the human condition, using his texts and the multifarious music it has inspired in every age.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be built around the operatic output inspired by Shakespeare, played on CD. There will constant allusion to the intellectual and cultural background out of which the operas emerged, and discussion of the many thematic and symbolic concerns implicit to the drama and the music, and its reflection of the views of the various composers of the human condition. A strong visual dimension will be part of this process.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- 1) demonstrate the universal nature of Shakespeare's genius, in the responses of other artists to his stories and poetry;
- 2) show how music, and particularly opera though the centuries, reflects a reciprocal response to the issues raised by Shakespeare's plays;
- 3) feel greater fluency in articulating and analyzing both literary and musical reactions to the human and even ontological situations and questions presented in the plays and in other forms of dramatic reflection on them.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Shakespeare		
BOWDEN, Henry Sebastian.	<i>The Religion of Shakespeare.</i>	London: Burn & Oates, 1899.
NOBLE, Richmond.	<i>Shakespeare's Use of Song.</i>	Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923, 1967.
SPURGEON, Caroline F.	<i>Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us.</i>	Cambridge University Press, 1935, 1971.
CLEMEN, Wolfgang.	<i>The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery.</i>	London: Methuen, 1953; rev 1977, 1987.
WILSON KNIGHT, G.	<i>The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy.</i>	London: Methuen, 1930, 1986.
—.	<i>The Crown of Life. Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays.</i>	London: Methuen, 1948, 1969.

Opera

- SADIE, Stanley (ed.) *The Grove Dictionary of Opera.* London: Macmillan, 1992.
- WARRACK, John and Ewen WEST. *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera.* Oxford: OUP, 1992

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 27 February 2017