

Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, a universal vision: Origins, Nature and Meaning

Start date 7 July 2017**End date** 9 July 2017**Venue** Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Robert Letellier**Course code** 1617NRX084**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this
course, please contact**Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 746237**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

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1 <i>Das Rheingold</i> : Protology, Notions of Divinity and Providence
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2 <i>Die Walküre</i> : The Human Predicament
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3 <i>Die Walküre</i> : The Human Predicament
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4 <i>Siegfried</i> : The Human Psyche and the Meaning of Love
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5 <i>Siegfried</i> : The Human Psyche and the Meaning of Love
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6 <i>Götterdämmerung</i> : Eschatology, Social and Political Realities
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7 <i>Götterdämmerung</i> : Eschatology, Social and Political Realities
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

- 1) to explore the musical heritage of Richard Wagner's music dramas;
- 2) to deepen the elements of musical appreciation and analysis;
- 3) to better understand the multifarious thematic implications of the music and the drama;
- 4) to contextualize this in the intellectual heritage of Western culture.

Content:

Wagner's tetralogy stands at the heart of Western musical tradition, and like the plays of Shakespeare, seems to exercise a hold on the public imagination because of the infinite variety and multiplicity of its content, both musical and textual. Wagner famously distilled the essences of the whole Nordic-Germanic Medieval tradition in shaping his libretti through their complex genesis. The outcome was a unique synthesis that seems to encompass the whole meaning of life. Where do we come from? Where are we heading to? What is the purpose of creation? Of Life? Of human freedom? Of love? Of power? What is the most important element in our experience? Why does love seem to be preeminent? How did the composer come to find and synthesize his sources, with such topical application? There have been attempts to read the Ring as protology, as psychology, as political tract, as Marxist-Capitalist economic manifesto, as Nietzschean death-of-God humanism, as Freudian symbolism, Jungian psychology, Adlerian power principle. Using mythology, theology, literature, music, philosophy and the processes of examination and interpretation, this course will try to ascertain why the four Ring operas contribute such stimulation, richness and reflection to our enjoyment of music, of opera, and of the conundrum of our lived experience as thinking human beings.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be built around the music of Richard Wagner's operatic output, played on CD. There will be 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 composer's view 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 a fuller knowledge of the life and work of Richard Wagner;
- 2) a deeper insight into the nature and style of the musical and dramatic elements of his art;
- 3) a greater capacity to examine and analyze the themes and symbols at work in his operas;
- 4) an expanded familiarity with the musical and literary elements of music and opera generally;
- 5) an increased capacity to recognize, explore and identify with individual, philosophical, moral or religious points of view in personal experience.

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
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Richard Wagner

NEWMAN, Ernest. *The Life of Richard Wagner*. 4 vols. London: Cassell, 1933; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

—. *Wagner as Man and Artist* [1914]. London: Jonathan Cape, 1969.

GUTMAN, Robert W. *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind and His Music*. (Pelican Biographies.) Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.

MAGEE, Brian. *Aspects of Wagner*. Manchester: Alan Ross, 1968/ London: Grenada Books, 1972.

LAUDON, R. T. *Sources of the Wagnerian Synthesis: A Study of the Franco-German Tradition in 19-century Opera*. (Musikwissenschaftliche Schriften, 2.) Munich and Salzburg: Musikverlag Emil Katzwichler, 1979.

WARRACK, John. "The influence of Grand Opéra on Wagner." In *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*. (La Vie musicale en France au XIXe siècle, 4.) Ed. P. BLOOM. Stuyversant, NY: Pendragon, 1987: 575-588.

SKELTON, Geoffrey. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries: An Abridgement. Introduced by Geoffrey Skelton and abridged by him from his translation of the complete 'Diaries'*. London: Pimlico, 1994.

WEINER, Marc A. *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

ROSE, Paul Lawrence. *Wagner: Race and Revolution*. London: Faber & Faber, 1996.

TANNER, Michael. *Wagner*. London: Harper Collins, 1996.

TAMBLING, Jeremy. *Opera and the Culture of Fascism*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1996/Clarendon Press 1996.

DEATHRIDGE, John. *New Grove Wagner* (New Grove Composer Biographies). 1984. W.W. Norton; Reissue edition, 1997

DEATHRIDGE, John. *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*. University of California Press, 2008.

GREY, Thomas S. *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*. Cambridge 2008

Der Ring des Nibelungen

DONNINGTON, Robert. *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbol*. London: Faber & Faber, 1963, 1976 etc.

CONRAD, Peter. *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*. University of California Press, 1977.

COOKE, Deryck. *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's 'Ring'*. Oxford University Press, 1979.

OWEN LEE, M. *Wagner's "Ring": Turning the Sky Around, An Introduction to The Ring of the Nibelung*. Limelight Editions, 1994.

KITCHER, Phillip and SCHACHT, Richard. *Finding an Ending: Reflections on Wagner's Ring*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

HUGHES, Derek. *Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera*. Cambridge: CUP 2007.

SCHOFIELD, Paul. *Redeemer Reborn: Parsifal as the Fifth Opera of Wagner's Ring* Amadeus Press, 2008.

FOSTER, Daniel H. *Wagner's Ring Cycle and the Greeks* (Cambridge Studies in Opera). Cambridge: CUP 2010.

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: 04 April 2017