

## **Verdi's Three Bel Canto Masterpieces: Rigoletto, La Traviata and Il Trovatore**

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**Start date** 19 January 2018**End date** 21 January 2018**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Robert Letellier**Course code** 1718NRX035**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact**

Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr

[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### **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.

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## Course programme

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### 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: Italian Romanticism: bel canto and melodramma
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2: <i>Rigoletto</i> : Victor Hugo & Francesco Maria Piave
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3: <i>Rigoletto</i> : What kind of love?
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4: <i>Il Trovatore</i> : Antonio Guttiérrez & Salvatore Cammarano
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5: <i>Il Trovatore</i> : Fate, Superstition, and Love
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6: <i>La Traviata</i> : Alexandre Dumas & Francesco Maria Piave
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: <i>La Traviata</i> : Society and Sacrifice
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

**Aims:**

- 1) to consider the role of Verdi in the history of opera
- 2) to explore something of the thematic contrast and implications of Verdi's subject matter and changing musical styles
- 3) to examine this operatic repertoire in terms of the intellectual and cultural history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the nature of Verdi's heritage

**Content:**

One of the most prominent opera composers of the nineteenth century, Giuseppe Verdi became the symbol of resurgent Italian nationalism, and the composer of popular operas that have entranced the world ever since with their wonderful melodies. The composer lays claim to a unique achievement, and his approach to art involves an irresistible fusion of drama and melody. He was deeply influenced by the great Italian tradition of impassioned lyricism (*bel canto*), revealed most perfectly in the three masterpieces of his Middle Period, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*. This course will investigate these operas in detail to explore their unique and enduring appeal over the years.

**Presentation of the course:**

The course will be based on lectures illustrated by the music of Verdi. There will be opportunity for class discussion. A visual dimension will also play its part.

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

- 1) to demonstrate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the nature of opera as a musical form, and its historical unfolding over the 19th century;
- 2) to have a fuller idea of the nature of Verdi's output, his characteristics, his affinities with the operatic traditions of Italian Romanticism, with their special recurrent motifs, themes and features
- 3) to see traditional *melodramma/ bel canto* and their literary recreations as a dynamic aspect of the operatic scenario, and to have some appreciation of the appropriate skill of the librettist(s)
- 4) to see how opera and its special themes have been used by Verdi as symbolic and metaphorical commentary on issues pertinent to their contemporary history and society
- 5) to appreciate the differing ways in which musical genre treats literature and drama as a reflection of changing aesthetic fashions, and itself becomes an agent for change in cultural history.

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## Reading and resources list

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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.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
	The Grove Dictionary of Opera	Macmillan 1992
	The Oxford Dictionary of Opera	OUP 1992
Verdi, Giuseppe	The Operas of Verdi (vocal scores/full scores)	Ricordi/Dover
Weaver, William	<i>The Verdi Companion</i>	Norton 1979
Walker, Frank	<i>The Man Verdi</i>	Littlehampton 1962
Budden, Julian	<i>The Operas of Verdi</i> 3 vols.	OUP 1972, 1992
Osborne, Charles	<i>The Complete Operas of Verdi</i>	London 1969
Conrad, Peter	<i>Verdi and/or Wagner. Two Men, Two Worlds, Two Centuries</i>	London 2011

## Website addresses

**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:* 25 July 2017

