

Mythological and theological concerns in the Opera of Richard Wagner

Start date	13 July 2018	End date	15 July 2018
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Robert Letellier	Course code	1718NRX036

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

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	Theses in the early operas (<i>Die Feen</i>, <i>Das Liebesverbot</i>, <i>Rienzi</i>)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	The issue of redemption (<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The Catholic world (<i>Tannhäuser</i>, <i>Lohengrin</i>)
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Celtic Twilight and renunciation/transcendence (<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>)
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Finding control and meaning (<i>The Ring</i> tetralogy)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	A Protestant nationalism? (<i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i>)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The Cosmic Christ? (<i>Parsifal</i>)
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

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

Content:

The music of Richard Wagner exerts such emotional power and provides such life enhancing joy that the composer must be regarded as one of the most significant and arresting figures in all art. Wagner captured the aspirations and self-expression of the German peoples, and brought the Romantic movement to its highpoint in his revolutionary music dramas (like *Tristan und Isolde*) that have influenced the whole course of musical history. Adapting the legends of Medieval Christianity, Celtic and Teutonic mythology, all Wagner's operas explore the range of human experience and the great symbols of the collective unconscious to investigate mankind's questions about life, the quest for meaning. This course examines the nature of Wagner's music and drama, using history, theology, philosophy, politics and psychology to reflect on its implications.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be based on lectures illustrated by the music of Wagner. There will 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 fuller idea of the nature of Wagner's output, their characteristics, their affinities with the operatic traditions of German Romanticism, with their special recurrent motifs, themes and features
- 3) to see traditional national/Northern mythology 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 Wagner 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.

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
	The Grove Dictionary of Opera	Macmillan 1992
	The Oxford Dictionary of Opera	OUP 1992
Wagner, Richard	The Operas of Wagner (vocal scores/full scores)	Schirmer/Dover
Newman, Ernest	<i>The Life of Richard Wagner</i> 4 vols. (1933-47)	CUP 1977, 2013
Gutman, Robert	<i>Richard Wagner. The Man, His Mind and His Music</i>	Penguin 1968
Osborne, Charles	<i>The Complete Operas of Richard Wagner</i>	London 1990
Conrad, Peter	<i>Verdi and or Wagner. Two Men, Two Worlds, Two Centuries</i>	London 2011

Detailed

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

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: 21 September 2017