

Three masters of beautiful song: The operas of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini

Start date 19 October 2018 **End date** 21 October 2018

Venue Madingley Hall
 Madingley
 Cambridge

Tutor Dr Robert Letellier **Course code** 1819NRX006

Director of Academic Centres Dr Corinne Boz

**For further information on this
course, please contact** Academic Centre 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 some 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.

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	The tradition of bel canto
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Rossini and the hegemony of Italian music
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Rossini: comic genius and epic chronicler
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Donizetti and the distillation of Romanticism
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Donizetti: commedia e tragedia
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Bellini and the triumph of song
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Bellini and the Tragic Muse
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

The venerable vocal traditions of the Baroque and Classical periods reached an apogee of attainment in the Italian Romantic operas of the early nineteenth century—in the work of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini, with an efflorescence of beautiful melody and exquisite control of the human voice. In both the tragic and comic modes, these composers wrote operas of endearing charm and soul-searching pathos: Rossini the master of opera buffa, Bellini, the master of tragic melancholy, Donizetti the master of both modes.

Aims:

- To consider the role of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini in the history of opera
- To explore something of the thematic contrast and implications of this Romantic subject matter and changing musical styles
- To examine this operatic repertoire in terms of the intellectual and cultural history of the 19th century, and the nature of the bel canto heritage

Content:

The glorious vocal traditions of the Baroque and Classical periods reached an apogee of attainment in the Italian Romantic operas of the early nineteenth century—and most especially in the work of the sublime trio of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. All three produced operas that, while eclipsed in the wake of Wagnerian music drama and Verismo, have since the 1950s, been recognized as containing great masterpieces. These are characterized by an efflorescence of beautiful melody and exquisite control of the human voice. In both the tragic and comic modes, these composers wrote operas of endearing charm and soul-searching pathos: Rossini the master of opera buffa (like *The Barber of Seville* and *La Cenerentola*), Bellini, the master of tragic melancholy (like *Norma* and *I Puritani*), Donizetti the master of both modes (like *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *L'Elisir d'amore*). This course will explore the bel canto tradition and the major works of these composers.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be based on lectures illustrated by the music of the bel canto composers. 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:

- demonstrate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the nature of opera as a musical form, and its historical unfolding over the 19th century;
- have a fuller idea of the nature of the output of the three bel canto composers, their characteristics, their affinities with the operatic traditions of Italian Romanticism, with their special recurrent motifs, themes and features;
- see traditional *melodrama / 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);

- see how opera and its special themes have been used by the bel canto as symbolic and metaphorical commentary on issues pertinent to their contemporary history and society;
- 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 texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Author	Title	Publisher and date
	The Grove Dictionary of Opera	Macmillan 1992
	The Oxford Dictionary of Opera	OUP 1992
Weinstock, Herbert	Rossini	Knopf 1968
Osborne, Richard	Rossini	Dent 1986
Orrey, Leslie	Rossini	Dent 1994
Weinstock, Herbert	Donizetti	Methuen 1964
Ashbrook, William	Donizetti	Cassell 1964
Weinstock, Herbert	Bellini	Weidenenfeld 1971
Rosselli, John	The Life of Bellini	CUP 1994

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: 31 August 2018