



A Magisterial Genre: French Grand Opera and its Message

Start date Friday 18 January 2019 **End date** Sunday 20 January 2019

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Tutor Dr Robert Letelier **Course code** 1819NRX012

Director ISP and Lifelong Learning Sarah Ormrod

For further information on this course, please contact HoACA, Lifelong Learning, Zara Kuckelhaus
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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	Session 1 A venerable tradition: the <i>tragédie lyrique</i> (Lully, Rameau, Gluck)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2 The Empire and Restoration: reinvention and innovation (Spontini, Rossini)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3 Revolution and Patriotism: a new genre (Auber, Rossini)
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4 Faith and Freedom: aspirations to liberty (Meyerbeer, Halévy)
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5 Faith and Freedom: a plea for tolerance (Meyerbeer, Halévy)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6 Exploration and Empire: finding new worlds (Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Verdi)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7 Conclusion: wider influences in the world of opera
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

This course examines the musical content, intellectual content and structural underpinning of sumptuous French Grand Opera which flourished in Paris from 1828-1870. The genre renewed by Auber and Rossini, considered the revolutionary struggle for national identity that was a growing issue of the age. Meyerbeer, Halévy and Verdi examined religious freedom in the spread of political ideals, the place of poor people, and faith as a ideology of social change.

Aims:

- 1) to consider the role of French Grand Opera in the history of opera
- 2) to explore something of the thematic contrast and implications of this Romantic 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 the heritage of Grand Opera and the Paris Opéra

Content:

This course examines the intellectual content and structural underpinning of French Grand Opera which flourished in Paris from 1828-1870. The genre of *tragédie lyrique* was renewed and relaunched by Auber with *La Muette de Portici* (1828) and Rossini with *Guillaume Tell* (1829). These operas considered the revolutionary struggle for national identity that was a growing issue of the age. The great operas that followed by Meyerbeer and Halévy considered the political situation in terms of religious freedom, the rise of Jewish emancipation and religious toleration in the spread of revolutionary ideals in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. *Robert le Diable* (1831), with a mythological theme conjured up the Catholic unity of the Middle Ages, *Les Huguenots* (1836), conversely, the bloody strife of the Reformation. *La Juive* (1835) considered the nature of religious freedom in terms of the Jews in Christian society, and *Le Prophète* (1849) the place of poor people, and religion as a ideology of social change—also in terms of Reformation scenario. Later Verdi's *Don Carlos* (1867) would present the very issue of personal freedom and its relation to state religion. The decisive influence of Grand Opera on the development of the history of the operatic genre will also be assessed.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be based on lectures illustrated by the music of Grand Opera. 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 French Grand Opera, its characteristics, its affinities with the operatic traditions of Romanticism, with their special recurrent motifs, themes and features
- 3) to see traditional Grand Opera and its 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 the Grand Opera composers 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 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
	<i>The Grove Dictionary of Opera</i>	Macmillan 1992
	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Opera</i>	OUP 1992
Crosten, William L.	<i>French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business.</i>	New York 1948; 1972.
Fulcher, Jane.	<i>The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politicized Art.</i>	Cambridge University Press, 1987;
Letellier, Robert	<i>Daniel-Francois_Esprit Auber: The Man and His Music</i>	Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010
Jordan,Ruth.	<i>Fromental Halévy: His Life, and Music, 1799-1862.</i>	London: Kahn & Averill, 1994.
Letellier, Robert	<i>Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Reader.</i>	CambridgeScholars Publishing, 2007
—.	<i>An Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Giacomo Meyerbeer: Operas, Ballets, Cantatas, Plays.</i>	Aldgate, 2008. Reprinted paperback,Routledge, 2016
—.	<i>The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer.</i>	Madison:Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006.
—.	<i>Political Concerns and Literary Topoi in French Grand Opera.</i>	New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2018.
—.	<i>Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Critical Life and Iconography.</i>	Newcastle:Cambridge ScholarsPublishing, 2018.
Barzun, Jacques.	<i>Berlioz and the Romantic Century, 2 vols</i>	Boston: Little, Brown & co., 1950.
Budden, Julian	<i>The Operas of Verdi 3 vols.</i>	OUP 1972, 1992
Osborne, Charles	<i>The Complete Operas of Verdi</i>	London 1969

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: 03 January 2019