

## An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Opera

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**Start date** 19 July 2019 **End date** 21 July 2019

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Dr Robert Letellier **Course code** 1819NRX045

**Director of Academic Centres** Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this course, please contact** Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus  
[zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746204

**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 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 opéra-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	<b>Session 1</b> Transitions: Naturalism, Verismo, Impressionism, Symbolism (Cilea, Mascagni, Debussy, Pfitzner, Pizzetti)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Session 2</b> Neo-Romanticism: Puccini, Richard Strauss, Korngold
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Session 3</b> Expressionism: the German scene (Schreker, Berg, Hindemith, Krenek, Weill, Henze)
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<b>Session 4</b> War and Revolution: the Russian response (Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Shaporin)
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	<b>Session 5</b> Slavonic perspectives: Czech, Polish, Serbian (Weinberger, Janaček, Szymanowski, Gotovac)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Session 6</b> The Anglo-Saxon World: British, American (Delius, Vaughan-Williams, Britten, Glass, Adams, Birtwistle, Ades)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Session 7</b> Conclusion
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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The twentieth century, even after the First World War with its huge sociological changes, including the movement from opera to film and television, presents a surprisingly vibrant chapter in the history of dramatic music. From the melodramatic realism of Puccini, the sumptuous textures of Richard Strauss, through the acerbic and tragic folklore of Janaček, the revolutionary reflections of Shostakovich and Prokofiev, and Britten's controversial exploration of the cursed outsider, the amazing diversity continues to attract and even enchant.

### Aims:

- 1) to consider the twentieth century in the history of opera;
- 2) to explore something of the thematic contrast and implications of this modern and post-modern subject matter and changing musical styles;
- 3) to examine this operatic repertoire in terms of the intellectual and cultural history of the twentieth century and the nature of the heritage of musical and, specifically, operatic genres.

### Content:

This course will explore the diversity of twentieth-century composers, their work with such librettists as Ingeborg Bachmann, Alice Goodman and Myfanwy Piper among others, and the performers of opera over the last 100 years. Through listening, students will appreciate the impact of a performer's interpretation of text and music.

The comprehensive course booklet provides further reading on all the composers mentioned, as well as a chronology of notable operas, with a brief synopsis of each.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will be based on lectures illustrated by the music of twentieth-century opera. There will be opportunities 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) demonstrate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the nature of opera as a musical form, and its historical unfolding over the twentieth century;
- 2) have a fuller idea of the nature of the creations of a cross-section of twentieth-century composers, their characteristics, their affinities with the operatic traditions of modern times, with their special recurrent motifs, themes and features;
- 3) see twentieth-century 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) see how opera and its special themes have been used by modern composers as symbolic and metaphorical commentary on issues pertinent to their contemporary history and society;
- 5) 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 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
Osborne, Charles	<b><i>The Complete Operas of Richard Strauss</i></b>	Methuen 1992
Osborne, Charles	<i>The Complete Operas of Puccini</i>	Methuen 1990
Chisholm, E.	<i>The Operas of Leos Janaček</i>	Oxford 1971
Howard, P.	<i>The Operas of Benjamin Britten</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:* 11 July 2019