



A survey of Russian opera

Start date 11 October 2019

End date

13 October 2019

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr Robert Letellier

Course code

1920NRX005

Director of ISP and LL

Sarah Ormrod

For further information on this course, please contact the Lifelong Learning team

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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 Introduction; Glinka

22:00 Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 Session 2 Dargomyzhsky

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Session 3 Mussorgsky

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 Session 4 Borodin

18:00 – 18:30 Free

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 Session 5 Tchaikovsky

21:30 Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 Session 6 Rimsky-Korsakov

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Session 7 Prokofiev, Shostakovich

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The aim of the course is to chronicle and explore the history and nature of Russian opera from its inception in the early nineteenth century, through its glorious efflorescence in the mid- and late nineteenth century, to its re-invention during the troubled and challenging years of the Soviet era.

Content:

Beginning with pale attempts at emulating the new vibrancy of German Romanticism (Verstovsky's *Askold's Tomb*), a vigorous Russian national consciousness soon exerted itself, and in the work of Glinka provided decisive examples of music drama that were to be of vital consequence for the Russian people. In the historical tale of peasant heroism, *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) and the fabulous fairytale world of *Ruslan and Ludmilla* (1842), blueprints were provided that were to be of inescapable consequence for all Russian composers who followed. In the works of Dargomyzhsky, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich, a whole operatic universe of colour and passion was unfolded in which the tragedy, aspiration and supreme creativity of the Russian spirit could find enduring resonance and celebration.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be conducted by lectures, readings, seminar situations, student contributions and presentations. Students will be invited to participate in discussion, and to observe their reactions to the matters raised in the individual sessions.

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

1) Feel that they have a grasp of the rich operatic heritage of Russia, with detailed knowledge of its principal works, and specific details of some of their most striking scenes and insights.

2) Answer the following questions:

-Who are the composers whose work has been explored?

-How do these operas relate to the mainstream of Italian, French and German opera?

-How do these operas relate to contemporary Russian culture (like poetry and fiction)?

-What movements in Russian history and society can be discerned, or are explored, in these operas?

-What do they say about Romanticism, patriotism, nationalism, Pan-Slavism, realism, historicism, socialism, revolution and cultural propaganda?

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 New Grove Dictionary of Opera</i> . Ed. Stanley Sadie. 4 vols. London: Macmillan, 1992. 2 nd ed. 2001. | |
| Newmarch, Rosa. | <i>The Russian Opera</i> . London, 1914. | |

Particular (biographies, autobiographical documents, studies in subject chronology):

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Brown, D. | <i>Mikhail Glinka</i> . London, 1974. |
| Calvocoressi, M. | <i>Modest Mussorgsky</i> . London, 1956, rev. 1967. |
| Dianin, S. <i>Borodin</i> . | Moscow. 1955, trans, London, 1963. |
| Newmarch, Rosa. | <i>Life and Letters of Tchaikovsky</i> . 2 vols. London, 1906. As one vol., New York, 1973. |
| Brown, D. | <i>Tchaikovsky</i> . 2 vols. London, 1979-91. |
| Holden, Anthony. | <i>Tchaikovsky</i> . London, 1995. |
| Abraham, G. | <i>Rimsky-Korsakov</i> . London, 1945. |
| Rimsky-Korsakov, N. | <i>My Musical Life</i> . St Petersburg, 1909; trans., 1924, 1942. As one vol., 1974. |
| Nestyev, I. | <i>Prokofiev</i> . Moscow, 1957; trans 1961. |
| Norris, G. > | The Operas=, in C. Palmer (ed.), <i>Shostakovich</i> . London, 1982. |
| Binyon, T. J. | <i>Pushkin: A Biography</i> London, 2002. |
| Yarmolinsky, A. | <i>The Poems, Prose and Plays of Pushkin</i> . New York, 1936. |

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee, lunch and dinner will be provided as outlined in the timetable. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

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: 23 September 2019