

From Creation to Apocalypse: reflecting on Wagner's Ring Cycle

Start date 19 May 2023**End date** 21 May 2023**Venue** Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ**Tutor** Dr Robert Letellier**Course code** 2223NRX032**Director of ISP and LL**

Sarah Ormrod

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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.

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-17th-, 18th- and early 19th-century novel (particularly the Gothic Novel and Sir Walter Scott), the Bible, and European culture. He has specialised 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 Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00 Dinner

20:30 – 22:00 Introduction. Prologue/Exposition: *Das Rheingold*. Creation and Original Sin (Protology)

22:00 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 Adagio: *Die Walküre*. Law and Love (Morality) (Part 1)

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 *Die Walküre* (Part 2)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free time

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 Scherzo: *Siegfried*. Youth and Maturity (Rites of Passage) (Part 1)

18:00 – 18:30 Free time

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 *Siegfried* (Part 2)

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10.30 Finale: *Götterdämmerung*. Society and Salvation (Eschatology) (Part 1)

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 *Götterdämmerung* (Part 2)

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will allow you to:

1. Explore the musical heritage of Richard Wagner's music dramas
2. Deepen the elements of musical appreciation and analysis
3. Better understand the multifarious thematic implications of the music and the drama
4. Contextualise this in the intellectual heritage of Western culture

Content:

The music of 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. Of all Wagner's works, the *Ring* is surely his masterpiece—one of grandest and most ambitious artistic projects ever and carried to completion by a single human mind. Adapting the legends of Teutonic and Nordic mythology, this operatic tetralogy explores the range of human experience and emotions, the great symbols of the collective unconscious, to investigate mankind's questions about life and relationships, the search for meaning and the desire to be set free from our limitations and imperfections. This course will explore the nature of Wagner's music and drama, using ideas from history, theology, philosophy, politics and psychology to reflect on its implications.

Presentation of the course:

Lectures with PowerPoint, CD and DVD presentation, class discussion.

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

1. Gain a fuller knowledge of the life and work of Richard Wagner
2. Gain deeper insight into the nature and style of the musical and dramatic elements of his art
3. Have a greater capacity to examine and analyse the themes and symbols at work in his operas
4. Expand familiarity with the musical and literary elements of music and opera generally
5. Increase capacity to recognise, explore and identify with individual, philosophical, moral or religious points of view in personal experience

Reading and resources list

Richard Wagner

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 Katzbichler, 1979.

WARRACK, John. "The influence of Grand Opéra on Wagner." In *Music in Paris in the Eighteenth-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

DEATHRIDGE, John. *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*. University of California Press, 2008.

GREY, Thomas S. *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*. Cambridge 2008

Der Ring des Nibelungen

DONNINGTON, Robert. *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbol*. London: Faber & Faber, 1963, 1976 etc.

CONRAD, Peter. *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*. Univ. of California Press, 1977.

COOKE, Deryck. *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's 'Ring'*. Oxford University Press, 1979.

OWEN LEE, M. *Wagner's "Ring": Turning the Sky Around, An Introduction to The Ring of the Nibelung*. Limelight Editions, 1994.

KITCHER, Phillip and SCHACHT, Richard. *Finding an Ending: Reflections on Wagner's Ring*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

HUGHES, Derek. *Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera*. Cambridge UP 2007.

SCHOFIELD, Paul. *Redeemer Reborn: Parsifal as the Fifth Opera of Wagner's Ring Amadeus* Press, 2008.

FOSTER, Daniel H. *Wagner's Ring Cycle and the Greeks* (Cambridge Studies in Opera). Cambridge: CUP 2010.