

MUCH 624 Metropolitan Opera Assignment Guidelines

Here's the details about the opera attendance and assignment for Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Logistical Details: You should attend a live performance of *Tristan und Isolde* through the Met Opera's Live in HD broadcast.

The two possible dates are:

1) Saturday, October 8 at 12:00 pm or 2) Sunday, October 16, at 6:00pm

- The opera is long, a little over 5 hours (so plan on a long afternoon or evening—you might want to smuggle in some snacks to the movie theater!).
 - The location of the movie theater is the Roxy Theater, 20 Main Street, Potsdam, NY 13676 <http://www.jscinemas.com> It's walking distance from Crane.
 - You can buy tickets ahead of time at the Community Performance Series box office in the PAC, or at the movie theater (I'd suggest purchasing ahead of time).
 - Tickets are \$12 for students. If anyone has a financial hardship in purchasing this ticket, please let me know).
 - You can find more information here if need be: <http://www.cpspotdam.org/eventpgs/methd.html>
 - Again, if you cannot make one of these dates, please let me know this week and I will arrange for you to view a DVD performance of the opera.
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Reading and assignment for our class based on this opera:

1) Please make sure to read the attached article **BEFORE** attending the opera.

Please read the opening two sections in the article (on Tristan's background and the following section on performance history) but you don't need to worry about the huge list of performers on page 703.

What I **would** like you to focus on in particular is the group of bold-face headings on "Performance Demands" that come from pp. 705-722 in the article. These sections each present some of the history of these topics in relation to this opera—they present changes in performance history/production over time. From this list, please select two topics that interest

you. I would suggest that everyone pick one of the first three (Production and Design, Vocal Techniques and Styles, or Expression) and then one other topic.

- Production and Design
- Vocal Techniques and Styles
- Expression
- Vibrato
- Portamento
- Conducting and Tempo Modification
- Orchestral Instruments
- Orchestral Constitution
- Orchestral Placement

3) As you attend the opera, take some notes on your chosen topics. For example, if you chose “vocal techniques and styles,” you might think about how the production you see relates to the information on “vocal techniques and styles” as presented in the reading.

Depending on the topic you choose, here are some questions you might think of as you take notes. Use what is useful—you do not need to answer them all. Pick one or two things to focus on.

- How is the acting in this opera? In what ways does it seem “natural” or not?
- How is lighting used in this production?
- How does the staging and stage design relate to the reading on production and design?
- In what ways does the vocal style relate to historical concerns about Wagnerian singing, particularly in reference to projection, pronunciation, declamation style?
 - Does any single element seem to dominate the production, between music, staging, and words?
 - In what ways does the sound and presentation of the orchestra relate to concepts presented in the reading?
 - You might even ask in what ways the Met presentation itself—camera angles, spoken introductions and material done between acts—tries to “explain” the tradition of Wagner to you?

4) Take your notes about your chosen topic and compile them into a three-page response paper. This response paper should be submitted to me via email by 9:00 p.m. on Monday, October 17.

Let me know if you have questions!