

Opera Reflection Paper
Pick a Topic, A or B
Submit via email by 11:59 p.m. on **Monday, November 26**

Hi all,

Here's the details about your last non-research paper assignment, a reflection on attending a live (or "live") opera.

Please pick option A or option B

(note: even if you pick option A, option B is *absolutely* worth attending!)

Option A Logistical Details:

Attend the world premiere of Tom Cipullo's *Mayo*
(should be a done deal for everyone at this point!)

Option B Logistical Details:

You should attend a live performance of Nico Muhly's *Marnie* through the Met Opera's Live in HD broadcast. This is a new production and Met premiere, so pretty unusual!

The date is:

1) Sunday, November 18, at 6:30pm

- The opera is 2 hours 52 minutes (so 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, but remember the movie theater is cash only.
- Tickets are \$12 for students

Writing assignment:

After the opera (A or B), please compile your ideas into a response paper of approximately **700 words**. This response paper should be submitted to me via email by **11:59 p.m. on Monday, November 26**.

This does not need to be a research paper, but should be thoughtful and well-written. You do not need to discuss all of the following questions exhaustively—it's fine if you find some more compelling than other—they are intended to help you get started thinking. Make sure that you always think about how this production—its singers, conducting, acting, lighting, etc—helps lead you towards certain interpretations. Feel free to include comments on those staging issues as you write about the following questions:

- How does the opera (either *Mayo* or *Marnie*) fit into a spectrum of what “modern” opera looks/sounds like? What about the action in this opera—is it fast paced and through-composed, long acts with few internal divisions? Or are there lots of individual numbers? What is this opera’s particular approach to number opera versus through-composed-ness?
- Does this opera (stylistically) seem to refer to any other styles of music? Are there quotations? Sounds which seem to refer to other composers or eras of music? Popular music styles which make their way into the score?
- Singing: what kinds of voices did the composer employ in this opera? Do specific characters have specific motifs? Is it mostly solo arias, or are there numerous examples of duets, trios, etc? Can you speculate about the specific types of vocal writing (coloratura, heavy lyric soprano, etc)? Is there a role for chorus? What kind of writing for the chorus?
- What role does the orchestra play? Specific scoring that stands out? Non-singing sections in the music? Harmonic choices?
- How does either opera’s approach to language and the vocal writing strike you? Both are in English, but each will use specific approaches.
- How does the composer depict the setting of the opera (time/place) through his musical setting? How does the production help?
- Please consider the staging/direction of the opera—given the things we’ve discussed in our class (from lighting to sets to costumes to movement onstage), please analyze the production carefully.
- Was there anything about the acting that struck you?
- In this class we’ve spent a lot of time focusing on larger themes of gender/sexuality, politics, and psychology. Does one of these themes dominate this opera? How is such a theme expressed, through the music, the plot, the staging of this opera? What interpretative questions did the author (s) open up for you? What questions or concerns were left open for you while viewing this work?