

Course Schedule & Assignments

Week 1: Introduction and 19th Century Legacy



- **Monday, January 23:** Introduction, Course Basics

Readings and listening: none assigned

- **Wednesday, January 25: The 19th-Century Legacy**

Readings: Parker, Roger. "Opera: The 19th Century." *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*

As you read this broad overview, I'd like you to come to class with informal notes on the following questions:

- 1) The author (Roger Parker) devotes headings to "institutions," "repertory," "genres," "plots," and "stylistic changes"? Why are these issues important? What specific information does he investigate under each of these headings?
- 2) Under the heading "National traditions:" why are national differences important for opera in the 19th century? On the other hand, what might we miss or misunderstand by ONLY thinking about opera along national lines or national schools?
- 3) How does the information under the heading "singers and performers" and "staging" help us think about opera in broader ways than just composers/scores?

From this reading, I'd also like you to come to class prepared to make one comment regarding something you noticed that changed about opera during the course of the 19th century. You may also feel free to comment on things that surprised you or anything you found confusing about issues raised in the reading.

Listening:

We'll be focusing on some questions about 19th century French opera today—a bit of the listening may be review for some of you from Music History II, but we'll get into deeper questions and analysis about these excerpts (and broader questions about each opera) in class.

1) Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots* (1859). PDFs of translation, commentary, and score attached on Moodle.

As you listen, imagine what kind of staging (visual effects) would accompany this scene; compare how this scene contrasts with a solo aria; consider how Meyerbeer differentiates certain characters through their vocal lines.

For the audio recording of this section, please use these three links: (note that the sheet music starts at about 1:26 in the first link)

<http://potsdam.naxosmusiclibrary.com.webproxy.potsdam.edu:2048/stream.asp?s=79844%2Fsunypotsdam11%2Fpy8224%5F021>

<http://potsdam.naxosmusiclibrary.com.webproxy.potsdam.edu:2048/stream.asp?s=79844%2Fsunypotsdam11%2Fpy8224%5F022>

<http://potsdam.naxosmusiclibrary.com.webproxy.potsdam.edu:2048/stream.asp?s=79844%2Fsunypotsdam11%2Fpy8224%5F023>

2) Bizet, *Carmen* (1875), Excerpt from Act I, “Seguidilla and Duet.” PDF of score attached (Moodle).

As you listen, consider how Bizet uses rhythm, language, and meaning to depict Carmen's character. Also think about what we learn about Don José from this scene--in what ways is this section NOT typical of an operatic love duet?

<http://potsdam.naxosmusiclibrary.com.webproxy.potsdam.edu:2048/stream.asp?s=79844%2Fsunypotsdam11%2Frp9326%5F015>

• Friday, January 27: Reading, Viewing, and Discussion

Readings: Whittall, Arnold. “Opera: The 20th Century.” *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*

Listening/Viewing: Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1859), Conclusion to Act I

Sheet music is attached (Moodle). Please listen here: the relevant section is from 1:50:52 until 1:15:06: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7GNgxxjNbw>

In-Class Viewing: Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (f.p. 1876), excerpts

Week 2: Early 20th Century Ventures



- **Monday, January 30: Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902)**

Reading: Goehr, Lydia. “Radical Modernism and the Failure of Style: Philosophical Reflections on Maeterlinck-Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*.” *Representations* 74, no. 1 (2001): 55–82.

Listening: In-class, Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), excerpts

- **Wednesday, February 1: Screenings (*Pelléas*, *Rusalka*)**

Reading: Chew, Geoffrey. “The Rusalka as an Endangered Species: Modernist Aspects and Intertexts of Kvapil’s and Dvořák’s *Rusalka*.” *Hudební Věda* 40 (2003): 371–379.

In-Class Viewing: Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (f.p. 1902), excerpts

- **Friday, February 3: Discussion**

Week 3: Psychology & Sexuality I

- **Monday, February 6: Richard Strauss & *Elektra* (1909)**

Readings: Gilliam, Bryan. "The Strauss-Hofmannsthal Operas." In *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, ed. Charles Youmans, 119-135. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Very straightforward quick read about the collaboration of composer and librettist.

Kramer, Lawrence. "Fin-de-siècle fantasies: Elektra, degeneration, and sexual science." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 2: 141-152. Please note that this is only an excerpt of this article, not the entire argument. You should be able to get a good idea, however, of Kramer's overall point and approach. Think about what he's arguing this opera has to do with turn-of-the-century ideas about gender and sexuality.

I have also provided a brief synopsis of Elektra (Moodle).



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- **Wednesday, February 8: Listening/Viewing (*Elektra*)**

Before coming to class, please listen to the following three excerpts from Strauss's *Elektra*. I have attached the full score, so that you can follow along (and have indicated page numbers next to each selection). These three excerpts will serve to familiarize you with the three main female characters in the opera, and some of the ways Strauss uses contrasting styles to depict each of these women.

I've provided both streaming audio from the library and (the same recording) via Youtube, in case you're having trouble getting the library audio proxy to work.

I have also attached a document which contains the German text and English translation for all 3 of these segments.

- 1) Elektra's opening monologue, "Allein! Weh, ganz allein" (9:30, pages 25-49 in the full score). https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/be|recorded_track|umg_isrc_00028947848875GBF076740102US or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsNAWbslCGo>
- 2) Chrysothemis (Elektra's sister), "Ich kann nicht sitzen und ins Dunkel starren," (5:52, pages 55-74 in full score). https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/be|recorded_track|umg_isrc_00028947848875GBF076740104US or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CX76SPGAkM>
- 3) Klytämnestra (Elektra's mother), "Ich habe keine guten Nächte," (6:11, pages 117-135 in full score). https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/be|recorded_track|umg_isrc_00028947848875GBF076740109US or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKerxykmwL0>

- **Friday, February 10: Discussion**

Due Date: Opera Choice and Bibliography, 11:59 pm

Week 4: Psychology & Sexuality II

- **Monday, February 13: A New Psychology—Expressionism, Alban Berg, and *Wozzeck* (1925)**

Reading: Botstein, Leon. “Alban Berg and the Memory of Modernism.” In *Berg and his World*, edited by Christopher Hailey, 299–344. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.



Extra resource: Perle, George.
“Woyzeck and Wozzeck.” *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 53, no. 2 (April 1967): 206-219.

- **Wednesday, February 15: Screenings (*Wozzeck*)**

Before coming to class, please listen to the following two excerpts from Berg's *Wozzeck*. I have attached the two scores (Moodle), so that you can follow along. In the first excerpt, please look in the score and find as many examples of the note "B" as you can. Circle them or take notes about where they are. For the second excerpt, please read the commentary for the second PDF before listening. (The commentary is at the end of the PDF).

- 1) Act III, scene 2—8:42 to 13:13 in this video clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viXMstoz5_Q
- 2) Act III, scene 3—13:13 to 16:45 in this video clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viXMstoz5_Q

In-Class Screening: Berg, *Wozzeck* (1925), excerpts

- **Friday, February 17: Discussion**

Week 5: Postwar Ventures I

- **Monday, February 20: No class (President's Day)**
- **Wednesday, February 22: French Opera in the 1920s—Childhood Fantasies and Modernist Dreams in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925)**

Readings: Synopsis of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925).

Kaminsky, Peter. Excerpts from “The Child on the Couch; or, Toward a (Psycho) Analysis of Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*.” In *Unmasking Ravel: New Perspectives on the Music*, ed. Peter Kaminsky, 306-330. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011.

As you read, I'd take Kaminsky seriously in terms of how he organizes his article (he lays it out pretty clearly for you in terms of how the article is organized—try to take notes based on the big sections he provides for you).

Listening/Viewing:

Please listen to the scene/duet between the Princess and the Child (this is the scene discussed by Kaminsky in his article). I've attached the vocal score below so you can follow along.

Here's a recording of this portion, please start at about 6:07 (the scene should automatically continue onto the next section): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX0WKrrMkDE>

- **Friday, February 24: Continue in-class viewing of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* | Discussion**

Due Date: Project Short Writing #1 (Musical Style), 11:59 pm

Met Opera Live in HD screenings: Dvorák, *Rusalka* (1901)

(run time is approximately 3 hours, 40 minutes)

Saturday, February 25 (12:55 pm) or Sunday, February 26 (6:30 pm)



Week 6: Politics & Sexuality



- **Monday, February 27: Politics, Sex, and Censorship—**
Shostakovich and *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934)

Reading: Wells, Elizabeth A. "The New Woman: 'Lady Macbeth and Sexual Politics in the Stalinist Era.'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no. 2 (July 2001): 163-189.

- **Wednesday, March 1: Screening (*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*)**

In-Class Viewing: Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934), excerpts

Due Date: Met Opera Live in HD Response Essay (*Rusalka*), 11:59 pm

- **Friday, March 3: Discussion of Shostakovich/*Lady Macbeth***

Week 7: American Operatic Contributions I



- **Monday, March 6: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934) and *Porgy and Bess* (1935)**

Reading: Excerpt from Barg, Lisa. "Black Voices/White Sounds: Race and Representation in Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*." *American Music* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 121-161.

In-class listening: Excerpts from Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934)

- **Wednesday, March 8: Screening (*Porgy and Bess*)**

Reading: Crawford, Richard. "Where Did Porgy and Bess Come From?" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4 (Spring 2006): 697-734

In-Class Viewing: Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* (1935), excerpts. Reference link to full *Porgy and Bess* production: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO2114PmTl4>

- **Friday, March 10: Discussion**

Week 8: Divas and Directing



- **Monday, March 13: Continue Discussion of *Porgy and Bess***
- **Wednesday, March 15: Divas on Stage and Screen**

Reading: Morris, Mitchell. "Reading as an Opera Queen." In *Musicology and Difference*, ed. Ruth Solie, 184-200. Berkeley: UC Press, 1993.

Listening: Operatic Selections performed by Maria Callas

In-Class Viewing: Jean-Jacques Beineix, dir., *Diva* (1981), excerpts
Jonathan Demme, dir., *Philadelphia* (1993), excerpts

- **Friday, March 17: No In-class Meeting—Online discussion about divas & Mitchell Morris article**
- **Moodle Prompt:** As I mentioned on Monday, this article is very well-known as one in a series of articles that were quite revolutionary in the early 1990s—a moment when (some) music historians started to acknowledge gender and sexuality, and when some scholars started to argue that personal experience, audience interpretations, and other subjective experiences could be valid as part of scholarly investigation. A little context: Some parts of this article may seem a little dated to us now (particularly given different understandings about gender and sexuality in 2017 as opposed to 1995). Do remember, however, that when this article was published in 1995, Mitchell Morris is writing at a moment when deeply repressive experiences of "the closet" are within the lived experience of most gay men. This article was also published during an era of particular tension

in regards to the AIDS crisis—to speak openly about (homo)sexuality and music was a very political act in 1995.

- Some initial questions from Mitchell Morris's readings and concepts of the diva:
 1. What does the word "diva" suggest to you? What meanings and associations are linked with this term in the 21st century?
 2. Mitchell makes a couple of defenses about *why* it is that he feels he can discuss opera queens (even though he himself does not identify as an opera queen). Looking around pages 185-186, how does he defend his right to discuss a community he is not a part of? Some of this is worth thinking about more broadly, and even connects with our discussion about Gershwin and *Porgy and Bess*.
 3. What characterizes the relationship between opera queens and singers? You might start by looking into what Morris describes as "the cult of the singer."
 4. Morris notes on page 185 that the aesthetic stances ("readings") of opera by opera queens are often "at least partially opposed to that of the majority of the audience" (particularly musicologists or critics). Readings by opera queens are necessarily subjective, yet Mitchell wants to take these readings by opera queens seriously. What are some ways in which opera queens judge operas differently than the "majority" audience? (you might look around pages 195-199 in particular).
 5. On page 190, Morris notes that "if an opera queen's interests appear too personal for most musicological tastes, the language in which he discusses those interests is even more idiosyncratic." What does this tell us about the ways musicology tended to discuss opera in the early 1990s? What kinds of language would musicologists use, do you think? What style of language does Morris argue that opera queens employ?
 6. On pages 192-193, Morris summarizes some thoughts from other cultural analysts about why members of an oppressed minority—and he is talking about gay men and lesbian women in this article, but this could have bearing for many other groups—invest/identify so heavily with opera. What is the argument in these two paragraphs? Can you put it in your own words?
 7. On page 197, Morris writes of the "gay tendency to assume multiple meanings in every cultural product, whether casual conversation, advertisement, or high art." Again, this may be more pertinent in 1995 than today, but what does he mean by this? Why would this be true? Why would looking for double meanings/secret understandings be important, necessary, or potentially empowering to an oppressed group? For a related concept in black culture, you might look up "signifying".

- As you write your thoughts about the article, please feel free to refer to specific number questions if you are answering a particular question of mine.
- And as always in online discussions, remember that no one can see your face or hear your tone of voice—be cautious and thoughtful about what you write.

Due Date: Midterm Essay, Sunday, March 19, 11:59 pm

Week 9: Postwar Ventures II



- **Monday, March 20: Catchup on Divas**
- **Wednesday, March 22: Opera in English—Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress* (1951)**

Reading: Wiebe, Heather. "The Rake's Progress as Opera Museum." *The Opera Quarterly* 25, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2009): 6-27.

Libretto to *The Rake's Progress* (Moodle)

In-class listening/viewing: Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress* (1951), excerpts

- **Screening (*The Rake's Progress*)**

In-Class Viewing: Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress* (1951), excerpts

- **Friday, March 24: Discussion, *The Rake's Progress***

No class

Monday, March 27—Friday, March 31: Spring Recess

Week 10: Psychology and Sexuality III



- **Monday, April 3: English Opera—Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (1954)**

Reading: As a quick introduction to the opera's construction and history, please read the 3 page entry from *Oxford Music Online* (Moodle). Pay special attention to the source text, the story of the opera, and how Britten organizes the opera.

Listening: Excerpts from *The Turn of the Screw*: please listen, following along with the score (Moodle), to both excerpts within this recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y47AhE-xN80>

- 1) The Prologue and Theme (p. 1-7 in score, 0:00--3:52 in the audio)
- 2) Variation 3: The Tower Scene & Variation 4: The Window (pp. 48-95 in the score, 16:02--30:01 in the audio)

- **Wednesday, April 5: Screening (*The Turn of the Screw*)**

Reading: Brett, Philip. "Britten's Bad Boys: Male Relations in The Turn of the Screw." *Repercussions* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 5-25.

I have also attached, just as an additional resource, one of the articles Brett mentions in his Britten article: this is purely for reference. Hindley, Clifford. "Why Does Miles Die? A Study of Britten's 'The Turn of the Screw.'" *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 74, no. 1 (1990): 1-17.

In-class viewing: Britten, *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), excerpts

Due Date: Project Short Writing #2 (Staging Trends & Visual Style), 11:59 pm

- **Friday, April 7: No in-class meeting (advising day). Begin discussion of *The Turn of the Screw* via online forum (Moodle).**

We won't be meeting on Friday in-class (due to advising day), but we'll start our discussion of Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* in our online forum (and continue it the following Monday, April 10). The discussion leaders and I will post some initial discussion questions on Friday morning, April 7.

Week 11: Genre & Style in 20th-Century Opera



- **Monday, April 10: Discussion of *The Turn of the Screw* (continued), in-class presentation on Staging & Directing**

Optional resources: Excerpts from “Stage Design,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*.

Carson, Robert. “Robert Carson, or Building a Bridge between Head and Heart.” In *Living Opera*, ed. Joshua Jampol, 17-31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Chéreau, Patrice. “Patrice Chéreau, or Truth, Opera, and the Director: In Wagner’s Footsteps.” In *Living Opera*, ed. Joshua Jampol, 33-43. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

- **Wednesday, April 12: Composing Opera (?) in the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s**

Reading: Boulez, Pierre. Excerpt from *Living Opera*, compiled Joshua Jampol. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Fink, Robert. Excerpt from “Opera after 1945.” In *Oxford Handbook of Opera*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

In-class Listening: Henze, *Boulevard Solitude* (1952), excerpts

Luigi Nono, *Intolleranza 1960* (1961), excerpts

Berio, *Passagio* and *Opera* (1963, 1970), excerpts

Mauricio Kagel, *Staatstheater* (1967/70), excerpts

György Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre* (1978), excerpts

- **Friday, April 14: Opera or Musical? Questions of genre in the 1940s through the 1960s**

Reading: Prece, Paul and William A. Everett. “The Megamusical and Beyond: the Creation, Internationalisation and Impact of a Genre.” In *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird, 246-265. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Tommasini, Anthony. “Opera? Musical? Please Respect the Difference.” *New York Times* 7 July 2011.

Listening: Kurt Weill, *Street Scene* (1947), excerpts

Leonard Bernstein, *West Side Story* (1957), excerpts

Week 12: American Contributions II

- **Monday, April 17: Sellars, Staging, and Statecraft—John Adams, *Nixon in China* (1987)**

Reading: For discussion on Friday—note that these are interviews, not articles with specific arguments. I'd like you to take notes on the kinds of concerns that minimalist opera composers in the 1980s tend to focus upon—for the first article (on Glass) don't worry too much about the specifics of *Satyagraha*, but think



about how Glass understands the operatic tradition and then compare/contrast that with John Adams.

Glass, Philip and John Howell. "Interview: Satyagraha and Contemporary Opera." *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (1981): 68-83.

Daines, Matthew and Peter Sellars. "Nixon in China: An Interview with Peter Sellars." *Tempo*, New Series, no. 197 (July 1996): 12-19.

Porter, Andrew and John Adams. "Nixon in China: John Adams in Conversation." *Tempo*, New Series, no. 167 (December 1988): 25-30.

- **Wednesday, April 19: Screening (*Nixon in China*)**

In-Class Viewing: Adams, *Nixon in China* (1987), excerpts

Due date: Project Short Writing #3 (Performers & Performing), 11:59 pm

- **Friday, April 21: Discussion of *Nixon in China***

Week 13: Multimedia and Chamber Works of the 1990s

- **Monday, April 24: Opera on Television, Filmed Opera, Opera in the Digital Age**

Reading: Citron, Marcia. Excerpt from *Opera on Screen*, 40-68. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Viewing in-class: Excerpts from Menotti, *The Medium* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1946 and 1951)

Francesco Rosi, *Carmen* (1984)

Tosca (1992 live from Rome)

Sellars, dir. *Don Giovanni* (1980, filmed 1992)



- **Wednesday, April 26: Digital Opera (continued), Chamber Opera, Biography, and Popular Culture in the 1990s—Thomas Adès’s *Powder Her Face* (1995) and Michael Daugherty’s *Jackie O* (1997)**

Reading: Taruskin, Richard. “A Surrealist Composer Comes to the Rescue of Modernism.” In *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays*, 144-152. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Listening: Adès, *Powder Her Face* (1995), excerpts
Daugherty, *Jackie O* (1997), excerpts

- **Friday, April 28: Digital Media—Discussion of The Met Broadcasts and Week 13 materials**

Readings: Steichen, James. “The Metropolitan Opera Goes Public: Peter Gelb and the Institutional Dramaturgy of *The Met: Live in HD*.” In *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 25-31.

Sheppard, W. Anthony. "Review of the Metropolitan Opera's New HD Movie Theater Broadcasts." *American Music* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 383-387.

Due date: **Project Abstract and Outline, 11:59 pm**

Week 14: 21st Century Statements



- **Monday, May 1: Finish Opera in the 1990s**
- **Wednesday, May 3: The Past and the Future I—Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* (2000)**

Reading: Synopsis of *L'Amour de loin* (2 pages).

Ellison, Cori. "Music, When Lady and Troubadour Become One." *The New York Times* 21 July 2002.

Listen to (and take notes over) 23-minute interview with journalist Naomi Lewin and opera dramaturge Cori Ellison, "Saariaho's opera *L'Amour de loin* at the Met—a landmark achievement by a woman composer." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L1M0S30q1w>

In-class screening: Saariaho, *L'amour de loin* (2000), excerpts

- **Friday, May 5: Viewing and Discussion (*L'amour de loin*, *Ainadamar*)**

In-Class Viewing: Saariaho, *L'amour de loin* (2000), excerpts
Golijov, *Ainadamar* (2003, rev. 2005), excerpts

Week 15: In-class presentations, final thoughts

- **Monday, May 8:** presentations (see sign-up sheet for schedule)
- **Wednesday, May 10:** presentations
- **Friday, May 12:** presentations, final thoughts

Final Paper Due: Wed, May 17, 11:59pm