



## CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM - FIRENZE

### CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY ITL 342 ITALIAN OPERA AS DRAMA FALL 2017-2018

Prof. DANIELA COSTA

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Tues 5:30 PM -8:15 PM

**Office hours: 1 hour before and 1 hour after class (by appointment)**

#### 1 - DESCRIPTION

This course gives a broad overview of Italian operatic history. As a cultural form of art, opera has not only been influenced by its social and political environment but it has also contributed to the shaping of its cultural context reflecting - directly or in more subtle ways - through its characters, amorous intrigues, dramatic tension, mystery of sexuality and spectacle, the complexity and the ambiguity of the tastes of the public of each different era.

**Instructor's Note :** The course gives a broad overview of Italian Operatic History, and through a interdisciplinary approach (musical, theatrical, literary, sociological and historical) will develop the knowledge of the ways in which opera and performance styles in opera have changed over time.

Tracing its origins back to the late sixteenth century 'Camerata' in Florence (which led to the first music dramas of Claudio Monteverdi), the course explores the history of Italian opera through a chronological selection of representative works from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

No prior musical background (technical) or historical knowledge of music is required. The topic is not geared only towards lovers of classical music and opera goers. It investigates the complexity and the ambiguity of women's voices and bodies, how some Italian operas and certain voices have the capacity to provoke admiration, rapture, identification even in the younger generation (the transposition of *Bohème* into the musical *Rent* and *Madam Butterfly* into *Miss Saigon* are typical, wonderful examples).

It illuminates also mysteries of sexuality, fandom, obsessions, history, performances, recordings, extravagant gestures, and divas. It explores the power of Italian opera to capture the fluidity of sexuality through voices that transcend the prescription of gender, reflecting at the same time the new American musicology's trend for new interdisciplinary approaches for the study of the human voice and opera theatre, and the interests of the young generations for phenomena such as the Drag Queens - whose origin has to be seen in the Castratos and *Primadonnas* roles en travesty- and for the transvestism-masquerading phenomena of the 21th century productions.

Other topics include: the technical issues of opera production, the role of singers and the relationship between the composer and the playwright or librettist, the heroine's role in opera examined as a reflection of the culture, religion, society, and literature over the centuries.

Classes include lectures, class discussions, excerpts of recorded material and videotapes, as well as attending

live performances in Italian theatres and concert halls and a workshop at the *Sartoria Teatrale Fiorentina* (Theatrical Costume Atelier) in Florence.

Selected works include: Monteverdi's *Incoronazione di Poppea*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Puccini's *Bohème*.

## 2 - OBJECTIVE

To provide students with a deeper understanding of the musical and cultural aspects of opera. By the end of this course, students gain a thorough knowledge of the works of the most important composers of the history of Italian Opera. They will be able to place them in historical context and appreciate the aesthetics of their art and better enjoy the live productions of the Italian operas in the theatres of the world!

## 3 - PREREQUISITES AND REQUIREMENTS

**There are no prerequisites for this course.**

The course will be taught in English.

The Italian verses of the operas will be read in translation.

Some technical terms in Italian (such as aria, recitativo, etc.) are essential for a basic understanding of opera.

A glossary will be provided.

**Mandatory opera performance at the Teatro dell'Opera di Firenze on Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>**

- Individual study of the notes, the readings, the handouts etc. at home is required after every lecture, at least on a weekly basis.
- Students will be asked to research, read and study quite often at the School Library. Please make sure you are familiar with it (know how it works, opening and closing times, facilities, etc.) from the very start of the course.
- For the material you will need to type, please check the school computer facilities.
- A responsible and active class participation is expected at all times and activities
- At all times cell phones must be turned off
- Please also consider important notes on attendance, participation and assignments (as described in pertinent paragraphs).

## 4 - TEACHING METHOD

The course consists of lectures, class discussion, listening and video projections and readings, live performances. Interdisciplinary approach by studying Italian opera's literary sources, music-dramatic features and production practices.

## 5 - ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

**"3 – Hour" Attendance Policy 2017-2018 (for classes that meet once a week for 3 hours)**

Attendance to all CSU courses is mandatory. One unexcused absence is allowed during the semester but more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade as follows (excused absences will be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies): **TWO** unexcused absences, lowers by 1.5 letter grades (i.e., B to C-); **THREE** unexcused absences, lowers by 3 letter grades (i.e., A to D). More than **THREE unexcused absences could result in failure of the course.**

In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding five minutes will be considered an absence.

Dates of mid-term and final exams **can not** be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs. Students should take note of the dates and hours of the midterm and final exams and plan their trips after the last exam. It is important to inform friends and relatives about these exam dates so that no tickets are purchased for you that will interfere with these exam dates. Missing the midterm or the final exam could mean failure of the course.

During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructors. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.

**Active participation to class discussion is requested.**

**Students are kindly requested NOT to use laptops in class.**

**Cellular phones must be turned off during class.**

**Eating is NOT allowed in class.**

## **6 - TESTS - ASSIGNMENTS**

The mid-term exam is in 2 parts: I part 4 answer questions; II part 1 essay question. Final exam is 2 parts: I part 7 answer questions; II part 1 essay question.

## **7 - EVALUATION - GRADING SYSTEM**

20% Attendance and participation

25% Mid-term written exam

25% Final written exam

25% Individual Research Paper

5% Attendance at cultural events organized by CSU

A = 100 - 93%, A- = 92 - 90%, B+ = 89 - 87%, B = 86 - 83%, B- = 82 - 80%,

C+ = 79 - 77%, C = 76 - 73%, C- = 72 - 70%, D = 69 - 60%, F = 59 - 0%

## **8 - TEXT BOOK - FURTHER READINGS - SOURCES**

### **Required reading:**

Headington C., Westbrook R., Barfoot T.,: Opera. A History.

Grout D.J.: A Short History of Opera.

Librettos of: Le Nozze di Figaro, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, La Sonnambula, Don Pasquale, Rigoletto, La Bohème.

Glossary (distributed in class).

### **Further suggested readings:**

BARBIER, Patrick, *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon* (Souvenir Press, 2001).

SMART, Mary Ann, *Siren Songs, Representation of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton University press, 2000).

TILL, Nicholas, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

OSBORNE, Charles *The Complete Operas of Mozart*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1992)

CARNER, Mosco, *Puccini: a Critical Biography*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition Duckworth 1992).

DONINGTON, Robert, *Opera and its symbols*, (Yale University Press, 1990).

STOLBA, K. Marie, *The Development of Western Music: A History*, (W.C. Brown 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1990).

ASHBROOK, W., BUDDEN, J., CARNER, M., GOSSETT, P., LIPPMAN, F., PORTER, A., *The New Grove Masters of Italian Opera: Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini*, (London, 1983).

BUDDEN, Julian, *The Operas of Verdi*, Voll. I, II & III, (3rd edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1982).

RAYNOR, Henry, *A Social History of Music*, Voll. I & II, (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1978).

### **Suggested Internet Sources:**

[www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com)

<http://opera.stanford.edu/>

[http://www.naxos.com/education/opera\\_synopses.asp?char=A](http://www.naxos.com/education/opera_synopses.asp?char=A)

<http://www.librettidopera.it/>

<http://www.librettodopera.it/librettodopera/>

### **9 – COURSE FEES**

Approx. 25 Euro for the 1 opera performance (see point 10)

### **10 - VISITS - TRIPS**

An evening at the Opera (TEATRO dell'OPERA di FIRENZE) on Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. **The ticket requires approx. 20 Euro Attendance is mandatory.**

**Since the performance is at the beginning of the semester, please bring the money on the first day of class.**

Further details on the show will be given in class.

### **11 - MATERIAL LIST**

Each student should be provided with a CD player for personal use.

CDs, DVDs and librettos of operas are available at the CSU Library.

### **RECORD STORES:**

LA FENICE, Via Santa Reparata 8 B (the largest selection of classical music in town)

ALBERTI Borgo San Lorenzo 45-49 red (on the first floor)

VIDEOSTORES:

ALBERTI Borgo San Lorenzo 45-49 red (on the first floor)

PUNTO VIDEO via Sant'Antonino 7 red (Operas in video to rent)

### **12 - FINAL EXAM - FINAL PAPER**

For the format of the final exam see #6 above.

The final research paper has to focus on a topic regarding Italian opera chosen by the student and approved by the teacher and developed through serious researches, readings, analysis, comparisons, observations.

Guidelines for the paper will be distributed on the first day of class.

The subject of the research paper should be decided by the end of the third week.

The deadline for handing in the research paper is 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018.

The paper has to be typed and can be 2500/3000 words excluding bibliography. **Handwritten and e-mailed papers are not accepted.**

**Three points will be deducted for each day of delay in handing in the final paper.**

All papers should have a pertinent bibliography and properly footnoted.

Websites must be cited as references

Plagiarism will bring you F grade.

Grading system for the paper

C: A correct work of compilation, for which one main source has been used.

B: A personal work, based on different sources, demonstrating a critical approach

A: A researched work, critical and insightful.

List of suggested topics for research papers:

- Analysis of one opera libretto's adaptation from a literary source.
- Opera considered as a phenomenon of social custom.
- Verdi and Pavesi: the form and function of a collaboration in opera.
- The situation of operatic vocalism before Verdi.
- The librettists Illica and Giacosa and their work with Puccini on Tosca or Madama Butterfly.

## 12 – LESSONS

Please consider that the contents of individual classes may be changed throughout the course according to the class's progress, and that some visits -whenever available and pertinent- may be included within regular class time. Note : Additional reading assignments will be distributed in class.

### NOVEMBER

**7<sup>th</sup> (1)** Introduction to the course. Aesthetic principles and great features of Italian operatic art. The birth of opera. Florentine camerata. *Recitar cantando*: music and poetry; the recitative style. Opera in Mantova: *Claudio Monteverdi*. Opera goes to Venezia. Opening of the first public Opera House in Venezia. Impact of the rise of the European middle class on opera. I Castrati and the mystery of desire: their origins and recruitment, the Roman Church and the practice of castration. The ambiguous, sexless, and angelical voice of the Castrato. The Castrati on stage: Female voice and male authority, beginning of the disguise. Musical samples from Caccini *Le Nuove Musiche*, Benedetto Ferrari della Tiorba, Claudio Monteverdi *La Favola di Orfeo* and *Incoronazione di Poppea* (videos and cds.)

**Reading assignment** Textbook: Headington pp. 20-26; 71-92.2

**14<sup>th</sup> (2)** Opera Seria and Opera Buffa. From Monteverdi to Mozart. Mozart's place in Italian Opera: introduction to *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart: original play by Pierre Beaumarchais, the libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte, analysis of the different types of arias; the great ensembles; the Finale as principal vehicle of musical ideas. Musical samples from Idomeneo, *Nozze di Figaro*, (videos and CDs.)

**Reading assignment** Textbook: Headington pp. 93-105; Grout pp. 274-286; Libretto).

**21<sup>st</sup> (3)** Continuing the critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart. Operatic condition at the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Italy. *Canto Fiorito* and *Coloritura*. Rise of the tenor voice. The form of the Aria bipartita in Rossini. Introduction to *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini.

Musical samples from Maria Callas singing Rossini and other samples of Coloratura. (videos and cds.)

**Reading assignment** Textbook: *Headington pp. 152-164; Grout pp. 342-356; Libretto*).

### HANDING IN OF THE RESEARCH PAPER FORM

**22<sup>nd</sup> (4) Opera Performance at the Teatro dell'Opera di Firenze: La Sonnambula by Vincenzo Bellini Attendance is Mandatory!**

**NOV. 28<sup>th</sup> (5)** Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini: original play by Pierre Beaumarchais, analysis of the of arias: *cavatina and cabaletta*, the *crescendo rossiniano* and the great ensembles.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

### DECEMBER

**5<sup>th</sup> (6)** Continuing the critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini. Introduction to Bellini and *La Sonnambula*. The syllabic style of vocal writing. The *Canto Declamato*.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

**Reading assignment** Textbook: *Headington pp. 171-176; Grout pp. 357-361; Libretto*).

**12<sup>th</sup> (7)** Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *La Sonnambula* by Bellini: the heroine's role examined as a reflection of the culture, religion, society, and literature of the time; the psychoanalytical approach and the notion of *unconsciousness*; the *scena and aria* combination.

Summing up and consolidation of the first part of course content.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

**19<sup>th</sup> (8)** Written **MID-TERM EXAM**.

## WINTER BREAK – NO CLASSES (Dec 23- Jan 8, 2018)

### JANUARY

9<sup>th</sup> **No Class** (this class was substituted by the performances of *La Sonnambula* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November at the Teatro dell'opera di Firenze).

16<sup>th</sup> (9) Focus on Italian Romanticism. The technical issues of opera productions. The role of singers and their collaboration with the composer. The most famous *mad-scene* from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti as a symbol of ill-starred romantic love. Introduction to *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti.

Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti: the passage from the comic-sentimental comedy to the comic drama; the new romantic dimension of the buffo character that subverted comedy. The new style of recitativo.

Musical samples from *Lucia di Lammermoor's* mad-scene, *Don Pasquale*, *Nabucco*, *Rigoletto* (videos and cds.)

**Reading assignment** Textbook: *Headington pp. 167-171; Grout pp. 356-357; Libretto*

23<sup>rd</sup> (10) Introduction to the ideals of the Risorgimento era. Milano and its intellectual and political life.

Introduction to Verdi as a symbol of the voice of the Italians, his general musical characteristics and introduction to his opera *Rigoletto*.

Critical analysis (musical, social, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Rigoletto* by Verdi: the unprecedented dynamism of the opera; the elimination of mere convention maintaining the traditional priorities of Italian Opera; the five arias and the ensembles; the sense of musical continuity; the *parola scenica*.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

**Reading assignment** Textbook: *Headington pp. 194-211; Grout pp. 361-374; Libretto*.

30<sup>th</sup> (11) Continuing the critical analysis (musical, social, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi.

### HANDING IN OF THE FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

### FEBRUARY

6<sup>th</sup> (12) Introduction to Realism in opera and conversational style. Introduction to Puccini, considered as the successor of Verdi: similarities and differences; the *Turn of the century*; comparison between the death scene of *Traviata* and that of *Mimi*; Puccini and *Bohème*. Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Bohème* by Puccini: the original source by Henri Murger; the freely adaptation of the libretto; *Mimi* as the symbol of love and youth; the musical device of the *recurring themes*; death-scene of the puccinian heroine.

**Summing-up and Consolidation of Course Content. Final review.**

Musical samples from *Traviata* and *Bohème* (videos and cds).

**Reading assignment** Textbook: *Headington pp. 212-217, 220-228; Grout pp. 440-445; Libretto*. (Video and CDs)

12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> (13) Written **FINAL EXAM**. Exact day and time to be announced.