

### Consideration of the area being studied:

In this course, we will seek out new perspectives on Mozart's most familiar operas (and a few less well-known ones) through the optic of literary genre. This does not mean we will only consider the opera's libretti; rather, we will examine these works as *musical* elaborations of, and responses to, the literary genres in which Mozart, like all eighteenth-century composers, was educated. The Classical dramatic genres of comedy, tragedy, and epic, as well as literary and rhetorical modes such as allegory, myth, pastoral, and satire, conditioned the ways composers and audiences understood operatic narrative. It will be our job to retrace some of these lines of influence, and to examine the ways in which they continue to inform our approach to these operas today.

In some cases, the alignment of an opera with a particular genre will be self-evident; at other times, it will be more of a juxtaposition, resulting in interpretatively productive frictions. As we move through the operas, we will also find genres impinging on and eliding with one another. By the end of the unit, we hope to have become more familiar with the literary traditions informing opera, and in turn, to have a more nuanced appreciation for the ways in which music complicates the performance of genre.

The course will unfold over a series of ten one-hour lectures, each paired with an hour of seminar-style discussion, with opportunities for students to make brief presentations or lead parts of the discussion. We will move quickly through ten operatic works, and students will be responsible for watching or listening to the operas each week in addition to the reading. I recommend students seek each other out to watch or listen to the operas in groups. Final papers could address any aspect of the themes and issues encountered in the course, or apply the topic of literary genre to a study of the reception of one of the operas, or one or more specific productions.

### Course outline:

WEEK	OPERA	GENRE
1	Introduction – what is genre?	
2	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	tragedy, part 1
3	<i>La finta giardiniera</i>	comedy, part 1
4	<i>Idomeneo</i>	epic
5	<i>Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots</i> and <i>Il re pastore</i>	allegory
6	<i>Die Entführung aus dem Serail</i>	comedy, part 2
7	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	pastoral
8	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	irony, parody, satire
9	<i>La clemenza di Tito</i>	tragedy, part 2
10	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	myth

### **WEEK 1: What is Genre (literary and operatic)?**

- John Frow, *Genre, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2006) – Chapter 1 ('Approaching Genre'), pp. 6-28
- Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) – First Essay ('Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes'), pp. 33-51
- Marita P. McClymonds, 'Opera seria? Opera buffa? Genre and style as sign', in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 197-231
- Ellen Rosand, 'Criticism and the Undoing of Opera' [review-essay], *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 14/1 (1990): 75-83
- Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History and Musical Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) – Chapter 1 ('The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor'), pp. 3-29 – and listen to the Nocturne itself, of course (op. 15, no. 3)

Initial discussion questions:

- What is genre? Is there a difference between genre in literature and genre in music? between literary and musical genre in opera?
- How can genre influence interpretation, beyond merely delimiting it?
- Is it appropriate to read opera through literary genre?

### **WEEK 2: *Don Giovanni* – tragedy**

- Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966) – Chapter 2 ('Tragedy and the Tradition')
- Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003) – Chapter 4 ('Heroes') and Chapter 6 ('Pity, Fear and Pleasure')
- Ingrid Rowland, 'Don Giovanni: 'And what communion hath light with darkness?'' in *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera*, ed. Lydia Goehr and Daniel Herwitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)
- Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* (Copenhagen, 1843) – Part 1, 'The Immediate Erotic Stages or The Musical-Erotic', Third Stage (on *Don Giovanni*)

Initial discussion question: Is *Don Giovanni* a tragedy?

### **WEEK 3: *La finta giardiniera* – comedy, part 1**

- Andrew Stott, *Comedy, Routledge New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2005) – Introduction – pp. 1-16
- Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* [1900], in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

- Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) – Chapter 1: 'Opera as sheer pleasure' – pp. 27-51
- Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue and Beauty in Mozart's Operas* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992) – Chapter 2: 'La finta giardiniera' – pp. 17-37

Initial discussion question: Consider the finales to Acts 1 and 2. How does music elaborate the comedy of the situation and of the characters involved?

#### **WEEK 4: *Idomeneo* – epic**

- J. B. Hainsworth, *The Idea of Epic* (Berkeley: University of California, Press, 1991) - Chapter 1: 'What is an epic?' – pp. 1-10
- Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) – Chapter 1: 'The Hero from On High' (see especially the section, 'The Hero and Heroic Literature' – pp. 27-52)
- The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. R. L. Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) – Chapter 7: 'Gender and Homeric Epic,' Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin – pp. 91-114
- Julian Rushton, *Idomeneo*, *Cambridge Opera Handbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) – Chapter 5: 'From Myth to Libretto' – pp. 69-82
- Daniel Heartz and Thomas Bauman, *Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) – Chapter 1: 'Sacrifice Dramas' – pp. 1-14

Initial discussion questions:

- Consider one of Idomeneo's two grand arias, either 'Fuor del mar' or 'Torna la pace'. What kind of an epic hero is Idomeneo?
- How do the female characters Electra and Ilia elaborate an epic reading of *Idomeneo*?

#### **WEEK 5: *Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots* and *Il re pastore* – allegory**

- Jane K. Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory: Drama and Neoclassicism from Shakespeare to Wagner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) – Chapter 1 – Introduction – pp. 1-14
- Mara Wade, *The German Baroque Pastoral 'Singspiel'*, *Berner Beiträge zur Barockgermanistik* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990) – Conclusion ('The Theme of *Anima* and *Corpo* in the German Baroque *Singspiel*: A Literary Contrafacture') – pp. 323-328
- Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) – Chapter 2 ('Arias: Form, Feeling, Exchange') and Chapter 6 ('Myths of Sovereignty')

Raymond Monelle, 'Gluck and the 'Festa Teatrale,'" *Music & Letters* 54/3  
(1973): 308-325

Initial discussion question: What models of sovereignty and morality are being allegorized in these works, and to what end?

### **WEEK 6: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* – comedy, part 2**

Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue and Beauty in Mozart's Operas* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992) – Chapter 9 ('*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*') – pp. 102-116

Jama Stilwell, 'A New View of the Eighteenth-Century 'Abduction' Opera: Edification and Escape at the Parisian "Théâtres de la foire"', *Music & Letters* 91/1 (2010): 51-82

Berta Joncus, 'Ich bin eine Engländerin, zur Freyheit geboren': Blonde and the enlightened female in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*', *Opera Quarterly* 26/4 (2010): 552

Initial discussion question: In what ways does the comedy of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* differ from that of *La finta giardiniera*?

### **WEEK 7: *Le nozze di Figaro* – pastoral**

Terry Gifford, *Pastoral, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1999) – Chapter 1: 'Three Kinds of Pastoral' – pp. 1-12

Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Wye J. Allanbrook, 'Human Nature in the Unnatural Garden: *Figaro* as Pastoral,' *Current Musicology* 51 (1993): 82-93

Stefano Castelvechi, 'Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental in 'Le nozze di Figaro',' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/1 (2000): 1-24

Tia DeNora, 'The biology lessons of opera buffa: gender, nature, and bourgeois society on Mozart's buffa stage,' in *Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 146-164

Initial discussion questions: Do you see the pastoral/sentimental modes employed in *Figaro* as primarily critical, or escapist, or something else altogether? One possible way to approach this: what is the garden *doing* in this opera?

### **WEEK 8: *Così fan tutte* – irony, parody, satire**

Claire Colebrook, *Irony, New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2004) – a Chapter 1 ('The Concept of irony') – pp. 1-21

- Simon Dentith, *Parody*, New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 2000) – a  
Chapter 1 ('Approaches to parody') – pp. 1-38
- A *Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford:  
Blackwell, 2007) – Introduction ('Understanding satire')
- Scott Burnham, 'Mozart's 'felix culpa': *Così fan tutte* and the Irony of Beauty,'  
*The Musical Quarterly* 78/1 (1994): 77-98
- Rodney Farnsworth, 'C*osì fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque,' *Opera Quarterly*  
6/2 (1988-89): 50-68
- Edmund J. Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical,  
Pastoral, and Comic in C*osì fan tutte**, Cambridge Studies in Opera  
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) – 'The Comic Vision of  
*Così fan tutte*' (pp. 265-273), and 'Epilogue' (pp. 274-280)

Initial discussion question: Identify one to three numbers in the opera that you feel exemplify/-ies each of the three modes of comic critique (irony, parody, satire), either singly or in overlap.

### **WEEK 9: *La clemenza di Tito* – tragedy, part 2**

- Gordon Pockock, *Corneille and Racine: Problems of Tragic Form* (Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press, 1973) – Introduction – pp. 1-14
- R. B. Moberly, 'The Influence of French Classical Drama on Mozart's *La  
clemenza di Tito*', *Music & Letters* 55/3 (1974): 286-298
- John Rice, *W. A. Mozart: La clemenza di Tito*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks  
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) – Chapter 2  
(‘Metastasio the romantic’) and Chapter 3 (‘Mazzola and his revision’)
- Jessica Waldoff, *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* (Oxford: Oxford University  
Press, 2006) – Chapter 8 (‘The Sense of the Ending in *La clemenza di  
Tito*) – pp. 265-308

Initial discussion question: How does *La clemenza di Tito* deviate from its French tragic models?

### **WEEK 10: *Die Zauberflöte* – myth**

- Laurence Coupe, *Myth*, The New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 1997) –  
Introduction – pp. 1-14 and Chapter 4 ('Truth') – pp. 95-124
- Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, Princeton Studies in Opera (Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 2001) - Chapter 2 ('Magic Flute, Nocturnal  
Sun') – pp. 55-106
- David Buch, 'Fairy-Tale Literature and 'Die Zauberflöte,'" *Acta Musicologica*  
64/1 (1992): 30-49
- Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Whose 'Magic Flute?' Intimations of Reality at the  
Gates of the Enlightenment,' *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 15/2, 'Toward Mozart'  
(1991): 132-150
- Marianne Tettlebaum, 'Whose Magic Flute?' *Representations* 102 (2008): 76-93

Initial discussion questions:

- If *Die Zauberflöte* is a myth, what kind of myth is it? If not, how might you describe its generic affiliation(s)?
- What is the function of *Die Zauberflöte*'s 'Bruch', or break? What is the nature of truth put forth in this Singspiel?