A Journey of the Emotions: Integrating Opera History into Honors Humanities

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Muncie, Indiana

December 9, 2016

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2018
Abstract

The task of incorporating music into an Honors Humanities course can be daunting to anyone who is not a musician, for the language of music and music theory can seem incomprehensible to those unfamiliar with it. But, focusing on the philosophical reasoning behind specific movements of music can be the pathway to studying the role music has played in human history. By examining history and society through the lens of opera’s development, it is possible to link many humanities fields: art, drama, literature, philosophy, history, and music. Opera synthesizes all of these fields, while providing a unique, additional voice to history’s ongoing conversation about the human experience. This project designs an Honors 202 course that uses opera history as its underlying, guiding concept. Through weekly lesson plans, discussion questions, readings, listenings, and assignments, the course aims to guide students through the history of opera, human emotions, and the human experience in a way that is accessible to non-musicians and musicians alike.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents, Scott and Shelley Weingart, for immersing me in the fine arts from an early age and encouraging my musical studies. I would also like to thank my brother, Carson Weingart, for setting an incredible standard of academic, musical, and leadership excellence. But, most of all, I’m thankful he made me sit through the entire Christmas portion of Handel’s Messiah when I was about ten years old.

An incredibly special thanks to Dr. Jason Powell, my Honors Thesis Advisor, whose enthusiasm and trust in me has been invaluable throughout this entire project. It has been such a joy to work with him for the past year—from collaborating in his classroom to creating this thesis.

Many thanks to my two voice teachers, Amanda-Joyce Abbott and Yoko Shimazaki-Kilburn, for introducing me to the world of opera and classical singing. I could not be more grateful for their encouragement, expertise, and friendship.

Thank you to Drs. Heather Platt and Murray Steib of the Ball State Musicology Department for their suggestions and guidance as I began this project. My thesis could not have existed without their informative classes and excellent teaching.

Special thanks to Jeff Frawley, whose outstanding syllabi showed me that a well crafted syllabus is an art form in and of itself. Also, thanks for demonstrating the educational capabilities of Wordpress site so effectively.

Thank you to Will Haeberle and Rosie Hua for perusing the website and wading through the nine-page syllabus every time I asked. Their good-natured tolerance of my excitement (often expressed through a storm of text messages) is very much appreciated.

And, finally, a very, very special thank you to my best friend and former roommate, Alice Runion. I am so grateful for her willingness to listen to all of the many thesis ideas I had before I settled on this one. I appreciate her listening, her reading, her constant reassurance, and most importantly her friendship.
Process Analysis

In Dr. Stedman’s Big Dreams, Big Ideas class my freshman year, I was given the assignment to write about someone I admired. The person was to be someone from my prospective field of study, and I chose Broadway actor and singer Franc D’Ambrosio, whom I had worked with the previous summer. To end my writing assignment, I came to the following conclusion: “[Franc] shared his love of his art, expertise, and passion with all of us [students]. This is what I would like to do with my life; I want to share my love of opera with others.” At the time, I thought that I would achieve this goal by becoming a famous, successful opera singer who would develop some kind of public outreach program. Even then, this seemed unlikely, for a number of reasons. But, it was the only idea I had.

The thought of teaching, oddly enough, had never crossed my mind.

I knew that I wanted to share my love of opera and classical singing with others, but I thought that the only way to do this would be through performing. Still, I wondered: “If performing were enough, why haven’t famous, successful opera singers already been able to impact the larger public? What could I do differently?”

Until October of 2015, I still did not have an answer to this question. By that point, I was a junior in college, and I had been debating several thesis topics. All of the ideas involved classical music in some way, and I wanted my thesis to help fulfill my initial goal: to share my love of opera with others. None of the ideas seemed practical, or useful, or applicable. And, just when I decided that I would have to choose another topic for my thesis, I had a conversation with Dr. Jason Powell.
At the first Curriculum Crash Course, I had the opportunity to speak with Jason about a humanities class that he was teaching. Jason asked me if I had any thoughts about how to include some music history into a humanities class. At the time, I was taking a music history course, and I recommended that Jason discuss the development of opera in his classes. Since music history was such an expansive subject, I told Jason that it would be best to focus on a specific genre of music (such as opera) and teach some lessons about its development. Opera, I explained, would be especially effective, for it involved other areas of the humanities: writing, drama, art, history, and philosophy.

This idea intrigued Jason, and at the Curriculum Crash Course he asked if I would be interested in giving a few presentations about opera in his class. The idea intrigued me, as well, and I agreed. There have been many exciting, unbelievable moments and opportunities throughout the creation of my honors thesis creative project, but I think that this initial offer is the most remarkable. Without Jason’s trust in me, as well as his willingness to try a new idea, I would still be brainstorming thesis ideas. From this moment forward, I had the chance to learn a great deal about opera, about the art of teaching, and about myself.

During the first phase of this project, Jason invited me into his class once a week to teach lessons about the development of opera. I taught his Honors 202 class at 9:30 in the morning; each week, I led students through presentations about opera, which would often include listening to brief snippets of opera in class. I met with Jason once a week to review what I planned to teach, for I could not attend Jason’s other 202 class at 12:30, and he had to teach my opera lessons in that class. These meetings with Jason were rather enlightening, for I realized that I had learned opera history through the lens of music
theory. When I explained several concepts to Jason, I had to bear in mind that, while he much more intelligent and competent than I, he was not a musician. Therefore, the music theory-based ideas and concepts that held so much meaning to me actually meant little to him, for he was not well-versed in those concepts. By teaching Jason, and Jason’s students, I realized that the way I had learned opera history was not the way that I should teach opera history to non-musicians.

Much of my teaching in Jason’s classes was a trial and error process. Each week, I tried to incorporate a different amount of music theory and terminology into the lessons, and I gauged the class’s response to the material. Sometimes, they could grasp the concepts and understand them. Other times, their eyes became glazed, distant, and, eventually, drifted closed. (No kidding. That happened a lot in the 9:30 am class.) Those were difficult moments; it was not easy to watch others fall asleep as I shared my passion with them. But, I learned a great deal from these moments, and I used this knowledge to craft the final version of the course that I created for my honors thesis project.

This is not to say that I needed to make the material simpler or less accurate. Rather, it meant that I needed to think about the development of opera in another, more humanities-based way. Instead of thinking about the who, what, and where, I needed to focus on the how, the why, and the ways in which opera related to other areas of the humanities.

As I worked with Jason, I gained insight into the mind and teaching process of an honors educator, and this was also helpful. I would like my thesis project to demonstrate that one does not need to be a musician in order to incorporate music into a humanities class, and working with Jason helped me understand how I could make my vision
become a reality. “If there is one thing that honors professors know how to do,” Jason said, “it’s learn.” And this was true: Jason was eager to learn what I had to share about opera, and he was a quick study. As I crafted my weekly lessons, however, I noticed that Jason often made connections between opera and the subjects of history and philosophy. When he made those connections, it enriched the lessons I created by transforming opera from a distant, unapproachable genre surrounded by music theory and Italian words to a relevant, relatable topic. Jason’s insights did not change the history of opera—instead, they helped me realize the parts of opera history that were the most universally recognizable and applicable to anyone, musician or non-musician.

By the end of the semester, I had learned I needed to approach teaching opera history from the macro level instead of the micro level: the emphasis should not be on names, important dates, or what kinds of dissonances Baroque composers used. Instead, I needed to focus on larger, more philosophical themes: why was opera created? What void did it fill? What did its creators hope that it would achieve? How does it make us feel? Why is it important that art makes us feel anything? Should art reflect society? If so, what parts of society? Once I began to ask these questions and examine them through the lens of opera, I knew that I could create a class that could be taught and appreciated by all professors and students—musician and non-musician alike. One does not need to know the intricacies of music theory to be able to ask and investigate those questions. All that is needed is a sense of curiosity and a willingness to explore an art form with which he or she might be unfamiliar.

In addition to these important lessons I learned about teaching opera in a humanities class, I also learned a great deal about myself. I knew, after a semester
teaching in Jason’s class and another semester of TA experience, that I enjoyed teaching. I had always loved being able to share what I knew and what I was passionate about—but this time, I shared it in a classroom, not a concert hall. I realized that my desire to perform had waned, or, at least, changed. Instead of singing for hundreds, I was more content to teach to twenty students. I looked forward to each class, wondering what questions the students would have for me, what comments they would make, and the connections that they would draw between my teaching and their own lives.

I began to imagine a future of teaching, which I had never considered before. And, as I imagined, the more excited I became—a kind of excitement I had never felt about performing. In a recital or show, the audience is dark, and all lights and attention focus on the performer. In a classroom, the attention is shared among everyone, teacher and students alike. I loved watching the students’ reactions, loved it when they interrupted me to ask a question, and could not wait to talk with Jason after each class about how the lesson had gone. There is much I still have to learn about the art of teaching, but I know that this is a skill that I would like to hone and perfect throughout my adult life.

I finished teaching a semester of lessons, and after a few conversations with Jason, we decided that there was one large problem with what we had done: the opera lessons did not correlate with the rest of the course’s readings. Neither Jason nor I liked the incompatibility between opera and the rest of the class, and Jason suggested that, for my honors thesis project, the course I designed should do the reverse. Instead of integrating opera into an existing Honors 202 syllabus, Jason suggested that opera should serve as the guiding concept. This way, the readings could be tailored to fit with opera
history’s progression, and opera could inform the rest of the course. In essence, this Honors 202 class would examine the development of Western civilization through the lens of opera history.

I consulted my music history professors, and with some of their suggested strategies and texts in mind, I set out to create my course. It would be an Honors 202 class, for opera began around 1600, and the course would end with Mozart’s Don Giovanni (written in 1787). This is the approximate span of history that Honors 202 covers. With this time period in mind, I started building my course by choosing which operas the course would explore. These operas were chosen based on the ideas that I wanted to examine throughout the course (I also decided to include a week of lessons about the end of the Renaissance Era to give students some added context). Each week would embody a different theme or concept, and the operas would help investigate that theme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Opera/Composer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moving the Emotions</td>
<td><em>La Pellegrina</em>, Florentine Camerata</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Baroque Affections</td>
<td><em>L’Orfeo</em>, Monteverdi</td>
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<td>Dissonance, Contrast, and Gender</td>
<td>Monteverdi</td>
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<td>Art as a Business</td>
<td><em>Orontea</em>, Cesti</td>
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<td>History Portrayed on Stage</td>
<td><em>Giulio Cesare</em>, Handel</td>
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<td>The Art of Propaganda/Government Involvement</td>
<td><em>Armide</em>, Lully</td>
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<td>Early Enlightenment</td>
<td><em>Orfeo ed Euridice</em>, Gluck</td>
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<td>Social Class and Tension</td>
<td><em>La Serva Padrona</em>, Pergolesi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late Enlightenment</td>
<td><em>Don Giovanni</em>, Mozart</td>
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Once I identified these operas and composers (based on what I had learned in my music history courses, as well as my own research and investigation), I began to design the weekly lesson plans. Each week, students are required to complete a reading assignment related to the opera of study that week. Sometimes, I require students to
complete a listening assignment, as well. Since I do not have a Blackboard site on which
to post these assignments, I created my own website for the course. Here, students can
find all reading and listening resources. For each week’s lesson, students are also
required to write a 150-word (minimum) blog post that is based on the readings,
listenings, and a prompt that I provide. Each of the prompts relates to the underlying
philosophical concept for that week, as well as challenging students to make connections
between unfamiliar operas and their own lives. These prompts also ask students to
explore the musical concepts of the operas, thereby familiarizing them with a genre with
which they might know very little. I designed these prompts to be open-ended and non­
threatening; there are no “wrong” answers—only exploration and discovery. For
example, in Week 4’s assignment, I have students respond to the following prompt:

For this week’s blog post, we’re going to do a little experiment. First, watch/listen
to “Ahi, casa acerbo”—but don’t read a translation first. In 150 words or more, explain
what you think is happening, based completely on the acting, singing, and music. Which
of your affections was moved? Then, read a translation and compare what is actually
happening to what you thought was happening. We’ll discuss our responses in class.

This prompt seeks to accomplish several educational objectives. First, it asks
students to interact with an unfamiliar concept—in this case, early Baroque, Italian
opera—in a way that encourages them to explore and make mistakes. Second, it relates
the opera of the week—Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo—to the underlying theme of the week: the
Baroque affections. Third, it asks students to apply this concept to their own experience.
With prompts like these, I hope to use these kinds of universal, philosophical concepts to
create connections between students and opera while encouraging them to explore
without worrying about whether or not they are “correct.” Opera, after all, is entertainment, and it is meant to be enjoyed.

In addition to these readings, listenings, and prompts, I include the week’s lecture notes on each web post. While these notes could be helpful for students, I am hoping that these notes will be helpful to educators who visit my site to learn more about integrating music into their classes. The notes contain all of the information that I would (theoretically) teach students in class, and each presentation is a modified, improved version of the lessons that I taught in Jason’s class. It is my hope that, in addition to creating my own Honors 202 course, my honors thesis can have an impact that extends beyond Jason’s classroom and the Ball State Honors College.

When I completed the weekly opera lessons, I collaborated with Jason to fill in the rest of the course plan with non-opera readings. Together, Jason and I examined the weekly themes and found literary and philosophical readings that correlated with those themes. These readings include: Marsilio Ficino’s “The Soul of a Man,” Pico della Mirandola’s, “The Dignity of Man,” the Orpheus myth, Elizabeth Cary’s The Tragedy of Mariam, Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, selections from Machiavelli’s The Prince, selected readings from Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant’s “What Is Enlightenment?,” and Voltaire’s Candide. We also included class periods to discuss visual art. At last, the entire course was coming together, and I had only one project left: the creation of a syllabus.

In the syllabus, I outlined my vision for the course, as well as my expectations for students. I also explained the assignments: weekly writings, one essay, one cultural event critique, and a final project. To create this syllabus (which I wanted to be as accurate and collegiate as possible) I consulted other honors humanities syllabi to ascertain what form
a syllabus should take, as well as what elements it should include. I wanted the essay and final project to be in line with the expectations of other humanities classes, yet still reflect the goals of my course. This forced me to think about the goals of an honors humanities class, as well as my vision for my course. To connect these concepts, I designed a final project that allowed for creativity, group work, writing, analysis, research, public presentation, and personal reflection. In addition to the essay and final project, students would also have to write a critique of a cultural event. All of these assignments are outlined in detail in the syllabus.

As I reached the end of my nine-page syllabus and reviewed my website, I was incredibly excited. I started messaging and emailing my friends and family: “The website is finished! I have a syllabus! Take a look at it!” I could not wait to share what I had created with everyone I knew—to share my passion and love for music and opera.

And I was excited because, unlike my initial dream of becoming a famous singer and doing outreach work, this was a plan that might actually work. What better way to share one’s love of something with others than by educating? Why not introduce music in a classroom as well as a concert hall? Why not show others that, yes, opera really is approachable? It does explain how we are human, how we feel, experience, and share emotions. And, why not let as many people as possible teach and learn about these concepts? This is who we are. This is what makes us human. While the language of music might be unfamiliar to many, that does not mean that we cannot understand what it wants to tell us—for it is telling us about ourselves.

Will this thesis project change the world? No. Will it start a movement among society that brings about the return of opera’s popularity? Most likely not. Will it show
students and educators that music and the rest of the humanities, and ourselves, are more connected than they realize? I think so.

And that is a start.
Works Cited


PROJECT SUPPLEMENTS

URL to class website, *Integrating Opera into Honors Humanities: A Week-by-Week, Opera-by-Opera Approach*

Syllabus for HONR 202 course, *A Journey of the Emotions*

Weekly presentation notes
Website URL

To access the course’s weekly lesson plans, readings, listenings, and assignments, please visit:

www.honors202opera.wordpress.com
HONR 202
A Journey of the Emotions
Syllabus

Instructor: Valerie Weingart
Email: vjweingart@bsu.edu

Class Time: T/Th 12:30-1:45
Classroom: BA 117
Credit Hours: 3

ABOUT THIS COURSE

All Ball State Honors Humanities classes examine reoccurring themes or concerns through literature, visual art, philosophy, and other key artifacts. In this particular section of Honors 202, we will also be exploring the ways in which opera connects with the other genres of the humanities. By using the development of this art form as our guide, we will examine important social and philosophical movements and ideas that developed from about 1600 to 1800. Along the way, we will ask questions about what it means to be a human being and how the arts can access and move our deepest emotions. The birth of opera began with a group of gentlemen amateurs asking the question, “How can we create an art form that can move the emotions?” From this, we can begin to ask one of the most complex, intriguing questions ever posed: “What does it mean to be human?”

What role should the arts play in a society? Is it an artist’s responsibility to create works that reflect or question current societal issues? What should the arts depict—the truth, or an idealized, imagined version of it? Should we strive to ask questions and push boundaries? What happens when ideas are met with resistance and distrust? These are just a few of the larger questions that we will confront this semester, and we will have the chance to observe a diverse dialogue between literary texts, philosophical readings, scholarly arguments, Shakespearean tragedies, ancient myths, and artwork. Opera will also join the conversation, contributing in its own fascinating, dramatic language.

By engaging with this variety of sources that span many years and genres, it is my hope that you will develop a deeper, richer understanding of the world and society around you. Who are you? Who are we? Why is it important to ask these questions, and what can we learn from the answers to these questions? Many times throughout this course, you might feel as if you have to answer questions with new questions. This is not only acceptable, but encouraged. Often, we can learn a great deal about ourselves by examining the kinds of questions we ask about the world around us.

How do European philosophers connect with an Austrian composer’s opera? How can a group of men from Florence’s ideas resonate with an Enlightenment writer and librettist? How can a Shakespearean tragedy compare to an Italian opera seria? How can a Greek myth inspire generations of writers and composers? How can we live differently, think differently, and interact differently, yet still be connected by the same concepts? Together, we’re going to find out.
EXPECTATIONS

This is an honors course, and it is expected that you behave like honors students—with emphasis on academic honesty and integrity, as well as exceptional academic performance.

What do these expectations include?

- **Attendance**
  - This includes punctuality—please be on time! We have 200 years to cover, and we’re going to need every minute we have.

- **Respectful classroom demeanor**
  - This is a discussion-based class, and in every discussion, there are times at which we will disagree with one another. I am expecting you to treat your classmates and their opinions with courtesy and respect. This means **paying attention** when others are speaking—for this class, I ask that all phones, laptops, and electronic devices be put away, unless noted otherwise. In a discussion, listening is often more important than speaking.
  - Please refrain from having side conversations during class. This is distracting to you, to me, to your neighbor, and to everyone else.
  - While the occasional humorous remark is always appreciated (and I'll probably attempt to make some at times), please keep all remarks respectful and appropriate for the classroom. Believe me: with humor, less is always more.
  - There will be zero tolerance for any remarks, written or spoken, that degrade another classmate in terms of opinion, appearance, religious beliefs, age, gender, sexual preference, race, or ethnicity.

- **Academic honesty**
  - You are responsible for all work that you turn in for this class. That means that you are the author or creator of all work that you turn in for class. Credit must be given for ideas that are not your own. This is the academic world, and these are the rules by which it operates.

I will communicate with you via email or in person. You may meet with me any time that it is mutually convenient. Please email me ahead of time to make an appointment.

I respond to emails quickly and check my inbox several times a day. In every case, I will reply to your message within 24 hours. Likewise, I expect you to check your email at least once a day, in case I send messages regarding course assignments.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Donald Jay Grout, *A Short History of Opera*
- Voltaire, *Candide* (Arouet translation)
OUR CLASS WEBSITE

All readings, listenings, and writing assignments related to the course’s operatic content are posted on our class website: honors202opera.wordpress.com. Consult this site for your weekly reading, listening, and writing assignments.

COURSEWORK

Reading and Listening Responses
20% of final grade.

Each week, there will be posted prompts on the course website. After completing the assigned readings and listenings, post a response (150 word minimum) that addresses the prompt. These should not be surface-level reactions (“It’s great!” “I have no idea.” “I guess I agree with this.” “Because that’s what I think.”). Instead, they should be the beginnings of thoughtful investigations and questioning. We will use these prompts—and your responses—to drive our in-class discussions. If you have an idea of your own that is not a response to one of the questions that I ask, please write about it. My questions are starting points for you; feel free to expand on them in any way that you believe is significant.

These responses are a way for you to organize your thoughts about the course material, and they are also a way for me to see how the class is responding the week’s topics. This can help guide the class discussions in a way that will be informative and intriguing for all of us.

Blog posts are due by 10 am on the day of class. Feel free to read and respond to your classmates’ posts!

Reasoned Critique of a Cultural Event
10% of final grade

These cultural events do not need to be directly related to the course’s subject matter, but they must take place on campus or in the city of Muncie. If you are in doubt about what you plan to critique, please ask me for clarification. Some suggestions for possible cultural event critiques:
- Live concert
- Live theatrical performance
- Lecture
- Art exhibit
- Planetarium show
- University Film Series (not just a movie at the local theater)

What doesn’t qualify:
- Pop/country/rock concert
- Stand-up comedy performance
• Church functions
• Circus performances
• Any event in which you are a participant
• Any event that does not take place within the current semester

Critiques are to be typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and at least two pages. In the critique, reflect upon your experiences at the event. What were its strengths? Weaknesses? Provide concrete examples to support your statements, and explain your reasoning in detail. Would you recommend the event to others? What kind of audience would that be? Also, please explain where you’re coming from—are you an art major attending an art exhibit? Are you a biology major going to the symphony? This will help your reader understand your knowledge and expertise.

These should be your personal responses to the event, but please remember that all opinions and responses must be supported and explained clearly. Your reader has a right to know why you feel the way you do.

All critiques must be turned in on or before Week 10.

NOTE: You do NOT need to be well acquainted with the kind of event you are attending. Try something new and unfamiliar! Take notes, be observant, and enjoy.

Essay
20% of final grade

You will write a formal essay on a topic relevant to the course. This can be about opera, art, literature, philosophy, or any other genre/medium that we cover in this class (or combination of them). This essay should be typed, double spaced, in 12-point, Times New Roman font, and no less than 2,000 words (6-8 pages). This essay should engage a major theme or topic that arises in class. Depending on the topic, your essay can include secondary research, but this is not a requirement.

You will submit your essay during Week 8. After grading, I will return your essays to you with my comments. If you would like to revise your essay based on my remarks, you will have two weeks to do so. I want you to have as much practice with formal writing as possible, and I believe that learning the art of revision is one of the most important skills that one can gain in college.

Final Creative Project
30% of final grade

Working in groups of up to four people, your final exam for this course will be to create a modern adaptation of an opera written before 1800 (it can be one that we have studied in class, or one that you choose, as long as I approve it).

Your project will include the following components:
• An artist’s statement explaining your adaptive choices. What did you change about the characters? What parts of the plot needed to be altered, and why? What didn’t change—think about the themes of the opera. Which are timeless? Which are not? You need to have specific reasons for each of your alterations. How would your choices help the opera resonate with a modern audience? (10% of total project grade)

• A 10-15 minute presentation of your project. These will take place in class during Week 15 and our Finals Week meeting. (10% of total project grade)
  o After your presentation, you will act out one of your scenes for the class. Singing is not required, but all other elements of your scene are: necessary costumes, props, etc. Scenes should be no longer than 10 minutes in length. This is how you will find out, firsthand, if your adaptation affects a modern audience!

• A specific adaptation of at least three scenes. (10% of total project grade)
  o This means: writing dialogue and stage directions for at least three scenes. You can change words to reflect modern speech, give descriptions of characters, have characters engage in modern activities (would Cherubino wear a baseball cap and listen to an iPod? Is that lame?), etc. I want to see three scenes that demonstrate your updated vision for your opera in detail.
  o You do NOT have to write any music or change the music.
  o Think about it this way: the artist statement is the macro vision for the opera, and the specific adaptation is the micro application of that vision.

Attendance and Participation
20% of final grade

Not really “coursework,” per se, but since this is a discussion-based class, your attendance and thoughtful, engaged participation are part of your grade. You are expected to attend all class meetings. Up to three absences are allowed, for any reason, and will not impact your grade. Absences past 3 (unless otherwise arranged with me) will decrease your attendance and participation grade by 5% for each absence. Think of if this way: no absences = 100/100 for attendance. Missing 4 classes = 95/100, missing 5 classes = 90/100, etc.

You can also lose points for poor conduct during class, being disengaged during class, or not taking part in the discussion on a consistent basis. If I find your participation to be less than satisfactory, I will let you know. If the behavior continues, I will begin to subtract points.

If you have any questions about your class participation, please speak with me about it.

Final Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (100-93)</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A- (90-92)</td>
<td>92-90</td>
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<td>D (69-63)</td>
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<td>D- (60-62)</td>
<td>62-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>F (59 and below)</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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TECHNOLOGY EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to have reliable access to the Internet for this course in order to access our class website and post your daily writings. You are also expected to print your essay and any written materials for your final project.

Technological malfunctions do not excuse late work. Back up your files!

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES AND DUE DATES

For this class, your graded assignments will be held:

- To the academic standards of Ball State University and the Honors College. Assignments will be returned if deemed sloppy, unsatisfactory, or not meeting the assignment requirements.
- Late assignments will be penalized by a half of a letter grade for each day that it is late. This is not "class days"; this is real days. Ex: an essay due on Thursday that is turned in on the following Sunday could, at highest, receive a B-.
- I reserve the right to fail an assignment if required components are not present.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Special Accommodations
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Writing Center
Want extra feedback on your writing? The Writing Center is a community of Ball State students who value writing. Come and collaborate with one of our trained peer tutors on any project for any major. The Writing Center is a comfortable, supportive environment for writers from all communities and backgrounds. We are located in RB 291. We also work with students online. Visit ballstate.mywconline.com.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty
Plagiarism is a violation of academic expectations about citing sources. (See Section VII of the Student Academic Ethics Policy for specific examples of plagiarism.) Whether committed intentionally or unintentionally, it can result in failing an assignment or course, or even suspension or expulsion from the university.
FERPA
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects your privacy as a student. University personnel and faculty are not permitted to share information about your academic progress with anyone outside the university (e.g., your parents) without your permission. In this class, we will be using a public Wordpress blog. If you would like to protect your privacy or prefer to remain anonymous, you may choose to blog using only your first name, initials, or a pseudonym. Whatever your preference, you must be willing to share your blogging username with everyone else in this course (instructor and students). I will not be grading or evaluating your blog postings publicly.

UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM GOALS

HONRS 202 Inquiries in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment (3)

Interdisciplinary exploration of major intellectual, artistic, and cultural achievements of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment. Incorporates the breadth of the humanities (e.g., literature, philosophy, and the fine arts). Open only to Honors College Students.

Holistically, the three-course Humanities Sequence enables students to achieve many of the UCC learning outcomes. HONRS 202 fulfills the UCC Humanities Tier 2 requirement. In the transformation from information to knowledge, the course enables students to

- Analyze and synthesize knowledge from multiple sources (including both literature and the arts) to formulate new understandings of the major ideas, philosophies, and modes of thought of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment.
- Compare new information to existing knowledge of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment to identify consonance and dissonance.
- Form knowledge both independently and collaboratively within a student centered, student driven, exploratory learning environment.
- Communicate their knowledge through well-crafted discussions, writings, presentations, and projects
- HONRS 202 also fulfills the WISER+ "W" designation. Intensive writing is woven through the Humanities Sequence, constituting at least 20% of the course content and 20% of points used to determine students' grades.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: The syllabus or schedule may be changed at the instructors' discretion to better suit the needs of the class.

Week 1: Introduction
T: Welcome
TH: Website assignments (Intro to Opera)

Week 2: The End of the Renaissance
T: Website assignments (Renaissance music)
TH: Marsilio Ficino, "The Soul of Man" and Pico della Mirandola, "The Dignity of Man"

Week 3: The Beginning of a New Era
T: Website assignments (The Florentine Camerata)
TH: Renaissance art (Florence)

Week 4: Getting "Affection"ate
T: Orpheus
TH: Website assignments (Monteverdi)

Week 5: Dissonance and Contrast, Public Influence
T: Website assignments (Monteverdi)
TH: Website Assignments (Public)

Week 6: Drama from a Female Playwright
T: The Tragedy of Mariam, Elizabeth Cary
TH: The Tragedy of Mariam, Elizabeth Cary

Week 7: History Portrayed on Stage
T: Website assignments (Handel, Giulio Cesare)
TH: Shakespeare, Julius Caesar (Acts I and II)

Week 8: Julius Caesar
T: Shakespeare, Julius Caesar (Finish)
TH: Julius Caesar Critical Essay Essay Due

Week 9: The Art of Propaganda
T: Website assignments (Lully)
TH: Selections from Machiavelli's The Prince

Week 10: A Change of Aesthetic
T: Website assignments (Gluck)
TH: Philosophical readings of Gottfried Leibnitz
Cultural Event Critiques Due
Week 11: Social Class and Tension
   T: *Candide* (All)
   TH: Website assignments (Comic opera)

Week 12: Enlightenment
   T: Website assignments (Mozart)
   TH: *What is Enlightenment?* Immanuel Kant

Week 13: Don Giovanni Screening

Week 14: Alternate Don Giovanni Viewing/Updating Opera
   T: Alternate *Don Giovanni* screenings
   TH: Special Blog Post due in class

Week 15: Conclusion
   T: Wrap-up, begin Final Project Presentations
   TH: Final Project Presentations

**Final Exam:** Conclude Final Project Presentations
HISTORY OF OPERA

The End of the Renaissance

MUSIC, CA. 1550

- What do you hear?
- Characteristics to consider:
  - Language
  - Secular or sacred?
  - How many voices?
  - How many lines of music?
  - Who is performing?
  - Vocal or instrumental?
  - Post or score?

- Giovanni Pierluigi di Palestrina,
  Pope Marcellus Mass
  - Agnus Dei: sacred
  - Vocal, a cappella (no instruments)
  - Performed by men
  - 6-part singing
  - Overlapping lines
  - Polyphony

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Palestrina’s work, though interesting,
for being clear text, is still quite
complicated. Note the six different
words that each have their own
notations and combine to create
mutual harmony. This piece would
have filled a large notebook with
cursive.
HISTORY OF OPERA
The Florentine Camerata and the Birth of the Baroque Era

ACADEMIES
- Academy: formal gatherings of gentlemen amateurs
  - Met to discuss topics that interested them
  - Wide range of subjects (not just one concentration)
  - Patron provided money, meeting place, and snacks
  - Composers
  - Theorists
  - Poets

Florentine, Italy: Birthplace of the Baroque
- As many as 20 academies at one time

FLORENTINE CAMERATA
- 1570-1590; 1590-1600
- Patron: Giovanni Bardi
- Composers: Caccini, Peri, Cavallini
- Theorists: Vincenzo Galilei
- Poets: Rinuccini, Striggio, Sermonti
- Studied classical Greek music

MOVING THE EMOTIONS
- What were the Greeks doing?
  - Real about Greek music
  - Moved the emotion more than modern music (remember the Florentine)
  - Monophony: single, simple vocal line
  - Modern composers were writing polyphonic music
  - Polyphony: combining two or more simultaneously, independently musical lines
- Do these complex lines take away from the emotional power of the music?
**PASTORAL DRAMAS**

- Pastoral Dramas: a play in verse with music and songs interspersed
- Based on the idea of how Greek and Roman plays were performed
- Idyllic love in rural settings
- Poets, patrons, and composers loved these simple, mythical subjects
- Poliziano's *Fama Fidei*
  - (Florence, 1477)

**REVIVING GREEK PLAYS**

- 16th Century saw a revival of Ancient Greek plays
- Added musical interludes between acts called *intermedio*
  - Unrelated to the play
  - Each intermedio is called a *tableau*
  - Combined tableaux make up an intermedio
- Medici family started requesting *intermedio* for all occasions
  - Became its own genre/art form—not longer needed to accompany a Greek tragedy

**LA PELLEGRINA**

- "The Pilgrim Woman," 1589
- Medici family wedding—requested an intermedio
- Camerata wrote the intermedio:
  - Theme: the power of ancient music
  - 6 tableaux each depicted the power of ancient music in different ways with different characters
- Madrigals, instrumental pieces, divided choral pieces, solo songs

**POST-PELLEGRINA**

- Camerata: "Was this piece successful? Did it move the emotions?"
  - *NO*
  - *JUST, NO*
Too much virtuosity: showing off a performer or composer's technical talent and skill

Remember all those composers and poets in the Camerata? They each wanted to contribute to the intermedi.

Virtuosity was not the way to move the emotions

**Strong polyphonic tradition**
- No going back to monophony

**Camerata (Galilei) developed the concept of monody**
- Monody: solo song with simple accompaniment
  - Different from monophony: solo vocal line without accompaniment
  - Accompaniment at the time
    - Basso Continuo: one player accompanying the vocalist on the harpsichord, lute, or organ

**This style of singing was not a "new" idea**
- Singing simple, pure words with light instrumental accompaniment
- Solo parts of madrigals
- CAPANTS published songs for voice and continuo, not print to music
- A monody in 1622
- Adorn ripido solo songs
- Madrigals through compound solo songs

Camerata's compositions were well-accepted by the Camerata
- Finally, something that would move the emotions
- Ornamento to enhance meaning of the text, not just to show off a singer's abilities

**The Earliest Operas**
- Peri's Dafne: 1600, Perugia
  - Only fragments remain

- Peri's Eurydice: 1600, Florence
  - Full score remains

- Four attempts before this:
  - Canzonets
  - Text by Rinuccini
NEXT TIME

- Percy I. Tealby
  * Thomas, 1660

- New connections:
  * Able
  * Reciprocal
  * Arena
  * Satisfy
  * Records

- Carla Monteveni L. Ojito
  * Thomas, 1667
HISTORY OF OPERA

The Affections, L'Estatrice, and L'Oiseau

BAROQUE: THE TERM AND THE TIME PERIOD

- 1600-1750: begins in Florence
- Baroque: French term from the Portuguese barroca, meaning "mismatched pearl"
- Exaggerated, in bad taste, unnatural, bizarre
- Originally a derogative term
- Nineteenth-century theorists praised the music, simpler style
- Unfavorable opinion of the Baroque Period.
- Opinions changed when critics studied Baroque art, then architecture.

KEY TERMS

- Baroque
- Affections
- Recitative
- Aria (ca. 1600)
- Sinnontia
- Rinonelle
- Libretto
- Libertint
- Strophic
- Through-composed

WHAT IS BAROQUE STYLE?

There is actually no definite "Baroque style" because many different styles of music developed over the 150 year time span known as the Baroque.

The Baroque is a period, a period of change, a period of innovation. These changes were driven by the desire to create musical drama.

If she can't have you, don't be the one.
Baroque composers prized music for its dramatic power, what did they hope for this drama to achieve?

Move the affections: emotions such as sadness, joy, anger, love, fear, excitement, wonder

- Thought to be stable states of one's soul
- Once set into motion by external stimuli through the senses, controlled motions to the soul, thus bringing out specific emotions

Recitative: The Passions of the Soul (1655-6)

PERI'S L'EURIDICE

- 1600, Florence
- Requested for a Medici family wedding
  - Overshadowed by the house ballet
- A new important musical innovation: Recitative
- Recitative: speech-like song that is a halfway point between spoken dialogue and sung songs
  - Similar to the style thought to be used for eumy, Greek heroic poetry
- Recitative could convey emotion quite effectively
- Met the demands of dramatic poetry

CHARLES LE BRUN, 1689

Recitative from L'EURIDICE

Notice the block chords in the bass and the vocal line moving freely above them.
Recitatives featured irregular rhythms meant to mimic natural speech.
They did not have a strict tempo, musical speed.
Singer could interpret the words and sing with appropriate emotion.
OTHER INNOVATIONS

- Sinfonia: generic term used throughout the seventeenth century for an abstract ensemble piece
- Ritorne: instrumental refrain
- Used in conjunction with recitative and arii
- At this time, arii are poetic songs set in a strophic style
  - (That does change in about 20 years)
- Recitative and Arii are both styles of monody

WHY ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE?

- Ulterior treatment of music being able to impact the audience
- Orpheus - Revolution
  - Missouri
  - Relevant to an evolving myth
- Orpheus is the most gifted musician around
- Goes down to the Underworld through the power of song
- Chooses Hades with his lute playing
- Savs Eurydice

MONTEVERDI'S L'ORFEO

- Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
  - Born in Cremona, Italy
  - Worked as a composer for the Gonzaga family in Mantua, Italy
- Libretto by Alessandro Striggio
- Libretto: "little book" poetic text set to music in an opera
  - A hybrid work between
- L'Orfeo premiered in Mantua, Italy in 1607
  - Opera is the event! Spreading from Florence to Rome, Mantua, Venice, etc.

L'ORFEO

- More effective than I, Orfeo—why?
- Monteverdi draws on a wide range of musical styles and genres
- Used generous musical contrasts to shape music, drama, and express the text
  - "This is another important innovation—music must work!"
- Five acts, one arii for Orfeo in each act
  - Confronts death is each act by concentrating on the text
- Larger, more varied orchestra
- Arii, recitative, duos, dance, ensemble madrigals
  - Madrigals through composed
L'ORFEO EXCERPT

- Aria: "Voi ricordate o banchi ambrosi"
  - Orfeo singing at his wedding
  - Celebratory
- Recitative: "Ah, caso acerbo!"
- Messenger arrives to tell of Ermidore's death by mistake

NEXT WEEK...

- Poesia and Scozia Principe
- Aria
- Arie
- Recitative
- 1620s and beyond
HISTORY OF OPERA

Secondo Prajic a,
An'a, Arioso, and Recitative, L'incoronazione di Poppea

Seconda Pratica, Aria, Arioso, and Recitativo, L'incoronazione di Poppea

Seconda Pratica

Seconda Pratica

Text Painting

Dissonance(s)

Monteverdi is using musical elements to portray the text

This is called text painting

Monteverdi wrote many madrigals

Used to stress/show importance of the most meaningful words of the libretto

Liberate poetic text set to music in an opera

KEY TERMS

Prima Pratica

Aria

Seconda Pratica

Arioso

Text Painting

Recitative (Recit)

Dissonance(s)

Blank Verse

BREAKING THE RULES OF HARMONY

Dissonance: a combination of two or more tones that, when played together, produce an unpleasant sound

- The distance between two tones is called an interval
- Opposite of dissonance is consonance
- Dissonance in Baroque music rules concerning dissonance/what was allowed

Some examples

WHY USE DISSONANCE?

Monteverdi is using musical elements to portray the text

This is called text painting

- Technique developed in madrigals
- Monteverdi wrote many madrigals

Used to stress/show importance of the most meaningful words of the libretto

Liberate poetic text set to music in an opera
Monteverdi used these dissonances in his operas and his madrigals.

Not everyone was happy about this...

3599 Artusi (theorist) publishes a pamphlet: "On the Imperfections of Modern Music"

This scandal Monteverdi and his brother, Giulio Cesar Monteverdi.

Orfeo's Lament: To et metu

Immediately follows the messenger scene:
- Orfeo is singing about Euridice's death by snakebite
- Very sad
- VERY emotional
- Litan

Civello Caesar Monteverdi responds to Artusi's pamphlet in Monteverdi's next book of madrigals:

Prima Pratica (First Practice) sixteenth-century style of polyphony. Music is more important than the text and must follow its own set of rules (This is what Artusi preferred).

Seconda Pratica (Second Practice) music serves to heighten the affect and rhetorical power of the words, and therefore can break traditional rules. Dissonances can be used to convey the meaning of the text.
Monteverdi's philosophy: the music and the text are equal partners, and when the correct balance was achieved between the two, musical drama can be created.

Text driven music, which drives drama.

Evident in his operatic works.

"THANKS, MAN."

Moving forward...

Concepts from last time:
  • Aria
  • Rondini

As opera develops throughout the century, these types of music continue to develop:

By the 1620s, there are 3 distinct styles: Aria, Arioso, and Recitativo.

Composers blended these styles within operatic scores to form one cohesive unit.

Recitativo

Uses blank verse poetry; sonnet to seven syllable lines, no rhyme scheme.

Through-composed.

"Dialogue" of the opera.

Speech like rhythms.

Little accompaniment beneath vocalist.

Lines of repeated notes, but no repeated text.

Most important and most emotional style.

In depth meter.

Aria

Emerges as its own distinct form in the 1650s

Not the same thing as Cavalli's aria from earlier.

Lyrical lines—no speech-like rhythms.

Usually set to seven or eight syllable lines of poetry (clear rhyme scheme).

Repeated text

Monody.

Repeated notes.

Used for happy moments.

Sing meter.
Last opera

Monteverdi wrote

1647

Act I, scene ii

Blend of recitative, arioso, and aria

Highlights:
- Begin on pp. 38
- Lines

ARIOSO

- Hybrid of aria and recitative: Esatia se nottdale
- Speed-like + Fast harmonic OR Lyrical + slow harmonic
- Repeated text or no repeated text—4 rules
- Through-composed
- Repeated notes
- Troughier to spot, since it has traits of both aria and recit
- Arias and ariosen were both VERY short

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA

- Hybrid of recitative, arioso, and aria

NEXT WEEK

- First public opera house
- Monteverdi’s death
  - Changes made in the generation of composers after Monteverdi
- Development of the aria
HISTORY OF OPERA

The first public opera house, the generation after Monteverdi, and the aria

Monody moves the emotions
- Provides the basis for opera

Seconda Pratica: dissonance allowed to express text

Musical conventions:
- Recitative
- Aria
- Aria

KEY TERMS
- Commission
- Patron
- Public opera house
- Measure

ESTABLISHED SO FAR
- Only men singing
- Five acts
- Chorus sings after main characters have left stage at the end of each act to sum up the situation
- Subject matter: mythological characters
- Operas are commissioned works by wealthy patrons
OPERA IN THE PUBLIC EYE

- Venice, Italy, 1637
- First public opera house opens
- Anyone can go see operas
  - Not just nobility
- Operas are no longer only sponsored by wealthy patrons
- Audience pays the bill for the opera
- Profit becomes an important factor in how operas are written and produced

CHANGES DEVELOP

- Opera is now a public genre and a business
- Inquire some changes
- Subject matter historical figures, less mythology (Monteverdi’s first opera in 1642 was about historical figures Poppea and Nero)
- Costs of operas become smaller
  - Tiny leads (or not) drama and dances
- Operas become shorter
  - 3 acts instead of 5
- Less elaborate costumes and scenery
- Orchestra becomes smaller—just continuo and strings

POST-MONTEVERDI GENERATION

- Monteverdi’s conventions:
  - Text vs music in matters of importance
  - Equal balance between three main elements of opera music:
    - Recitative, text (dialogue)
    - Scenes as a blend of aria, recit, and recitative
    - Short arias and scenes, longer, more emotionally expressive recitatives
- Monteverdi dies in 1643
- Following his death, the balance begins to break down
- Composers have new priorities

THE RISE OF THE ARIA

- Post-Monteverdi composers focus more on music than on the text
  - Recitative: all about the text
    - Aria: more about the music
    - Which one do you think received the most attention now...?
  - Arias become longer, more emotional
  - More instrumental support added to arias
  - Grow from about 6 measures to over 80 measures
    - Measure: musical unit divided by bar lines
THE FALL OF RECITATIVE

- Composers had more interest in the compositional options that aria allowed.
- Recitative became the neglected style, and the following changes develop:
  - Becomes faster
  - Less emotional
    - Just relay plot information
    - Get through quickly to get to the aria
  - Recitative and aria become organic entries
  - Aria begins to die out completely

REDEFINED ROLES

- 25 years past Monteverdi's death, there was a new standard for aria/recit
- Recitative: relay plot information quickly and set up the situation about which the aria will be sung.
- Aria: deeply emotional, most important part of the opera
  - Simple and through-composed
  - Harmonic progression
- Opera scenes follow this pattern
- Recitative, aria, recitative, aria, recitative, aria... on and on

ORNTEA

- Opera by Antonio Cesti, (1623-1669)
  - Post-Monteverdi composer
  - Premiered in 1656
  - Act II, scenes 16 and 17
  - Recitative: If she is false
  - Listen
  - Aria: Intorno all' idola mia
  - Listen (slide 2.39)

NEXT TIME

- The 1700s
- G. F. Handel
- Opera seria
- More on Arias and Recitatives
HISTORY OF OPERA

G. F. Handel, Opera Seria, the Da Capo Aria

KEY TERMS

- Opera Seria
- Da Capo Aria
- Ornamentation
- Mefistos
- Diva

OPERA AT MIDCENTURY

- Flourishes in Venice, Italy, within the city's many opera houses
- Spreads to Naples, Milan, and Florence
- Opera is a public genre
- Public is fascinated by two elements
- The singers
- The arias

THE PRIMA DONNA

- Ca. 1650 women gain recognition as opera singers
- Anna Renzi, leading lady of the Venetian stage
- Singers gain renown, rise in popularity
  - Diva
- Public idolizes these figures—press attention
- When a singer gains renown, she can start to demand that composers and librettists start writing roles to suit her specific abilities
VIRTUOSIC ABILITIES

- Sopranos were the most revered kind of singers
- Especially those capable of singing fast, ornamented, melismatic passages
- Ornamented: embellished melodic lines
- Melismatic (Melismas): singing multiple notes on one word
- Audiences become less interested in operatic plots
- More concerned with their favorite stars and the new arias they are singing.

MELISMAS

CHANGES TO THE ARIA

- As composers wished to showcase opera singers' abilities, a new convention emerged
- The Da Capo Aria became the new standard of aria composition around 1700
  - Da Capo: "back to top"
- Three-part form:
  - A major emotion is presented through a melody. Small amount of text, usually repeated multiple times
  - If contrasting emotion is presented through a contrasting melody. New text.
  - A return of A section, only the word line is highly embellished

ORNAMENTS/ORNAMENTATION

- Ornamented line (sung when the section of the aria is repeated)
- "Affanni del pensiero" by Handel
DA CAPO ARIA

- "Se bramate d'amor"
  - From: "Love" by GF Handel
  - A section: Se bramate d'amor, chi si ignora vola adagnarvi, a rime non so
  - B section: La vostra si creder me l'insegna, torno falso, o quel'llima non poi.
  - AC same text as A, but with ornaments

OPERA SERIA

- The Da Capo Aria became an important element of opera seria
  - Most popular/most recognized of opera of the late 1600s-early 1700s
  - It uses plots concerning historical figures or mythological beings (sometimes both)
  - 3 acts
  - Act 1: Longest, introduces main characters, introduces plot
    - Act 2: The plot thickens, follows a new murder
    - Act 3: Resolves conflict, and simply "shoves out"
  - Support alternation between recitative and aria
  - Sequences and continuos song the best roles

G. F. HANDEL

- Born in Germany (1685-1759)
  - Performed first opera at age 19
  - Completed his education in Italy
  - Learned how to write Italian operas
  - Moved to London
  - Began composing operas for the Royal Academy (1728-29)
  - 8 new operas world premiere per season
  - Compositional style blended Italian, German, and French conventions
  - Composed with the public in mind
  - Very popular

HANDEL'S CONVENTIONS

- Two types of recitatives:
  - Simple recitatives: little orchestral accompaniment
  - Accompanied recitatives: full orchestration beneath vocal line
  - Handel introduces acts, narrations, and action (which in this point are just shorter arias in his scenes, emission of Montevideo
  - Instrumental interludes to mark important plot movement, battles, declarations, etc.
  - Larger orchestras
  - No ensemble in choirs larger than a duet
Royal Academy dissolved by 1729
- Struggled financially due to singers' rising salaries
- Rise of English opera
  - The English did not like castrati and wanted operas written in their own language
- Handel focuses on another genre: the sacred oratorio
  - Messiah, for example
- Handel's later operas do not match the success of his earlier works

Next Time
- Opera moves to France!
- Jean-Baptiste Lully and French opera
HISTORY OF OPERA

Jean-Baptiste Lully and French Opera

KEY TERMS

- Commedia dell'arte
- Tragedie-en-musique
- Ballet
- Aria
- Rondel
- Divertissement

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

- (1632-1687)
- Born in Florence, Italy
- Composed in France
- King Louis XIV’s favorite composer
- Considered the quintessential French operatic composer
- Wrote ballets, serious ballet (ballets with stories/spoken dialogue), and tragedie-en-musique (French Opera)

FRENCH OPERA

- Lully writes the first French opera in 1673
- 73 years after the first Italian opera
- What took the French so long to develop their own opera?
  - Strong ballet tradition
  - Early operas performed in Italian were met with artistic and political resistance
  - French: poetry > music, Italian: music > poetry
- A typical tragedie-en-musique:
  - Overture (forewarning entry of the king)
  - Prologue (dedicated to glorifying the king)
  - Acts, divided into scenes
FRENCH OPERA

Components of scenes:
- Recitativo
  - Like Italian recitatives, but modified musically to accommodate the French language
- Aria
  - More musical than recitative
  - Staccato or legato vocal writing
- Récit en chœur
  - Like Italian recitativo—monarchical interlude

THE LIBRETTI

- Lully's librettist was Philippe Quinault
- Quinault cleverly wove political propaganda (favoring the king) into the operatic plots
- Ideal, well-ordered, disciplined society
- Mythological settings enforced Louis XIV's attempts to draw parallels between his kingdom and Ancient Greece and Rome

DIVERTISSEMENTS

- Literally translates to "diversion"
- Contains chorus, ballet dancing, singing, and other scenic spectacular events
- Occurred at the center or end of every act
- The librettist had to link the divertissement to the rest of the plot
- These were the crowd-pleasers!

ARMIDE, 1686

- Considered to be Lully and Quinault's finest work
- Divertissement from the end of Act II
  - Sorceress Armide commands her army of demons to put the hero Renaud to death
- Plot focuses more on psychological development of the main character (Armide)
- This was way ahead of its time!
• Another era of reformation: Gluck and Calzabigi's problems with opera seria
• Gluck's Iphigénie
• Opera and the Enlightenment: change of plot
• The rise of comic opera in the galant/classical period
HISTORY OF OPERA

GALANT STYLE
GALANT STYLE, GLUCK & CALZABIGI'S REFORMS, AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

GALANT STYLE

- 1720-1780
- Beginning of the Classical era—transition from Baroque to Classical
- Began as a rebellion against Baroque painting
  - Dramatic elements, movement, chiaroscuro: light/dark contrast
  - Baroque music was too complicated, embellished, and ornamented
  - Music should not be mentally taxing—relaxed, casual
  - No precise definition or translation—the word was used for anything good, fashionable, important
  - Like “cool” or “bae” are used today

BAROQUE VS. GALANT STYLE
(IN TERMS OF “ORNAMENTATION”)

WATTEAU, “THE MUSIC PARTY”
CA. 1718

Music serves a social purpose—meant to be enjoyed as an uncomplicated background element of life
by the connoisseur paying attention to the lute player.
GALANT OPERA

- Johann Adolf Hasse
- Cleofide
- "Dpigli ch'io son fedele"
- 1731
- Opera seria
- How does this sound different than Handel's aria from last week?
- Simpler vocal line
- Shorter phrases
- Less elaborate melismas
- Lighter accompaniment
- Less complex accompaniment
- Italian Opera Seria was still being written in the galant style

PROBLEMS WITH OPERA SERIA

- Early Classical composers think that opera seria needs to be reformed
- Plots are too convoluted and the pacing is too slow
- Composers wanted to make the storyline more interesting
- Librettist Pietro Metastasio streamlines opera seria
- Cut out unimportant characters
- Only unnecessary plot lines
- Writes 27 3-act librettos that composers turn into over 800 operas
- Other composers start to wonder if the music is the problem
- Recit. aria, recit. aria, recit. aria, repeat... for 5 hours
- By the end of the Baroque era, the music was back to driving the text, instead of the text driving the music

OPERA AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- Enlightenment principles:
  - Reason and observation
  - Natural law/rights/improving the human condition
  - Expression of emotions in a natural way
- Classical composers believed that opera seria's rigid forms were not allowing for this natural expression
- 1750s—reforms to opera
  - More natural
  - Modified, simplified da capo aria
  - Influence from French opera, which was more dramatic, expressive, and flowed more naturally than Italian opera
  - Orchestra and chorus play a larger role in the drama

GLUCK AND CALZABIGI'S REFORMS

- Christoph Willibald Gluck and Raniero Calzabigi
- Composer and Librettist
- Working in Vienna
  - Many opera houses—exposure to French, Italian, and German opera
  - Their operas are a synthesis of these three styles
- No more da capo aria
  - "A beautiful simplicity"
  - No ornaments unless they are dramatically significant
  - More accompanied recitative to blend with arias more naturally
  - Orchestra contributes the the mood of the scene
  - Before this, no one listened to the orchestral overture. Now, the overture contributed to the drama of the opera's first scene
  - Chorus is back and can interact with main character while the main character is singing
  - Plot unfolds more naturally and evenly
GLUCK AND CALZABIGI'S CHANGES

• This is a big deal!
• Gluck is asking everyone to change their behavior
  • Audiences
  • Composers
  • Singers
  • Not everyone thought that opera needed to be “fixed”
• Wrote two operas together:
  • Orfeo ed Euridice (1762)
  • Alceste (1767)
• Became very famous
• While in Paris, Gluck published the libretto to Alceste
  • The preface explains how he alone reformed opera seria
  • Calzabigi is not amused.

L'ORFEO REVISITED

• Act II, Scene I
• Orchestra and chorus open Act II and set the mood
  • Orfeo is in hell
  • Chorus sings
  • Orfeo’s aria
  • Simple
  • Unembellished
  • Chorus is involved in the aria
• 1760s—nearing the end of the galant, so Gluck’s music is more complex than Hasse’s

NEXT TIME...

• While opera seria was changing, comic opera was becoming its own entity
• Italy: intermezzo, opera buffa
• France: opera comique
• England: ballad opera
• Germany: Singspiel
• Comic opera + Gluck’s reforms = opera in Mozart’s era
INTERMEZZO

- Type of Italian comic opera
- Performed in 2 or 3 segments
- These segments were performed between the acts of an opera seria production
- Developed due to the purging of comic characters/plots from opera seria
- Intermezzi gave comic characters their own plot
- Plots were unrelated to opera seria they accompanied
- 2-3 characters
- Often parodied the dramatic and musical excess of opera seria
- Aimed toward a middle-class audience
  - Depicted ordinary people in everyday situations

COMIC OPERA EMERGES

- 1700
  - Opera seria and comic opera separate to become their own genres
  - Why?
    - Pietro Metastasio (librettist) streamlined opera seria
    - Following the teachings of Aristotle
    - Metastasio’s changes led to comic elements being cut from opera seria plots
    - Counteraction: opera houses in Naples and Venice develop comic operas called *intermezzi* (intermezzo)
      - These operas often offer social criticism of some kind

PERGOLESI

- Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736)
- Primary composer of early 18th-Century intermezzi
- *La serva padrona* (1733)
- 3 characters
  - Uberto—bass
  - Serpina—soprano
  - Vespone—mute
- Plot questions social hierarchy
  - Uberto’s aria: “Son imbrogliato io”
  - Comic bass—basses can have lead roles in comic operas
  - Uberto sings about being all mixed up
  - Different orchestral textures and fluctuating tempo contribute to the confused mood
  - Range
  - Different from a Handel aria—does not follow da capo form.
  - More experimentation in comic opera
OPERA BUFFA

- Blanket term that describes different genres of comic opera:
  - Dramma giocoso (Jesting drama)
  - Dramma comico (Comic drama)
  - Commedia per musica (Comedy in music)
- All are full-length works (unlike intermezzi) with 6 or more singing characters
- Sung throughout (other countries didn’t do this)
- Plots: ordinary people in the present day
- Questioned social hierarchy, echoing Enlightenment principles:
  - Are the nobles the most ethical?
  - Are the nobles the smartest?

OPERA BUFFA

- Characters:
  - Servants
  - Caricatures of aristocrats
  - Vain divas
  - Old men
  - Deceitful husbands and wives
  - Bumbling physicians
  - Boring lawyers
  - Pompous military commanders
- Lower class usually outsmarts the nobility
- These characters are derived from the 16th-Century genre of Italian improv comedy, Commedia dell’arte

OPERA BUFFA ARIAS AND RECIT

- Rapid-fire recitative
- Usually only piano accompaniment
- Most arias are written in da capo form, but in the galant style
- Short, tuneful, repeated phrases
- Simple accompaniment
- Comedic equivalent to the Hasse aria from last time
- Leonardo Vinci (1696-1730)
- Composer from Naples
- Pioneered comic opera arias
- Some followed da capo style with full string accompaniment
- Others were simpler, shorter, and had only piano accompaniment

LATER ITALIAN COMIC OPERA

- Comic opera genres (intermezzi and opera buffa) continue to develop throughout the 18th Century
- Ca. 1750
- Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793)
- Italian dramatist who changed libretti yet again
- Introduced serious, sentimental, or woeful sub-plots into comic opera
- Ensemble Finale
  - Begins to appear in the operas of Logroscino and Galuppi
  - End of each act
  - All characters appear on stage while the action continues
- Become more animated until all singers are on stage and singing together
FRENCH COMIC OPERA

• French version of comic opera was called Opéra-comique
• Began to develop ca. 1710
• Main composer was Jean-Jacques Rousseau
• Loved Italian melody and emotion
• Italian musical inspiration ca. 1750 inspires the French genre's growth
• Plot content was inspired by French vaudeville acts
• Opéra comique productions were a mix of singing and spoken dialogue

GERMAN COMIC OPERA

• Singspiel: opera with spoken dialogue, musical numbers, and usually a comic plight
• Johann Adam Hiller was the main composer of Singspiel
• Featured a blend of music: German folk songs, Lutheran hymn/chorale tunes, some Italian-style arias
• Plots were German folk tales, often concerning some kind of supernatural element
• Ballets
• Spoken dialogue
• Singspiel was a mix of German, Italian, and French comic opera

NEXT TIME
HISTORY OF OPERA

The Late Classical and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

LATE CLASSICAL

- Mid 18th Century
- Ca. 1730, Czech composer Johann Stamitz begins directing the Mannheim orchestra
- Advanced, professional orchestra
  - Capable wind players
  - Strings are the predominant instrument of the Early Classical (Galant) era
  - Winds are just beginning to develop
- Since Stamitz had a skilled orchestra at his disposal, he could write more complex music for them to play
- This, and other reasons, led to a change in style that impacted all genres of music

CHARACTERISTICS

- Late Classical music:
- Larger orchestra
  - More emphasis on wind instruments
- More complex musical texture
  - Less homophony, more polyphony
- More attention to form and structure
  - Sonata form
- Arias, on the other hand, adhere less to the Da Capo form

MOZART: CHILD PRODIGY

- Born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756
- One of the most influential composers of the Late Classical Era
- Leopold Mozart
  - Mozart's father
  - Violinist and composer for the archbishop of Salzburg
  - Recognized his son and daughter's musical talent from an early age
- Both children were keyboard prodigies
- Took young Mozart and his sister Nannerl on tour throughout Europe
CHILD PRODIGY

- Young Mozart was also a violin prodigy
- Tested by musical experts of the day—all concluded that he was a genius
- In addition to touring the royal courts of Europe, Mozart was busy composing his first works
- Misses at age 5
- Symphony at age 9
- Opera at age 12
- All this travelling exposed young Mozart to music from all over the world

TEENS AND TWENTIES

- The most common way for a composer to earn a living in the 18th Century was by working for a patron or institution
- At age 16, Mozart was appointed to the archbishop of Salzburg's court
- Mozart rebelled against the rules and captivity
- Sought a position elsewhere, but failed
- Composed church music for the archbishop for eight years
- Received an offer to write an opera seria for an opera house in Munich
  - *Llomonos, 1781*

FREELANCING

- Left the bishop's employ and moved to Vienna to be a freelance musician
- Works on commissions
- Self-employed
- Mozart gave concerts to premier his own works
- Taught piano lessons
- Second opera, a *Singvogel*, in 1782
  - *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
- Appointed to Emperor Joseph II's court in 1787
- Court musician

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND DEATH

- Vienna suffered an economic depression in the late 1780s—early 1790s
- Mozart began to lose money
  - Fewer concerts
  - Fewer pupils
  - Increased living expenses
  - Gambling debts
- Died in 1791 while writing a *Requiem* (death mass)
  - Cause of death is still unknown
- Mozart's wife, Constanze, managed to save the family and estate from financial ruin following her husband's death
## Mozart's Music

- Joseph Haydn, fellow Classical composer, wrote, "Posterity will not see such a great talent again in 100 years."
- Credited with over 600 works
  - Chamber music
  - Orchestral music
  - Songs (Lieder)
  - Opera
  - Church music
  - Piano sonatas, concertos, etc.

## Musical Style

- Influenced by three major composers: JS Bach, Handel, Haydn
- Mozart's fondness of Bach's polyphonic, more complex writing helped usher in the Late Classical style and break away from the gallant
- Hallmarks of Late Classical style:
  - Clarity
  - Balance
  - Transparency
- Mozart's music appears to be simple, but his compositions are some of the most complex works ever written

## Operas

- Mozart wrote in the three major operatic genres of his time:
  - Opera seria
  - Opera buffa
  - Singspiel
- Most famous opera seria, Idomeneo, shows evidence of Gluck's influence and French operatic elements
- The Singspiel Die Entführung aus dem Serail is hailed for its fully-developed Turkish characters
- Mozart's musical choices help establish these characters and their personalities

## Operas

- Mozart wanted his music to capture characters' personalities and feelings
  - Choice of range for the singer
  - Choice of orchestral texture
  - Choice of tempo
  - Harmonic and melodic choices
- Mozart's comic operas continue to blend serious and comic genres
  - Comic characters
  - Serious characters
  - Mezzo carattere, middle-ground character who is both serious and funny
MOZART'S COMIC OPERAS

- Collaborated with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte
- Augmented social issues between classes
- Introduces moral issues
- Greater character depth
- Mozart expands upon the libretto through his arias, duets, trios, and ensemble finales
- These musical elements add even greater depth of character and make interactions between them more dramatic—and comic
- One of the most famous Mozart/da Ponte collaborations was Le Nozze di Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro), 1786
- Based on a French play that the Emperor had banned in Vienna

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

- Sextet from Act III, "Riconosci in questo amplexo"
- Figaro has just discovered that Bartolo and Marcellina, his two former enemies, are actually his parents
- Susanna, Figaro's fiancée, arrives and is confused (and outraged) to see him embracing another woman
- The Count and Don Curzio are irritated that Figaro, a servant, now has social status
- Mozart manages to encompass all of these contradicting emotions and make them work together in this ensemble
History of Opera

Mozart and Da Ponte: 
Cosi fan tutte and Don Giovanni

In association: 
Die Zauberflöte

Da Ponte’s Libretti

- Da Ponte’s collaborations with Mozart highlight his political beliefs
- Questioning the European oligarchy
- Effects of the Enlightenment and Renaissance
- Championed the French Revolution and the American Revolution
- Influenced by Venice—the city’s moral/ethical code that both permitted and condemned degenerate behavior
- Librettist depict characters of different social classes
- Lower classes have greater moral/ethical qualities than those of higher social standing
- Known for his ability to fuse the comedic with the dramatic and depict characters who possessed both comedic and serious qualities

Lorenzo Da Ponte

- 1749-1838
- Born in Venice, Italy
- Jewish heritage
- Converted to Catholicism
- Took minor orders in the Catholic church
- Had affairs/organized a brothel
- Banned from Venice for 15 years
- After some travelling, he settled in Vienna
- Collaborated with Mozart for Cosi Fan Tutte, Le Nozze di Figaro, and Don Giovanni
- Married a Roman Catholic
- Moved to America in 1805
- Professor of Italian literature at Columbia College
- Established an opera house/company in New York that was a predecessor to the Metropolitan Opera

Cosi fan tutte

(Opera buffa (1789)
- Considered the most scandalous of the Mozart/ Da Ponte collaborations
- Tells of two couples
- Fiordiligia and Gonzilino
- Dorabella and Ferrando
- Gonzilino and Ferrando make a bet with an old philosopher, Don Alfonso, that each man can make the other man’s fiancée fall in love with him
- Mistaken identity/disguises...chaos and hilarity ensues
Così fan tutte
(Women are like that)
- Da Ponte’s mistress sang the role of Fiordiligi
  - Mozart didn’t like her, so to make fun of her, he wrote her an aria (“Come scaglia”) with lots of extreme range jumps in it
  - She had a habit of dipping her chin on low notes and throwing her head back on high notes, so Mozart wanted her to bob her head like a chicken on stage
- The theme of “fiancé swapping” has origins as early as the 13th Century
  - Boccaccio’s Decameron
  - Shakespeare’s Cymbeline

Don Giovanni
- (1787)
  - In this collaboration, Da Ponte and Mozart were able to explore the interactions among social classes more thoroughly than ever before
  - Treat Don Giovanni as a serious character
    - Previous depictions had characterized him as comical/farcical
  - Incorporate elements of opera seria into a comic opera (dramma giocoso)

Don Giovanni
- Three levels of characters:
  - Donna Anna and other nobles
  - Leporello (Don Giovanni’s servant) and the peasants
  - Marked by the buffoonery of opera buffa, although they still are clever and moral
- Don Giovanni and Donna Elvira
  - Don Giovanni: duplicitous seducer who can be both comic and serious
  - Donna Elvira: Don Giovanni’s former lover; she takes herself seriously, but is really a comic character
- Da Ponte depicts these differences in the libretto
  - Mozart expresses them musically

Don Giovanni
- Act I finale
- Blending of social classes
  - Mozart composes a finale that features three dance bands playing on stage
  - Each band plays music to represent the characters’ different social classes
    - Nobles: minuet
    - Don Giovanni: contredanse
    - Servants/Peasants: rustic waltz
### Die Zauberflöte
*(The Magic Flute)*

- Mozart's final opera
- Singspiel: comic opera with German text
- Spoken dialogue instead of recitative
- The quality of Mozart's music designates this work as the first great German opera
- Paves the way for German Romantic opera composers Weber, Mendelssohn, and Wagner
- Mozart interweaves elements from different genres:
  - Italian opera seria
  - German folk music
  - Solo aria
  - Buffo ensemble
  - German recitative (a new convention)
  - Solemn choral scenes

### Next time...
- Don Giovanni overview

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### Die Zauberflöte
*(The Magic Flute)*

- Supernatural elements
- *Queen of the Night* aria
- Famous soprano aria
- ...you'll see why
History of Opera
Don Giovanni Synopsis

Characters
- **Don Giovanni**: young, extremely promiscuous nobleman
- **Leporello**: Don Giovanni's servant
- **Il Commendatore (Don Pedro)**: elderly nobleman/officer
- **Donna Anna**: Don Pedro's daughter, engaged to Don Ottavio
- **Don Ottavio**: Donna Anna's fiancé
- **Donna Elvira**: one of Don Giovanni's bitter ex-girlfriends
- **Zerlina**: beautiful, sassy peasant girl
- **Masetto**: Zerlina's fiancé, also a peasant

**Act I**
- **Spain, 1600s**
- **Scene 1**: Leporello complains about his current life as Don Giovanni's servant. Don Giovanni (masked) enters, followed by Donna Anna, whom he's been trying to seduce. At her cries for help, her father, the Commendatore, appears. DG kills the Commendatore and escapes with Leporello. Donna Anna and her fiancé, Don Ottavio, swear vengeance on the unknown murderer.

- **Scene 2**: DG and Leporello hear a woman singing about being abandoned by her lover. DG attempts to seduce her, only to realize that it is his former lover, Donna Elvira. She is livid, and DG runs away, leaving Leporello with her. Leporello tells Donna Elvira that DG is not worth her time and informs her about DG's extensive sexual history.
- **Scene 3**: Masetto and Zerlina's wedding. DG arrives and sends everyone back to the castle for a reception so that he can seduce Zerlina. He is nearly successful when Donna Anna and Elvira arrive and take Zerlina away. Donna Anna and Don Ottavio enter, plotting revenge for the Commendatore's murder. They plead to DG for help, unaware that he is the murderer, but then Donna Anna recognizes him. Meanwhile, the reception has not been going well, but DG isn't troubled. He tells Leporello to throw a party and invite every girl he can find.
Act 1

- Scene 4: Zerlina tries to pacify Masetto, only to be interrupted by DG. He tries to seduce Zerlina again after Masetto runs away and hides, but once he discovers Masetto, he returns Zerlina to him. Three masked figures appear (Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, and Don Ottavio) and Leporello invites them to DG's party.

- Scene 5: At the party, DG attempts to seduce Zerlina again, but she screams and he is discovered. He blames Leporello, but Don Ottavio, Donna Anna, and Donna Elvira unmask and tell the guests everything. DG escapes.

Act 2

- Scene 1: Outside of Donna Elvira's window, DG and Leporello swap clothes so that DG can seduce Donna Elvira's maid. Leporello, dressed as DG, lure Donna Elvira into the street and leads her away. Masetto and his friends arrive, looking for DG. Since DG is dressed as Leporello, they do not recognize him. He says he also hates DG and joins their search party. Then, he takes Masetto's weapons and beats him up. Zerlina arrives and consoles Masetto.

- Scene 2: Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Zerlina, and Masetto find Leporello with Donna Elvira. Leporello's true identity is revealed; he begs for mercy, and runs away. Don Ottavio is convinced that DG murdered the Commendatore, and he swears vengeance (again). Donna Elvira has conflicted feelings about DG.

Act 2 Finale

- Scene 5: At dinner, DG listens to music as he dines. Donna Elvira arrives and begs him to change his ways because she loves him. He laughs her off and tells her that he will never change. When she leaves, DG hears her scream with terror and asks Leporello to go see what is wrong. He returns, terrified; the statues has arrived for dinner. An ominous knocking sounds at the door, and DG answers it to reveal the statue. The Commendatore statue offers DG one last chance to repent; DG refuses. A chorus of demons carry DG to hell.
Act 2 Finale

• All of the main characters return to find Leporello hiding under the dining room table. Don Ottavio and Donna Anna will be marrying when Anna's year of mourning is over. Donna Elvira will be joining a convent. Zerlina and Masetto will go home for dinner. Leporello leaves to go to a tavern in search of a better master.

• The End