OPERA ACROSS MEDIA
Signature Course
M/W 3:00-4:20
Logan 901, Penthouse
MUSI 25020/1, TAPS 26516/1, CMST 24617/1, SIGN 26058/1, ITAL 25020/1

Instructor
Prof. Martha Feldman
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Office hours: Monday, 4:30-5:30 (at Logan Café) or by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
“Opera is a type of theater in which most or all of the characters sing most or all of the time.” So write Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker in their recent history of opera. Opera, they note, is also both outlandishly expensive and widely beloved (and often fetishized). But there is something else opera is: an object of radical cultural translation, exported to and from different literary genres (novels, plays, fairy tales, myths, epics) and to different lands and
languages (French, Italian, Chinese, German, Spanish, Russian, Swedish, Korean), as well as being a form that has been continually remade in different genres, from Singspiel to opera buffa, opera seria to intermezzo, opera to operetta or farce, Peking opera to kunqu. Added to such exports and translations, especially since the late 19th to early 20th centuries, have been new mass reproduced and broadcast forms of opera, using new technological means.

What does the assemblage of cultural markers that have long characterized opera production and consumption have to do with the new affordances given opera in the era of film, digital HD live streaming, radio broadcasts, cinecasts, and podcasts, as well as experimental “mediatized” stagings of all kinds? Where do these stand amid the extremes of extravagant performance supposedly inherent to opera and “realism” supposedly intrinsic to cinema (a dichotomy that will quickly break down under scrutiny)? This course will address those questions by looking at opera as something that exists “across media,” thereby experiencing its rich possibilities for remaking and transformation.

Keystone works will include Verdi’s La traviata (1853) as directed for film by Zeffirelli (1981), Mozart’s Magic Flute (1791) as directed for television by Ingmar Bergman (1975), Offenbach’s The Tales of Hoffmann (1881), directed as “ballet opera” by Powell and Pressburger (1951), Don Giovanni (1787) as directed for film on location by Joseph Losey (1979), Fellini’s opera-infused film And the Ship Sails on (1981). Other works, many less canonical, will flesh out the course.

No prior background in music performance, theory, or notation is needed. Students may write papers based on their own skills and interests relevant to the course. All materials will be made available in English translation. The course is open to all College students.

BOOK FOR PURCHASE

REQUIRED SCREENINGS
N.B. All screenings will take place in Cobb 307, the Film Screening Room, at 7 pm on Mondays.

On the even numbered weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8, films of whole operas will be screened, ones we will attend to both as works in their own right (insofar as such a thing is possible) and as mediated and remediated interpretations and recontextualizations. On odd numbered weeks and in week 10, films will pertain to operatic figures of various kind: a diva (Maria by Callas), a castrato (Farinelli), a Chinese operatic ghost (Human Demon Woman), an obsessive opera fan (Diva), and a cremated diva, buried at sea (E la nave va [And the Ship Sails on]). Following is the list of screenings. See the numbers after the authors and titles for the length of time the screening will take:
Week 2  Verdi, *La traviata* [Venice, 1853] (dir. Franco Zeffirelli, 1983), 1'45"
Week 3  *Maria by Callas: In Her Own Words* (dir. Tom Volf, 2017), 1'59"
Week 4  Mozart, *The Magic Flute* [Vienna, 1791] (dir. Ingmar Bergman, 1975), 2'15"
Week 5  *Farinelli* (dir. Gérard Corbiau, 1994), 1'51"
Week 7  *Woman Demon Human* (dir. Huang Shuqin, 1987), 1'55"
Week 8  Mozart, *Don Giovanni* [Prague, 1787] (dir. Joseph Losey, 1979), 3'5"
Week 9  *Diva* (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1982), 1'57"
Week 10  *E la nave va* [And the Ship Sails on] (dir. Federico Fellini, 1983), 2'8"

**ATTENDANCE AT OPERAS**
1. Met HD screening of a live performance, details of place, time, and tickets to be arranged ASAP but will include attendance at one of the following plus a post addressing a question about the experience. Choose the one you will attend early.
   a. October 12, Puccini, *Turandot*
   b. October 26, Massenet, *Manon*
   c. November 9, Puccini, *Madame Butterfly*
2. One Lyric Opera of Chicago performance of Mozart and Da Ponte’s *Don Giovanni*, to take place at Thursday, Nov. 14 at 7 pm (tickets to be arranged)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**
1. Preparation of study questions
2. Overall attendance and engagement in class
3. Reading, listening, and watching operas
4. Attendance at screenings (9 in all)
5. Weekly paragraph-length posts on particular questions, to be supplied one class session in advance of their due date
6. Attendance at two operas, as above (i.e. one Met broadcast and one live)
7. A short midterm paper [“think piece”] (ca. 3-4 pp., roughly 1000-1200 words)
8. A final project, for which there are two options:
   a) A final paper on a topic of your choice (roughly 10 pp., or 2000-2500 words)
   b) A creative project inspired by and responding to the course, which will include a project narrative and bibliography, and if appropriate, a final class presentation. Advance approval by instructor required. Projects might include a performance, an original libretto scene, a dramaturgical or scenographic stage plotting of an act of an opera, etc.

**GRADING**
Grades will be based on the following:
- 45% preparation, attendance (including at screenings), engagement, and Canvas posts
- 15% midterm paper
• 40% final project

CLASS COMMUNITY GUIDELINES:
Electronic devices and other class protocols
This is a wireless class. Please print out pages from readings and bring them to class in hard copy. Or make notes on passages you want to discuss, including relevant page numbers from readings.

The following are protocols for our classroom:
• Take notes on paper, not on computer.
• Cell phones must be turned off and stowed in backpacks or beneath your seat during class. If you are texting in class or otherwise using your phone in class, or looking things up on another device in class, you will be counted as absent (!).
• No wireless earbuds.
• Please eat before or after class (drinks only, please). Let us know if your schedule allows you no other time to eat.
• Make every effort to avoid being late as this interrupts others’ listening and discussion.
• Whenever possible use bathroom and water fountain between classes, so that you can concentrate continually throughout the time we have together and avoid leaving class.

Attendance in this class is essential and expected. Please use the bathroom and the water fountain before or after class whenever possible.

DISABILITY STATEMENT
Students with physical or cognitive disabilities should speak with me early on about their needs. If this applies to you, please understand that you are responsible for informing me as early as possible about anything that may negatively affect your ability to perform in the course. Without timely prior notification, it may be difficult or impossible to adjust the due dates of assignments, to reschedule examinations, or to make other reasonable accommodations, as needed. Thank you in advance for working with me or a TA about this.

WEEKLY PLAN
N.B. Class sessions are oriented around the operas, operatic productions, and opera-inflected films, tv films, etc. that we will view and study. For bibliographic information on assigned readings and further readings, please see the Selective Bibliography at the end of this document.

WEEK 1
Oct. 2  **Introduction**: Opera as aesthetic object, fetish object, cultural object, dramaturgical form, event, and institution
LISTENING/VIEWING: excerpts from early 20th century operatic shorts; audio examples of arias and ensemble pieces

**WEEK 2**

Oct. 7  **Verdi’s La traviata, 1**
READING AND DISCUSSION: libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, for Verdi’s *La Traviata* (Venice, 1853)
RECOMMENDED READING: Abbate and Parker, *The History of Opera*, Introduction, 1-35 (highly recommended if you know nothing about opera)
IN-CLASS LISTENING: Verdi, *La traviata* (1853), act 1

**MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:**
Giuseppe Verdi, *La traviata* [Venice, 1853], (dir. Franco Zeffirelli, 1983)

Oct. 9  **Verdi’s La traviata, 2**
RECOMMENDED READING: Giorgio Biancorosso, “The Big Screen and Verdi’s Stage”
IN-CLASS LISTENING: Verdi, *La traviata*, act 2; excerpts from the Marx Brothers, *A Night at the Opera* (1935)

Sat., Oct. 12: Puccini, Turandot, Met Live in HD

**WEEK 3**

Oct. 14  **Verdi’s La traviata, 3 [Darren]**
READING: Heather Hadlock, “Violetta’s Passion, according to Zeffirelli”
RECOMMENDED READING: Tambling, *Opera, Ideology, and Film*, pp. 00-00
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: *La traviata*, act 3

**MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:**
*Maria by Callas: In Her Own Words* (dir. Tom Volf, 2017), 1’59”

Oct. 16  **Callas’s Paris concert, 1958, and the Lisbon Traviata**
RECOMMENDED READING: Will Crutchfield, “The Story of a Voice”
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: Callas’s Paris concert, 1958: Bellini’s “Casta diva,” (Callas and Caballé compared); Puccini’s “Vissi d’arte,”; Lisbon *Traviata* “Addio del passato”

**WEEK 4**

Oct. 21  **Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte [The Magic Flute], 1**
READING: Emanuel Schikaneder, libretto for Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte [The Magic Flute], Vienna, 1791
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: excerpts from Bergman’s Magic Flute

MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:
Mozart, The Magic Flute [Vienna, 1791] (dir. Ingmar Bergman, 1975), 2'15"

Oct. 23 Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte [The Magic Flute], 2

Sat., Oct. 26, Massenet, Manon, Met Live in HD

WEEK 5
Oct. 28 The Castrato
READING/VIEWING: Martha Feldman, “Castrato Acts”;
“https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MVjNEEMwTc, conversation on castrati with Roger Freitas, Suzanne Cusick, and Emily Wilbourne
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: selected castrato arias, staged and unstaged; reconstructed voices seen in strobes and televised projects

MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:
Farinelli (dir. Gérard Corbiau, 1994), 1’51”

Oct. 30 Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte [The Magic Flute], 3 [David]
READING: Sheila Boniface Davies and James Q. Davies, “So Take This Magic Flute and Blow. It Will Protect Us As We Go’: Impempe Yomlingo (2007–11) and South Africa’s Ongoing Transition”;
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: South African Magic Flutes, including South African artist William Kentridge’s production:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKzcbEb714
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpyLM4t_5U8

WEEK 6
Nov. 4 The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger), 1: puppetry, automatons, and the uncanny
READING: Marcia Citron, When Opera Meets Film, pp. 112-41
RECOMMENDED READING: Abbate, In Search of Opera, preface, vii-xvi
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger)

MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:
Nov. 6  The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger), 2, life and death
READING: Babbington and Evans, “Matters of Life and Death in Powell and Pressburger’s The Tales of Hoffmann” (1994)
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger)

Friday, Nov. 8, 9 pm, midterm think piece due

Sat., Nov. 9, Puccini, Madame Butterfly, Met Live in HD

WEEK 7
Nov. 11  The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger), 3, opera/film
READING: Lesley Stern, “The Tales of Hoffmann: An Instance of Operality” (electronic resource)
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: The Tales of Hoffmann (Powell and Pressburger)

MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:
Woman, Demon, Human (dir. Huang Shuqin, 1987), 1'55"

Nov. 13  Woman, Demon, Human (1987)
RECOMMENDED READING: Berry and Farquhar, “Operatic Modes: Opera Film, Martial Arts, and Cultural Nationalism”
LISTENING/VIEWING: excerpts from Woman, Demon, Human and excerpts from John Adams, Nixon in China (Houston, 1987) (Metropolitan Opera live recording)

Thurs., Nov. 14: class trip to Lyric Opera of Chicago, Mozart’s Don Giovanni

WEEK 8
Nov. 18  Don Giovanni, 1
READING: Lorenzo Da Ponte, libretto to Don Giovanni (1787)
RECOMMENDED READING: Wayne Koestenbaum, The Queen’s Throat, Chap. 6, “The Unspeakable Marriage of Words and Music”
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: Don Giovanni, Overture, Introduzione, and “Catalogue aria”

MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:
Mozart, Don Giovanni [Prague, 1787] (Joseph Losey, 1979), 3'5"

Nov. 20  Don Giovanni, 2
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: Don Giovanni, act 2 sextet, etc.

**WEEK 9**
**Nov. 25**  *Don Giovanni*, 3 [Darren]
READING: “Kierkegaard’s Don Giovanni,” in Piero Weiss, *Opera: A History in Documents*
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: excerpts from Act 2; excerpts from *Juan* (directed by Kaspar Holten, 2010)

**MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:**
*Diva* (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1982)

Nov. 27 [no class, Happy Thanksgiving!]

**WEEK 10**
**Dec. 2**  *The Diva, dead or alive* [David]
Melina Esse, “The Silent Diva: Farrar’s Carmen”
RECOMMENDED READING: David Levin, “Is There a Text in this Libido? *Diva* and the Rhetoric of Contemporary Opera Criticism”
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: excerpts from Cecil B. DeMille, *Carmen* (1915) and *A Burlesque on Carmen* (Charlie Chaplin, 1915)

**MONDAY NIGHT SCREENING:**
*Week 10  E la nave va* [And the Ship Sails on] (dir. Federico Fellini, 1983)

**Dec. 4**  *And the Ship Sails on*
READING: Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera*, Chap. 6, “Fellini’s Ashes”
IN-CLASS LISTENING/VIEWING: *E la nave va* [And the Ship Sails on] (dir. Federico Fellini, 1983)

**Final paper due: Wed, Dec. 11 by 11 pm**
Selective Bibliography

Databases and Encyclopedias
RILM, online database of music periodical literature, including opera
Grove Music Online, enormous encyclopedia of music, including the Grove Dictionary of Opera

Periodicals
Cambridge Opera Journal
The Opera Quarterly
Avant-scène opera

Books
Citron, Marcia J. When Opera Meets Film. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.


Davies, James Q. and Sheila Boniface Davies. “‘So Take This Magic Flute and Blow. It Will Protect Us As We Go’: Impempe Yomlingo (2007–11) and South Africa’s Ongoing Transition.” The Opera Quarterly 28/1 (2012): 54-71.


