

Perspectives on Opera

Harold Kuskin

Course Information

Tuesdays from 1:30–3:30 p.m. for seven weeks beginning March 5 through April 16.

Hybrid – Lecture/Discussion – Unlimited

Course Summary

This course is designed to be informative, stimulating, and enjoyable for those with a new interest in or curiosity about opera, for those with some opera knowledge, and for those who already are opera enthusiasts. All seven class sessions will consist of lectures with extensive use of illustrative videos. There will be some limited opportunities for discussion.

In the initial class session, we will trace the evolution of opera from the 16th to the 21st centuries.

Session 2 is entitled “Singing” and will focus on the history and techniques of opera singing.

Session 3 will be devoted in its entirety to Mozart’s humorous, insightful and moving opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, including consideration of how both its music and libretto reflect Age of the Enlightenment principles.

Session 4 will feature two choral works that are operatic but not opera. The first is Leonard Bernstein’s inspiring oratorio *Chichester Psalms*, and the second is Carl Orff’s propulsive and bawdy cantata *Carmina Burana*.

In Session 5, we will discuss the late 19th century opera genre known as *verismo*, literally meaning “truth” but, in the operatic and literary contexts, usually translated as “realism”. The best-known examples of *verismo* opera are the dramatic and intense *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. We will explore both works.

In Session 6 our topic will be the mad scene, a staple of early and mid-19th century opera. We will view the melodic and technically demanding arias of

deranged characters from a variety of operas.

In Session 7, the course concludes on a lighter note with the presentation of two comic operas by Gilbert and Sullivan, *Trial by Jury* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

A Syllabus containing a detailed listing of the performers and performances included in each session, opera vocabulary, suggested readings and internet resources will be provided, as will optional reading materials.