

**Charles University, Faculty of Arts
East and Central European Studies**

Spring 2011

Opera and Film

Insert course number

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Class Days/Time: Tue and Thur 10.50-12.25
Classroom: Tue 405, Thur 404

Course Description

The encounters of opera and cinema date back to the latter's inception. Opera served as a source of gripping stories for silent movies, and it was not only revered but also ridiculed by the new medium, as in Marx Brothers' *A Night at the Opera* (1935). Canonic works of opera (Bizet's *Carmen*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*) were successfully adapted for the screen by iconic directors such as Franco Zeffirelli and Ingmar Bergman, and later Kenneth Branagh and Peter Sellars. Moreover, opera left its mark on both the Hollywood blockbuster production (think *Pretty Woman*, for example) and European art cinema. Last but not least, television opera was developed as a new intermedial genre devised specifically for the small screen. In recent years, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to these developments, with several book-length studies devoted to opera on screen. The present course draws on this scholarship to explore some of the best-known examples of the diverse encounters of opera, cinema and television. The course is designed to provide students with audio-visual experience of the selected works and with theoretical and analytical tools to approach them.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

The goal of the course is twofold. One, it provides the students with a solid overview of the history and key repertory of opera on screen by means of class screenings of selected works. Two, it equips the students with theoretical and analytical tools that they are encouraged to apply in their coursework. The latter goal is achieved by introducing the students to up-to-date scholarship on the topic, which is explained and applied in class discussions in relation to the screened works.

Students are asked to write one reaction paper every week, dealing with the work screened (1 page handed in on each Thursday). The reaction papers are not graded. Students are allowed to miss two reaction papers per semester. In addition, students are asked to write two graded papers (5-7 pages). The mid-term paper will deal with the issue of opera *in* film, i.e. the use of opera in particular scenes or on the soundtrack of a Hollywood or European film. The final paper will concentrate on the topic of opera *on* film, i.e. film versions or adaptations of works of the operatic repertory. Each paper will be based on a case study of the student's choice, to

which the theoretical and analytical tools learned through the relevant readings and class discussions will be applied.

Required Readings

The required readings for each week will be posted at the course page at <http://musicology.ff.cuni.cz/sylaby.htm>. Students will be provided with a password to access the pdf files. The readings are selected from the following publications:

Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa, Eds. *Between Opera and Cinema*. New York and London: Routledge 2002.

Marcia J. Citron. *Opera on Screen*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2000.

Marcia J. Citron. *When Opera Meets Film*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2010.

Jeremy Tambling. *Opera, Ideology and Film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1987.

Jeremy Tambling, Ed. *A Night in at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera*. London: John Libbey 1994.

Jennifer Barnes. "Britten, Opera and Television." *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2003, 42-80

Michal Grover-Friedlander. *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2005.

David Schroeder. *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film*. New York and London: Continuum 2003.

Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert, Eds. *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 2007.

Susan McClary. *Georg Bizet: Carmen (Cambridge Opera Handbooks)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992, 130-146.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Grades based on letters A through F will be given. ECES does not provide courses with pass/fail grades.

Participation	10 %
Reaction papers	20 %
Midterm Paper	30 %
Final Paper	40 %

Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is mandatory for all students. Absence of 180 minutes is allowed. Three or more absences (90 minutes each) lower the grade automatically (A to A-, A to B+ in case of 4 absences etc.)

Presentation Policy: Missing the presentation will result in an F (when applicable). If the student wants to switch the date, he/she must find someone to do it and both students must confirm the change in e-mails to the professor at least 10 days in advance. If the student is sick and has a medical note, then the professor must agree with the student on how the work will be made up for.

Final Test or Paper Policy: Completing the final test or paper is required. Failure to submit the final test or paper according to the deadline will result in a letter grade F for the entire course.

For further details, please see the Attendance Policy at the ECES website under “*Academic Policies and Procedures*” : <http://eces.ff.cuni.cz/>

Student Responsibility and Code of Conduct (required)

Students are subject to the general standards and requirements of Charles University in regard to attendance, examinations, and conduct, as well as to the specific requirements of the program. The student is expected to assume the initiative in completing all requirements at the time specified.

Weekly Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Any changes made will be announced a week beforehand at the course page at <http://musicology.ff.cuni.cz/sylaby.htm>

Week 1

Opera on Screen – An Overview

Feb. 22

Introduction, Course Overview

A Short History of Encounters between Opera, Cinema and Television

Tracing the major phases of opera on screen: the silent and sound eras in cinema, the early and later years of television, the modern film-opera, and recent developments.

Feb. 24

Opera and Early Film

Why was early cinema attracted to opera? How did the “soundless opera” work? How did opera on screen transition from the silent to the sound era? What does early cinema share with late cinema in relation to opera?

Required reading:

Rose Theresa. “From Méphistophélès to Méliès: Spectacle and Narrative in Opera and Early Film.” In *Between Opera and Cinema*, Ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa. New York and London: Routledge 2002, 1-18.

Week 2

An (In)famous Encounter – Marx Brothers’ A Night at the Opera (1935)

March 1

Screening of Marx Brothers’ *A Night at the Opera*. Preliminary observations about the role of opera in the film. In preparation for the screening, the students read the synopsis of Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*.

March 3

Discussion of Marx Brothers’ *A Night at the Opera* based on the students’ reaction papers and the readings for the week. Students divide into two groups, one concentrating on Grover-Friedlander, the other on Kramer. Each group discusses the assigned reading and presents it to the other group. All students read Schroeder.

Required readings:

David Schroeder. “Attack of the anarchists: A Night at the Opera.” *Cinema’s Illusions, Opera’s Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film*. New York and London: Continuum 2003, 107-115.

Michal Grover-Friedlander. “Brothers at the Opera.” *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2005, 33-50.

Week 3

Opera in Film – Why Does Hollywood Like Opera?

This week, the students divide into two groups, one presents the reading on Tuesday, the other on Thursday. Reaction papers for this week are related to the reading presented by the student's group.

March 8

The Hollywood attraction to opera. Case study: Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia* (1993).

Required reading:

Marc A. Weiner. "Why Does Hollywood Like Opera?" In *Between Opera and Cinema*, Eds. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa. New York and London: Routledge 2002, s. 75-91.

March 10

The Hollywood attraction to opera continued. Case studies: Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and John Huston's *Prizzi's Honor* (1985).

Required reading:

Mary Hunter. "Opera in Film: Sentiment and Wit, Feeling and Knowing: *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Prizzi's Honor*." In *Between Opera and Cinema*, Eds. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa. New York and London: Routledge 2002, s. 93-119.

Week 4

Opera in Film – Moonstruck (1987)

March 15

Screening of Norman Jewison's *Moonstruck* (1987). Students prepare for the screening by reading the synopsis of Puccini's *La Bohème*.

March 17

Discussion on the role of opera in *Moonstruck* based on the students' reaction papers and the reading for the week.

Required reading:

Marcia J. Citron. "'An Honest Contrivance': Opera and Desire in *Moonstruck*." *When Opera Meets Film*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2010, 173-210.

Week 5

Opera in Film – An Intercultural Encounter

March 22

Screening of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

March 24

Discussion on the role of opera in *Fitzcarraldo* based on the students' reaction papers and the reading for the week.

Required reading:

Richard Leppert. "Opera, Aesthetic Violence, and the Imposition of Modernity: *Fitzcarraldo*." In *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, Eds. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 2007, s. 99-119.

Week 6***Opera on Film – Powell and Pressburger's The Tales of Hoffmann (1951)***

March 29

Screening of Powell and Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann* based on Offenbach's opera of the same name. Students will prepare for the screening by reading the synopsis of the opera.

March 31

Discussion of *The Tales of Hoffmann* based on the students' reaction papers and the readings for the week. Students divide into two groups, one concentrating on Citron, the other on Babbington and Evans. Each group discusses the assigned reading and presents it to the other group. All students read Stern. Students also review the reading from Week 1 (Rose Theresa).

Required readings:

Lesley Stern. "*The Tales of Hoffmann: An Instance of Operality*." In *Between Opera and Cinema*, Ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa. New York and London: Routledge 2002, 39-57.

Marcia J. Citron. "Cinema and the Power of Fantasy: Powell and Pressburger's *Tales of Hoffmann* and Syberberg's *Parsifal*." *Opera on Screen*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2000, 112-141, 158-160.

Bruce Babbington and Peter Evans. "Matters of Life and Death in Powell and Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann*." In *A Night in at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera*. Ed. Jeremy Tambling. London: John Libbey 1994, 145-168.

Week 7 – Midterm paper due on Tuesday, April 5***Carmen on Film***

April 5

Screening of Francesco Rosi's *Carmen* (1983). In preparation for the screening, students read the libretto of Bizet's *Carmen*.

April 7

Discussion of Rosi's *Carmen* based on students' reaction papers and the reading for the week.

Required readings:

Marcia J. Citron. "Opera *al fresco*: Rosi's *Bizet's Carmen* and Losey's *Don Giovanni*." *Opera on Screen*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2000, 161-204.

Week 8***Carmen Adaptations***

April 12

Screening of Hammerstein and Preminger's *Carmen Jones* (1954).

April 14

Discussion of *Carmen Jones* within the context of other *Carmen* adaptations for the screen, such as Carlos Saura's *Carmen* (1983) and Godard's *Prénom Carmen* (1983), and in relation to Rosi's *Carmen*. Students divide into two groups, one concentrating on McClary, the other on Schroeder. Each group discusses the assigned reading and presents it to the other group. All students read Tambling.

Required readings:

Jeremy Tambling. "Ideology in the Cinema: Rewriting *Carmen*." *Opera, Ideology and Film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1987, 13-40.

Susan McClary. "Carmen on Film." *Cambridge Opera Handbooks: Georg Bizet Carmen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992, 130-146.

David Schroeder. "Carmen Copies." *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film*. New York and London: Continuum 2003, 247-263.

Week 9

Mozart on Screen – Losey's Don Giovanni (1979)

April 19

Screening of Losey's *Don Giovanni*. In preparation for the screening, students read the libretto of the opera.

April 21

Discussion of Losey's *Don Giovanni* based on the students' reaction papers and the readings for the week. Students are encouraged to compare Losey's *Don Giovanni* with Rosi's *Carmen* and to draw on theoretical and analytical insights from previous readings.

Required readings:

Jeremy Tambling. "Losey's 'Fenomeni Morbosi': *Don Giovanni*." *Opera, Ideology and Film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1987, 159-175.

Marcia J. Citron. "Opera *al fresco*: Rosi's *Bizet's Carmen* and Losey's *Don Giovanni*." *Opera on Screen*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2000, 161-204.

Week 10

Mozart on Screen – Ponnelle's Le nozze di Figaro (1976)

April 26

Screening of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's *Le nozze di Figaro*. In preparation for the screening, students read the libretto of the opera.

April 28

Discussion of Ponnelle's *Le nozze di Figaro* based on the students' reaction papers and the reading for the week. Students are encouraged to compare Ponnelle's approach to Losey's, and to draw on theoretical and analytical insights from previous readings.

Required readings:

Marcia J. Citron. "The Elusive Voice: Absence and Presence in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Film *Le nozze di Figaro*." In *Between Opera and Cinema*, Ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa. New York and London: Routledge 2002, 133-153.

Week 11***Mozart on Screen – Bergman's The Magic Flute (1975)***

May 3

Screening of Bergman's *The Magic Flute*. In preparation for the screening, students read the libretto of the opera.

May 5

Discussion of Bergman's the *Magic Flute* based on the students' reaction papers and the reading for the week. Students are encouraged to compare the three screen versions of Mozart operas, and to draw on their audio-visual experience with other operas screened in the course of the semester as well as on the theoretical and analytical insights that they acquired from previous readings.

Required readings:

Jeremy Tambling, "Opera as Culinary Art: Bergman's *Magic flute*." In *Opera, Ideology and Film*, Palgrave Macmillan 1987, s. 126-139.

Week 12***Television Opera – Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors (1951)***

May 10

Introduction to television opera. Screening of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

May 12

Discussion of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* based on the students' reaction papers and the reading for the week. Students are encouraged to compare *Amahl* with *The Tales of Hoffmann*, produced the same year, as well as with Bergman's *The Magic Flute* as another instance of a "Christmas opera." The following general questions will be considered: How does opera created for the small screen differ from opera on film? What theoretical and analytical tools developed with regard to filmed opera are relevant and productive when brought to bear on television opera?

Required readings:

Jennifer Barnes. "A Daring Experiment." *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2003, 15-41.

Week 13 – Final paper due on Tuesday, May 17***Television Opera – Britten's Owen Wingrave (1971)***

May 17

Screening of Britten's *Owen Wingrave*.

May 19

Discussion of Britten's *Owen Wingrave* based on the students' reaction papers and the readings for the week. Students divide into two groups, one concentrating on Tambling, the other on Barnes. Each group discusses the assigned reading and presents it to the other group. Students are encouraged to compare *Owen Wingrave* to *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and to situate it in the more general context of opera on screen.

Required readings:

Jennifer Barnes. "Britten, Opera and Television." *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2003, 42-80.

Jeremy Tambling, "Owen Wingrave and Television Opera." In *Opera, Ideology and Film*, Palgrave Macmillan 1987, s. 113-125.