



MS 360 STAGING ITALIAN OPERA

IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION: The final objective of the course is to learn hands-on how to stage an opera, whether it is a complete title or an opera-pastiche, which will be composed in class in this case from arias, duets and ensembles taken from famous Italian operas written by various composers, such as Händel, Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, etc., from the 17th to the 20th century. The opera or the music performed will be chosen according to its connection with a topic chosen by the teachers every semester. The arias and the ensembles will be chosen according to the voice types and the vocal ranges of the students.

We will focus on music style, musical form and structure of the pieces, words and diction, acting and staging.

The course will culminate in a live performance in Milan at the end of the semester and will be performed with piano and other accompanying instruments, if necessary. The course is open to all voice, theatre or dance students and does not require acceptance into the Music Program. Students will also work to create a critical/analytical text on the opera, to be presented in the form of program notes for the final performance.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: Experience with opera and/or musical theatre

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

During the course, we will focus on the musical and theatrical aspects of the repertoire the students will work on. A lot of time will be given to in-class performances, workshops, and attendance to targeted professional performances and theatrical rehearsals in Milan, as well as the final rehearsals.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

All the students enrolled in the course will be involved in the production and in the performance. Singers will be asked to sing the repertoire chosen for the performance. Other students can take part in the creation of sets and costumes, as well as the flyers and programs advertising the performance. The students' work to put on the opera as well as the quality of the final performance will form the basis of the final performance grade.

- Class engagement – 20%
- Progress in singing – 25%
- Progress in acting – 25%
- Final Public Performance – 30%

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Memorize and perform excerpts of scores of different operas in a foreign language (singers)
- Understand a score, in detail, including its historical background
- Create sets and manage lighting and sound for a performance
- Advertise a production and create a program
- Write a critical text on the excerpts chosen from the operas, analyzing the scores, the musical forms and the meaning of the words and music in their historical context

This course will expose all students to a vivid contact with the actual making of an operatic work, through the development of several necessary steps of cultural awareness, historical research, musical as well as literary analysis, productions, and organization



and performing skills. The overall quality of the performance will be proportional to the skills, quality, and commitment of the students enrolled.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, the IES Abroad Milan attendance policy allows for the following number of absences, which are intended to be used for physical and mental health reasons:

THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course,

TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course,

ONE (1) absence in each seminar course or course meeting 1 day a week,

ZERO (0) absences in each course of individual music instruction.

Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in seminar or 1-day-a-week courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT:

The teachers will choose a title to work on or different musical pieces from a list of arias, duets and ensembles by Italian opera composers related to the topic and its multiple meanings, according to the singers enrolled in the course. There will be a choice of recitatives, arias, duets and ensembles from Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Handel, Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, Puccini, Verdi, etc. The students will be guided by the teachers in creating the dramaturgy of the “opera” learning hands-on how to be on a stage. There will be individual and group lessons, according to the repertoire chosen. There will be classes with different instructors, who will work together, as specified in the schedule. We may have guest teachers for lectures about specific topics related to the music performed, as well as course-related trips to visit well renowned Italian theaters or opera houses and audit their rehearsals.

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1 <i>Session 1</i>	Introduction to the art of staging an opera.	• In-class and out-of-class analysis of a traditional and a contemporary staging.
<i>Session 2</i>	Text Analysis. How to analyze an opera libretto (the constituent elements of a story).	• In-class analysis of an opera scene. • In-class and out-of-class analysis of the given material
Week 2 <i>Session 1</i>	How to study an opera score. Diction, pronunciation, articulation.	• First approach to arias and recitativi.

<i>Session 2</i>	Role study. Diction, pronunciation, articulation in singing.	/
Week 3 <i>Session 1</i>	Theatrical proxemics. The subject in relation to space.	• In-class theatrical exercises.
<i>Session 2</i>	Role study. In-depth understanding of the personal repertoire.	• In-class score study.
Week 4 <i>Session 1</i>	Body postures. Time-rhythm of the character. Tone, rhythm, and volume in acting.	• In-class theatrical exercises.
<i>Session 2</i>	Role study. Projection and expressivity in the musical phrase.	• In-class score study.
Week 5 <i>Session 1</i>	Role study. The form of duets and ensemble pieces.	/
<i>Session 2</i>	Role study. Enhancing musical dramaturgy in singing.	/
Week 6 <i>Session 1</i>	Role study. First rehearsals, putting singing and acting together.	• How to go from text to scene.
<i>Session 2</i>	MIDTERM EXAM.	• Written exam or mini performance based on the topics, readings or rehearsals from the first part of the course
Week 7 <i>Session 1</i>	Final performance rehearsal 1. Blocking.	• First blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.
<i>Session 2</i>	Final performance rehearsal 2. Blocking.	• Second blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.
Week 8 <i>Session 1</i>	Final performance rehearsal 3. Blocking.	• Third blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.

Session 2	Final performance rehearsal 4. Blocking.	• Fourth blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.
Week 9 Session 1	Refinement of the role (acting).	/
Session 2	Refinement of the role (music).	/
Week 10 Session 1	Final performance rehearsal 5. Blocking.	• Fifth blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.
Session 2	Final performance rehearsal 6. Blocking.	• Sixth blocking of fragments of arias, recitativi, duets and ensemble pieces.
Week 11 Session 1	Pre-general rehearsal.	/
Session 2	General rehearsal.	/
TBD	FINAL PERFORMANCE	<i>Please note that, in preparation for the final performance, some additional rehearsals outside the regular class timetable will be scheduled. These will be communicated as early as possible during the semester and will be arranged according to the specific needs of the performance, while also taking into account the students' schedules and the commitments of their other classes.</i>

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Each student will be provided with copies of the music assigned, if necessary.
- Course-pack prepared by the teacher and uploaded to Moodle, consisting of critical, up-to-date articles and bibliography related to the selected subject (i.e.: synopsis and analytical essays in English from the Program Booklets published by the main opera theaters in the World for the most meaningful productions).
- Jessica M. MacMurray (Editor), *The Book of 101 Opera Librettos* (Ita-Eng), Black dog & Leventhal Publishers Inc. 1996.
- Rodolfo Celletti, *A History of the Belcanto*, Clarendon Paperbacks, 1997.
- Robert Donington, *Opera and its Symbols: the Unity of Words, Music and Staging*, Yale Univ. Press, 1992.
- Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, University of California Press, 2005.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- David F. Ostwald, *Acting for Singers: Creating Believable Singing Characters*, OUP USA, 2005.
- Victoria Worsley, *Feldenkrais for Actors: How to Do Less and Discover More*, Nick Hern Books, 2016.
- Boris Goldovsky, *Bringing opera to life: Operatic Acting and Stage Direction*, Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Donald Jay Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, Columbia University Press, 1988 (3rd ed.)
- Roger Parker, *The Oxford illustrated History of Opera*, Oxford University Press 1994.