Created for the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in-service program at Webster University (St. Louis, Missouri), this series of seminars, presented over a 9-day period, focuses on a comparative study of four operas set in the time period of the French Revolution. The operas examined are: (1) Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" (1786); (2) Beethoven's "Fidelio" (1805); (3) Giordano's "Andrea Chenier"; and (4) Poulenc's "Dialogues of the Carmelites" (1955). In addition to an extensive survey of the philosophical and historical background and events of the French Revolution, participants analyze not only how these operatic works reflect aspects of the period under study but also the relationship between the operas and the literary works upon which each opera is based. Corresponding literary and philosophical materials include Beaumarchais' "The Marriage of Figaro" (1784), a selection of poems by Andre Chenier, Gertrude von le Fort's novelette "The Song at the Scaffold" and its dramatization by Georges Bernanos (1949), and selected writings of Condorcet, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and John Locke. Application to the curriculum also is emphasized. Contains a 21-item bibliography.

(Author/BT)
OPERA AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Syllabus For A Series Of Graduate Seminars In The MAT In-service Program
At Webster University, St. Louis

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ABSTRACT

Created for the MAT In-service Program at Webster University, this series of seminars presented over a nine-day period focuses on a comparative study of four operas set in the time period of the French Revolution. The operas to be examined are Mozart's MARRIAGE OF FIGARO (1786), Beethoven's FIDELIO (1805), Giordano's ANDREA CHÉNIER, and Poulenc's DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES (1955).

In addition to an extensive survey of the philosophical and historical background and events of the Revolution, participants will analyze not only how the operatic works reflect aspects of the period under study, but also see the relationship between the operas and the literary works upon which each opera is based. Corresponding literary and philosophical materials include Beaumarchais' The Marriage of Figaro (1784), a selection of poems by André Chénier, Gertrude von le Fort's novelette The Song at the Scaffold and its dramatization by Georges Bernanos (1949), and selected writings of Condorcet, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and John Locke. Application to the curriculum will also be emphasized.
OPERA AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Syllabus for the MAT In-service Program, Webster University

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

A. Rationale

Opera is not simply a combination of music, dramatic literature, and visual effects. Rather, it is a unified art form with those constituent elements, each of which takes on new character and potential in its interaction with the others. Opera explores human values, traditions, behaviors, and emotions. Equally important, opera and other music theater genres present a study of the human condition, reflecting the prevailing ideas of their contemporary society. Opera has also played a significant role in the development of the philosophy of aesthetics (Nietzsche), intellectual history, and in the evolution of the various arts disciplines that it embodies. This combination of intensity of experience and intellectual content makes opera a potent educational tool for learning in such disciplines as history, literature, social studies, and psychology, as well as in each of the arts disciplines.

Opera has a definite place in the humanities. Not only does opera help to unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment, but also as one of our key interdisciplinary art forms, it lends coherence, depth, and resonance to other curricular areas. In opera, music is allied with language, and when we have language to guide us, associations become explicit. Words and stories are only the beginning, and as music is added, a new layer of meaning becomes evident. An "idea" begins to take shape, an idea that takes on significance when it becomes part of the great intellectual resources of the
age. According to Paul Robinson (Opera and Ideas: from Mozart to Strauss), many operas can indeed be interpreted in terms of intellectual constructs or seen as manifestations of events, currents of thought, or political or social belief. The purpose of this course is to impart to participants information and intellectual strategies for the integration of dramatic and operatic literature into humanities curricula, in particular, social studies, foreign languages, language arts and music. These tools can then be used in writing curricula and in classroom teaching. Specific works have been selected for examination and analysis that will give participants opportunities to learn from scholars in the fields of literature, musicology, and history, as well as from each other.

This series of graduate seminars will teach participants how to approach history through the eyes of literature and music theater as represented by the choice of operas. The key to this process is involvement with primary source materials: plays, librettos, scores and political writings. The ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity still echo through the world, and are fought for in many guises by many peoples. The works of art and political writings which demonstrate these principles as the just basis for human existence still generate excitement and intense personal reactions. THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO provides a foundation for the study of the causes of the French Revolution, in particular, the social and economic imbalance found in the society of the time. In addition, it reflects the moral and social vision of the Enlightenment. Mozart and Da Ponte could be considered the operatic spokesmen of the philosophe, both effectively arguing in the unity of music, words and drama an operatic case for reason and humanity. Beethoven’s FIDELIO, the offspring of two very different artistic worlds (a French librettist and a German composer), displays brilliantly and nobly a common belief in the
essential goodness of man, and that right, in the end, will triumph. ANDREA CHÉNIER illustrates the effect of the Revolution on an individual who is at first dedicated to its ideals, and ultimately destroyed when those ideals become prey to excess. Finally, THE DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES deals with the microcosm of a convent trapped within a world which is in upheaval, and the effects of such turmoil upon an internally ordered society. The themes in these works include love, hatred, pride, intrigue, loyalty, betrayal, and abandonment, as well as many other types of human interaction and experience. Teachers will come to know the literature and operas more intimately. In addition, the course of study and group discussions will inspire an intense feeling of involvement in, and commitment to, the fundamental issues involved.

In addition to expanding their knowledge base, participants will be able to refine their critical skills by engaging in intensive musical, literary, historical, social, musico-dramatic and dramatic analysis of the works to be studied. Participants will also learn how to produce curriculum materials about opera in the humanities using an interdisciplinary approach that is appropriate to an inherently interdisciplinary art form. Further, the examination of a society in the turmoil of attempting to reshape its ideals provides a perfect basis for analysis of the impulses which have motivated humanity throughout the course of its history.
B. Content

Although many operas have been written which deal with the themes and events of the French Revolution, the works chosen for inclusion in this course represent not only the most well known, but also provide different views of the Revolution as an event and as a phenomenon in history.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO was written by Pierre Augustin Caron under the nom de plume of Beaumarchais. A French dramatist, courtier and watchmaker to Louis XVI, he was politically active in influencing French aid to the revolutionary forces in America. His play illustrates a decaying nobility outsmarted by the natural talents of its servants, and provides a setting for understanding some of the underlying reasons for the unrest, which led to the Revolution. This satiric French comedy was fashioned into an Italian libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, and set to music by Mozart in an opera which, in a comic fashion, addresses aspects of the social unrest that led to the events of 1789.

FIDELIO, the most popular of the “Rescue Operas” (a genre which exalted marital love, fidelity, heroism, good over evil, and freedom over tyranny), is Beethoven’s only operatic legacy to us. Yet within the two-act libretto based upon a story by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, the dark world of deception and cruelty is defeated by the forces of mercy, justice, and love.

ANDREA CHÉNIER is based on an original libretto by one of the most prolific Italian novecento librettists, Luigi Illica. Although the actual events in the life of Chénier are greatly romanticized, the ideals and aspirations of the poet (generally considered to be the greatest of the French Revolutionary period) echo strongly throughout the work. Umberto Giordano set this libretto to music in the style of the Italian verismo school,
which presented drama as closely as possible to real life. Poignant historical touches are added by the incorporation not only of some of Chénier’s own writings, but also of actual music of the Revolution (such as the marching song, “Ça ira”).

**THE DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES** is drawn from the novelette by Gertrude von le Fort (*The Song at the Scaffold*), and from a quintessential twentieth century medium, the film scenario by the Reverend Fr. Raymond Bruckberger and Philippe Agostini. The literary and visual inspirations were shaped into a play by the French novelist and religious philosopher, Georges Bernanos. He later adapted this dramatic work into the libretto upon which Francis Poulenc based his poignant operatic masterpiece. Poulenc’s music expresses the anguish of the individuals in a religious community subjected to pressure and ultimately destruction from a hostile outside environment.

In addition to the fact that the French Revolution forms the background or undercurrent to each opera, inherent qualities and themes link these pieces. The structure of Poulenc, both in simplicity and form, mirrors that of his classical predecessor, Mozart. The humanistic values apparent in the works of both these composers are echoed in the conflicts of both **ANDREA CHÉNIER** and **FIDELIO**. Each contains strong characters whose lives will be or are affected by the Revolution, and each offers alternatives to the political, social, religious or intellectual ideas of those characters. The pieces include masterpieces of French, German, and Italian dramatic and musical literature which span two centuries, and are written in a range of styles from classical to late impressionistic. What is more, the central themes in each are the struggle to liberate the man from oppression, the dangers of this struggle escalating beyond control, and the ethical
dilemma of individuals often forced to chose between their ideologies and their personal loyalties. Conflict takes place in all four, yet the underlying motives of fate, love and justice underscore and influence the decision-making processes which all mankind must go through in its development.

C. Instructors

Professor Barbara Ann Barbato has been a Professor of History at Webster University since 1963, where she has taught students on both the undergraduate and graduate level. She is also a mentor and advisor for the Graduate Program in International Relations at Webster University. She has assisted students in educational planning through academic advising, supervised student teachers on elementary and secondary levels, and been active in assessing prior learning of adults.

Professor Barbato holds a B.A. in History with honors from Loretto Heights College in Denver, a Master of Business Management from Webster University, and a Doctorate in Modern European History from Saint Louis University. She has published extensively in the field of historical reference works.

Dr. Cyrilla Barr has been a professor since 1976 and Chairman of the Musicology Department since 1986 at the Catholic University of America. Dr. Barr received her B.M. in violin from Viterbo College, an M.M. in Musicology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and a Ph.D. in Musicology from Catholic University. She has published extensively in her fields of specialization, namely Medieval and Early-Renaissance Italian Music; 19th-Century Italian Opera and Early-20th Century American Musical Patronage.
Clifford Brooks, former General Manager of the Opera Company of Boston and former Manager of Opera New England, holds a B.S. (*summa cum laude*) in French, with minors in Italian and history from Georgetown University, an M.L.S. degree from Rutgers University in Library and Information Studies, and an M.A. in Urban Education from New Jersey City University. He also studied musicology at the Université de Paris and vocal and choral music with Paul Hume at Georgetown University. Mr. Brooks is a principal author of the OPERA America Textbook Series, MUSIC! WORDS! OPERA!, and is in demand as a workshop presenter and consultant in the fields of opera instruction and opera as literature. He presently serves as Curriculum Materials Librarian of New Jersey City University, and as a consultant on school programs to the Leonard Bernstein Center for Arts Education in Nashville, TN.
II. SYLLABUS

FRENCH REVOLUTION AND OPERA

Genesis of the Revolution -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

Because there is more written about the French Revolution than almost any other single historical event, there is a plenitude of material easily available to the course participants. A brief introductory analysis of this material will serve to place in perspective the time and interpretations of the Revolution.

If the French Revolution is the watershed of modern European history, one should start with understanding the world which gave it birth. Thus, the course will begin with a wide-ranging critique of the social and intellectual bases of European culture, which characterized the eighteenth century: the Enlightenment. It is in this context and in the understanding of the nature of the ancien régime that the causes of the French Revolution will have meaning. This lecture might include emancipation of the Jews, rise of the rights of women (Mary Wollstonecraft), as well as Rousseau and the philosophes.

A Short History of Opera -Mr. Clifford Brooks

Introduction to opera from an historical perspective. Dramma per musica -the combination of music, drama, poetry, dance and visual art. The dualism between recitative and aria. Operatic forms and conventions. Comparison of French, German and Italian traditions. Opera and the twentieth century.

The French Revolution and Comedy? -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Is FIGARO a political opera? The critical place of FIGARO in Mozart’s canon. The question of Mozart’s motivation. Some thoughts on the theory of comedy and buffa tradition.

Bibliography


Beaumarchais - Playwright, Rogue or Revolutionary? - Mr. Clifford Brooks


Bibliography


The Laundering of FIGARO: From Beaumarchais to Da Ponte - Dr. Cyrilla Barr

The transition from the play to the libretto. Problems of censorship. The poet as stage director. The role of Joseph II.

Bibliography


Literature and History through Opera - What approach should we take? Mr. Clifford Brooks

How can we analyze opera, literature, and history? Some methods of analysis - biographical, psychological, linguistic, social, Marxist, feminist. Transfer of method. Can opera represent aspects of history? Are opera and literature similar? Different?

Bibliography

Workshop: Music and Opera Signposts decoded -Forms and Conventions
Mr. Clifford Brooks and Dr. Cyrilla Barr

“What’s Opera, Doc?” video. A vocabulary for music and opera, including discussion of technical and non-technical language. Dimensions of music (melody, harmony and rhythm) as they relate to opera. Tempo, accents, dynamics, and pitch. Vocal score reading.

Outbreak of the Revolution -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

The first stage of the Revolution - the Bourgeois phase. From the Convocation of the Estates General to solve the financial problem through the declaration and work of the National Assembly. The Fall of Bastille and the Social Revolution culminating in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Session will also include march of women from Paris to Versailles; Royal family to Paris; flight of the nobles; the rise of Marat, Danton, Robespierre; opposition to Pius VI.

Figaro’s Ancestry -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

The Commedia dell’arte influences of Italian Renaissance comedy on opera buffa; characterization. From repartee and comic banter to recitativo secco. Analysis of examples.

Bibliography

Heartz, Ibid.


Mozart and the Comic Muse -Dr. Cyrilla Barr


Bibliography

Heartz, Ibid.


The Revolution at War -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

Foreign opposition to the events in France. The people turn against the King; the Royal Family is imprisoned and executed; civil war breaks out in France. New government,
new laws; the internal struggle for power. The Reign of Terror. Included will be discussions of the September Massacres; the activities of the Paris Revolutionary Commune; the National Convention; the struggle for power between Gironde and the Mountain; the King’s trial.

**Video Workshop - Mr. Clifford Brooks**

Elements to integrate opera videos into the content area. Video-viewing techniques (focusing, predictive viewing, role play and simulation). Video Guides. Follow-up activities. Relevance to opera in the classroom.

**Bibliography**


**The Reign of Terror - Professor Barbara Ann Barbato**

From June, 1793 to the Thermidorian Reaction in July, 1794. The Republic of Virtue. The dictatorship of Robespierre.

**FIDELIO: The Visual Perspective - Mr. Clifford Brooks**

Elements of scenic design. Communication for interpretation. Background and setting of the opera. Fidelity to the librettist/composer team. Problems and solutions. (A large part of this session will be devoted to small group work wherein participants will develop their “concept” of the piece and describe a scene or act as they would design and stage it.)

**Bibliography**

Rolland, Romain. *Beethoven the Creator*. trans. by Ernest Newman. NY: Dover, 1964. If able, participants may wish to read the original in French. All should complete the chapter devoted to Lenore/Leonora.

**FIDELIO: The Musical Perspective - Dr. Cyrilla Barr**

Bibliography


Notables of the Revolution -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

This session will provide an opportunity to highlight representative players (leaders and voices, women and men) in the Revolution.

André Chénier: Poet, Patriot or Revolutionary?- Mr. Clifford Brooks


Bibliography


Verismo and Umberto Giordano: Bringing Opera up to Date and down to Earth
Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Realism in the operatic world. Brevity of the movement; its influences. Role of Giordano -musician, composer, fencer, and pigeon breeder. Collaboration with Luigi Illica and “bohemian” lifestyle. Feud between publishing houses makes musical history.

Bibliography


Is ANDREA CHÉNIER the demolition of Grand Opera? -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Examination of the opera’s “revolutionary agenda of Verismo.” Musical and textual innovations. The incorporation of quotations of “ça ira,” the “camagne,” and “La Marseillaise.” Analysis of “La mamma morta” and the tribunal scene. Critical appraisal: history or melodrama?
Video Workshop -Mr. Clifford Brooks

Participants will view acts/scenes of operas under study, developing a video guide for use with students.

Church and State -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

The French Revolution and the “two nations of France.” An examination of the issues in the evolution of the attitude toward clergy and church.

Georges Bernanos - Mr. Clifford Brooks


Bibliography


Creative Collaboration: the libretto for DIALOGUES- Mr. Clifford Brooks


Bibliography


Francis Poulenc -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Mother as first influence. Meeting with Ricardo Viñes. Early works (Rhapsodie Nègre, Le Bestiaire); study with Koechlin. Secular works. Visit to Our Lady of Rocamadour -sacred works. Late years and output. Compositional style.
Bibliography


Napoleon waits in the Wings -Professor Barbara Ann Barbato

War goes well, climate changes, factions fall out, dictatorship loses its head, the populace gets restless. A new constitution of 1795 established. Bonaparte ends an uprising and maneuvers his way to power.

CARMELITES as a 20th century religious opera -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Brief comparison with Schoenberg’s MOSES UND AARON and Pfitzner’s PALESTRINA. Poulenc’s musical speech as a return to the principles of Monteverdian opera. Poulenc’s sacred music as impetus to his secular creations. CARMELITES in the correspondence of Poulenc. Poulenc and his “Spiritual Itinerary.” The facts and their musical interpretation.

Bibliography


Musical and Psychological Symbolism of CARMELITES -Dr. Cyrilla Barr

Identification of characters by motifs. Juxtaposition of vocal style to represent opposing forces-“Au bruit” contrasted with the strongly tonal and simple lines of the nuns’ Latin motets, “Ave Maria” and the lyrical beauty of the “Salve Regina” punctuated by the sound of the guillotine. A Freudian view of Sister Blanche and the psychology of fear.
III. SEMINAR SCHEDULE

All events, unless otherwise indicated, take place on the campus of Webster University.

**Day 1**

1:00 - 1:45 p.m. - Orientation to Procedure and Schedule

1:45 - 3:15 p.m. - Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: Genesis of the Revolution

3:15 - 3:30 p.m. - Break

3:30 - 5:00 p.m. - Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: continuation of first session

Evening: Open

**Day 2**

1:00 - 2:00 p.m. - Mr. Clifford Brooks: A Short History of Opera

2:00 - 2:15 p.m. - Break

2:15 - 4:00 p.m. - Dr. Cyrilla Barr: The French Revolution and Comedy?

4:00 - 5:00 p.m. - All Instructors: Projects/Partnership Plans: A presentation of possible topics and thematic projects to be developed during the course of the seminar. Since cross disciplinarity is emphasized as a model in the presentations, participants are urged to take this approach to their teaching through developing a partnership plan.

8:00 p.m. Open

**Day 3**

9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Beaumarchais - Playwright, Rogue or Revolutionary?

10:30 - 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 - 12:15 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: The Laundering of FIGARO: From Beaumarchais to Da Ponte

12:15 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Literature and History through Opera
2:30 - 4:00 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks and Dr. Cyrilla Barr: WORKSHOP
-Music and Opera Signposts Decoded

4:00 - 4:15 p.m. Break

4:15 - 5:30 p.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato -Outbreak of the Revolution

Day 4
9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: Figaro's Ancestry

10:30 - 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 - 12:00 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: Mozart and the Comic Muse

12:00 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 - 3:15 p.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: The Revolution at War

3:15 - 3:30 p.m. Break

3:30 - 4:15 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Video Workshop

Day 5
9:30 - 10:45 a.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: Reign of Terror

10:45 - 11:00 p.m. Break

11:00 - 12:30 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: FIDELIO: The visual perspective

12:30 - 1:45 p.m. Lunch

1:45 - 3:00 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: FIDELIO: The musical perspective

Day 6
9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: Notables of the Revolution

10:30 - 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 - 11:30 a.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: André Chénier: Poet, Patriot, or Revolutionary?
11:30 - 12:15 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: *Verismo* and Umberto Giordano

12:15 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: Is ANDREA CHÉNIER the demolition of Grand Opera?

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Break

3:45 - 5:00 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Video Workshop

**Day 7**

9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: Church and State

10:30 - 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 - 11:45 a.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Georges Bernanos - A Catholic in the face of Death

11:45 - 12:15 p.m. All Instructors: Workshops and Discussion: Special time has been allotted for individual and group work on projects, units, etc.

12:15 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Mr. Clifford Brooks: Creative Collaboration: The libretto for DIALOGUES

2:30 - 2:45 p.m. Break

2:45 - 3:45 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: Francis Poulenc

3:45 - 5:00 p.m. All Instructors: Thematic units and Partnership plans

**Day 8**

9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Professor Barbara Ann Barbato: Napoleon Waits in the Wings

10:30 - 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 - 12:15 p.m. Dr. Cyrilla Barr: CARMELITES as 20th century religious opera

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Break
3:45 - 5:00 p.m. All Instructors: Thematic Workshop. Continuing work with small groups, instructors will discuss and shape projects dealing with application of curriculum content to school curriculum.

Day 9

1:00 - 2:30 p.m. "Group Presentations." Each study group will present its thematic unit, examples of video guides, and outlines of partnership plans.

2:00 - 2:45 p.m. Break

2:45 - 4:00 p.m. Closing reception.
Title: Opera and the French Revolution: Syllabus for a Series of Graduate Seminars in the Mat In-service Program at Webster University, St. Louis

Author(s): Clifford J. Brooks (with contributions from Barbara Barbato and Cyril la Barr)

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