

## Perspectives on Opera

This course is designed to be informative, stimulating, and enjoyable for those with a new interest in, or curiosity about, opera and for those who are already opera fans. The seven class sessions generally will consist of lectures with extensive use of illustrative videos. The lectures will include background information about opera in general and about specific subjects and operas, with some non-technical musical analysis. In each session, time will be set aside for questions and discussion, with the amount of time available varying from session to session.

The first class session will focus on opera basics including voice categories and vocal techniques and challenges, combined with a virtual backstage tour of the Metropolitan Opera House. Much, but not all, of the material presented in this session was included in last spring's Appreciating Opera course. **Each of the remaining six class sessions will be devoted to new material** covering the following topics:

Session 2—how singers are trained for a career in opera;

Session 3—comparisons of performances of arias by different singers, with ample time for discussion of class members' preferences;

Session 4—different productions, ranging from the traditional to the avant garde (some qualifying for an R-rating), of scenes from operas by Bizet, Donizetti, Mozart, and Wagner;

Session 5—the creative process for the powerful and melodic new American opera “Moby-Dick”, with exploration of the opera itself;

Session 6—Puccini's beautiful and moving opera *Madama Butterfly*, preceded by an examination of the obstacles faced by Asian singers in being hired by opera companies, even to perform in an opera set in Japan; and

Session 7—the history of African-American singers of classical music and their struggle for acceptance in the opera world, followed by a performance of *Treemonisha*, a delightful and tuneful, but rarely performed, opera by the African-American composer Scott Joplin, the King of Ragtime.

At the first class session, a packet of reading materials will be distributed, together with a syllabus containing a detailed listing of the performers and performances included in each session, some opera vocabulary, and suggested readings and internet resources.

**Leader:** Harold Kuskin has been an opera lover and Metropolitan Opera subscriber for over 45 years, a backstage tour guide at the Metropolitan Opera House for 15 years, a lecturer on opera for the Princeton Festival, and an instructor on opera at the Evergreen Forum.

**Thursdays:** 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., 7 weeks: February 28 through April 11

**Location:** The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville