

## 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 eight class sessions will consist of lectures with extensive use of illustrative videos. 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 Perspectives on Opera course. **Each of the remaining seven class sessions will be devoted to new material** (including all of the subject matter that we did not get to last spring) covering the following topics:

Session 2—we will explore the legend of a person making a deal with the devil as presented in two operas inspired by Goethe's *Faust*;

Sessions 3 and 4—in response to multiple requests, we will take an approximately four-hour romp through Richard Wagner's monumental fifteen-hour Ring Cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Class session 3 will include background material and the first of the Ring operas, *Das Rheingold*. Session 4 will cover the remaining three operas, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*;

Session 5—we will examine how to understand and enjoy 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century operas, including demonstrations by a noted local accordionist;

Session 6—we will investigate non-opera, but operatic, vocal music written by Mozart, Strauss, Bernstein, Rossini, and Verdi, including the *Verdi Requiem*, which is considered by many to be the composer's greatest opera;

Session 7—we will explore two versions of the opera *The Barber of Seville*, one by Giovanni Paisiello and the other by Gioachino Rossini, and seek to determine why Rossini's version became more popular than Paisiello's;

Session 8—we will conclude the course with a light-hearted presentation of a variety of expressions of love in opera.

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.

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**Leader:** Harold Kuskin has been an opera lover and Metropolitan Opera subscriber for over 45 years and served as a Backstage Tour Guide at the Metropolitan Opera House for 15 years. He has lectured on opera for the Princeton Festival, has taught opera at the Princeton Adult School, and, for each of the past four years, has taught a course on opera at the Evergreen Forum.

**Thursdays:** 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks: February 25 through April 15

**Maximum:** unlimited