

Music 291-ILC: Music and Poetry

Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:20–12:50, Campus Hall, Room 104

Instructor: Prof. David Schulenberg (email: dschulen@wagner.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:40–4:10, and Wednesdays, 3:30–4:30; Campus Hall, Rm. 110

Together with PS 291 (Psychology and Literature), this course forms Intermediate Learning Community 9 (Word, Mind, and Music). ILC-9 as a whole explores relationships between literature and the fields of music and psychology. Considering works from Greek antiquity to the present day, both courses provide students with an opportunity to read a broad range of poetry, fiction, and other writings while considering the diverse ways in which literature has been used and interpreted by composers and performing musicians, as well as by psychologists and philosophers. Intersections between the two courses include examination of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* and its musical realization by Stravinsky, as well as consideration of a work of Shakespeare in both an original play and an operatic adaptation. There are no prerequisites, but students should be prepared to carry reading and musical listening assignments on a regular basis and to contribute to class discussions and presentations based on them.

Our focus will be on how musicians in the Western classical tradition have responded to poetry of various types. After introducing students to basic concepts and terms used in the discussion of music, the course examines musical settings of epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry, chiefly from the Middle Ages to the present. Works examined range from medieval chansons and Renaissance madrigals to opera and songs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and twentieth- and twenty-first century settings of contemporary poetry. The course has no prerequisites and does not require previous instruction or experience in music, music theory, or music notation, musical or foreign-language literacy; students will master essential musical terminology and fundamental concepts during the first two weeks of the course.

Course objectives. At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- recognize and understand various types of poetry from several European and American traditions
- follow a musical setting of that poetry aurally, understanding aspects of the relationship between words and music
- identify the genres, forms, and historical contexts of various musical settings of poetry
- correctly employ commonly used terminology in writing and speaking about musical settings of poetry.

The course promotes these goals of the College's general education program:

- critical thinking
- an appreciation of different modes of inquiry
- competence in the skills of listening, speaking, and writing
- an appreciation of and sensitivity to the arts
- familiarity with one's own culture and other cultures in a global context.

Work for the course includes reading, listening, two written assignments, a quiz, a midterm,

aural presentations, and a final examination.

Listening to assigned recordings is the most important work. Please plan to devote several hours each week to reading the assigned texts (poetry and background readings) and then carefully listening to assigned musical compositions. The first paper and the examinations will be based primarily on these listening assignments, which are online and will be accessed either through Moodle or through links to other sites. For the second paper you will need to purchase classical music CDs or downloads unless you are able to find appropriate recordings online or in the Horrmann Library collection.

The second paper will combine original research and reading about a poem or a poetic work by a recognized literary author, together with its musical setting by a significant “classical” composer. Jazz, musical comedy, popular and commercial music, and other styles or genres of music will not be acceptable topics for this assignment unless they involve a serious poetic text by a significant writer. You will receive additional information about each assignment in class.

Over the course of the semester, each member of the class will participate in one ten-minute *student presentation*. Some presentations will be in connection with regular listening assignments. Others will take place toward the end of the semester, based on final papers. Joint presentations by more than one student on a single topic are possible. Each presentation will include a written outline and illustrative matter distributed to the class or displayed onscreen, and each should incorporate brief audio examples from the music under discussion.

During the semester you will also be expected to *attend at least three classical concerts* or comparable musical performances that involve settings of serious poetry. To receive credit for attending these performances, please bring copies of concert programs, ticket stubs, or other proof of attendance to the final exam. Concert attendance counts as part of your class attendance grade. Many free concerts are given on campus, but at least one of these performances must take place in a professional venue (concert hall, opera house, etc.) in Manhattan. Certain free performances at The Juilliard School and other area conservatories may count toward this requirement, but you must receive permission in advance.

Readings will be made available online. You are not required to purchase any textbooks.

Email and internet. Please do not submit work as email attachments unless I specifically ask you to do so. Also, please do not send me email messages asking questions about matters discussed in class, in assigned readings, or in any handouts or assignment sheets; I will not respond to such messages. Although you may use music downloads and online websites for some purposes of the course, successful completion of assignments will require you to obtain information that is available only from printed books and articles, CD recordings, and other hard-copy sources. Websites are not acceptable sources for papers except as noted below.

Grades and attendance. The final grade will be based on the two papers (10% and 20%, respectively), one quiz (10%), aural presentation (10%), midterm (15%), and final examination (25%). Class attendance and participation are worth 10%. Attendance is mandatory, and grades

will be reduced for unexcused absences. *Anyone arriving to class late or leaving early will be marked absent. You will also be marked absent if you use a cellphone or text messaging in class, or if you leave the room more than once during a class period.*

Only documents from medical or other appropriate professionals will be accepted as excuses for lateness or absence. Make-up exams will not be given; students excused from tests will instead be assigned additional written work.

Music reference books. The Horrmann Library possesses reference works on music that will provide assistance with unfamiliar terms and names. Two standard works are:

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d edn., edited by Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001). This is the standard English-language music encyclopedia, especially notable for its biographies of composers, including detailed lists of their compositions. An electronic version, *Grove Music Online*, is part of the larger website *Oxford Music Online*, which is available from the “Online Databases” page of the Horrmann Library website (<http://www.wagner.edu/library/findarticles>).

A smaller music dictionary recommended for purchase is the *Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Don M. Randel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). The online *Oxford Music Dictionary* is accessible from *Oxford Music Online* (see above).

Our library has a limited number of recent books on classical music that you may cite in papers and presentations. Many publications accessible online through the library website, including recent articles in scholarly journals and e-books issued by university presses, are also reliable sources that you may cite as references in papers and presentations. But you should not rely on older writings or on other types of online sources, such as recording reviews, news articles, and encyclopedia entries (except for *Grove*). *Wikipedia* can be helpful for getting started on a research assignment, but it is *not* acceptable as a source for any paper or presentation. The same goes for commercial websites and websites for theaters, concert organizations and halls, and individual musicians and composers. Exceptions will be allowed only in the case of certain recent works and composers for which no other sources are available.

The course calendar below lists assignments and topics. Please listen to each listed work and do the reading *before* coming to the class for which they are assigned. The numbers in parentheses are page numbers in the online textbook for the reading assignments. Most listening assignments will be available online.

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| 1 | Jan. 21 | Introduction; melody and pitch (1–6) |
| 2 | Jan. 23 | Texture, meter, and tempo; sound (6–14). Listen: examples 1–5 |
| 3 | Jan. 28 | Musical ideas (15–19). Listen: examples 6–9 |
| 4 | Jan. 30 | DIAGNOSTIC QUIZ |
| 5 | Feb. 4 | Songs by John Dowland and Henry Purcell |

- 6 Feb. 6 *student presentations*
- 7 Feb. 11 Medieval song: chansons by Guillaume de Machaut
- 8 Feb. 13 *student presentations* [2014: snow, moved to class 9]
- [Feb. 18—no class]
- 9 Feb. 20 PAPER DUE Renaissance madrigals by Marenzio and Gesualdo [presntns]
- 10 Feb. 25 *student presentations* [go over papers]
- 11 Feb. 27 Baroque ballet (epic poetry): Monteverdi's *Combatimento* [madrils]
- 12 Mar. 4 FINAL PAPER *student presentations* [on madrigals]
TOPIC DUE
- 13 Mar. 6 Baroque opera: Handel's *Orlando* [*Combat.*]
- 14 Mar. 11 *student presentations* [on *Combat.*]
- 15 Mar. 13 MIDTERM EXAM [*Orlando*]
- [Mar. 18, 20: Spring Break]
- 16 Mar. 25 Review of midterm exam [midterm: IDs only]
- 17 Mar. 27 Classical symphony: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony
- 18 Apr. 1 FINAL PAPER Romantic song: Schubert's songs on poems by Goethe
OUTLINE DUE
- 19 Apr. 3 *student presentations*
- 20 Apr. 8 Romantic opera: Verdi's *Otello* (excerpts)
- 21 Apr. 10 Symbolism, expressionism, and atonality: Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*; songs by Charles Ives
- [Apr. 15: Passover holiday]
- 22 Apr. 17 *student presentations*
- 23 Apr. 22 Neoclassic drama: Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*
- 24 Apr. 24 *student presentations*
- 25 Apr. 29 Music and poetry since World War II
- 26 May 1 FINAL PAPER Preparation for final exam
DUE
- May 8 FINAL EXAM