

VENICE AND ITS MUSICAL HISTORY - OC3184

Professor: Giuseppe Gerbino

Email: gg2024@columbia.edu

*This was Venice, the flattering and suspect beauty — this city,
half fairy tale and half tourist trap, in whose insalubrious air
the arts once rankly and voluptuously blossomed,
where composers have been inspired
to lulling tones of somniferous eroticism.*

Thomas Mann

Course Description

Throughout its history, Venice cultivated an idealized image of its political and civic identity. Music played a central role in the construction of the myth of the “Most Serene Republic” both through the prestige of the Venetian music establishment and as a symbol of social harmony and cohesion. This course explores the history of this unique bond between Venice and its musical self-fashioning.

The historical scope of the class includes key moments in the cultural life of Venice and its musical institutions: the development of polychorality in the architectural space of St. Mark’s Basilica; the opening of the first public opera houses and the commercialization of opera; the phenomenon of musical tourism, which attracted international visitors as early as the 17th century; the establishment of the music printing industry; and the cloistered virtuosity of the women musicians of the “conservatories.” The last part of the syllabus is devoted to the political legacy of Venice in 19th-century opera as well as to the construction of a nostalgic image of the city’s past musical splendor in twentieth-century music. Rather than following a strict chronological order, the syllabus is meant to reflect the topographical organization of Venetian society along the lines of the six *sestieri* and their musical venues, from the St. Mark’s Basilica, opera theaters, and aristocratic academies, to the charitable organizations known as *scuole grandi*, and the trade guilds for foreign communities (*fondachi*).

Weekly schedule

The class will meet twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday) for 3 hours each day, for a total of six weeks.

Course Requirements

This course will be run as an undergraduate seminar. Students are expected to attend regularly and to participate actively (final grades will be penalized for unexcused absences—further details in CourseWorks). Students will take turns in leading class discussions. All reading and listening assignments are available on line in CourseWorks. Class participation and presentations will account for 20% of the final grade. Students will also have to take a final exam (30%) and complete two essays (25% each) on a choice of assigned topics related to class discussion. Students will be required to attend two concerts outside class time. Guided visits to historical sites relevant to the course will be organized during class time.

Statement on Academic Integrity

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Syllabus

Week 1

Venice and Its (Musical) Myths

Venice's Musical Geography: Introductory tour of the main theaters, the *sestieri* system, and the *Scuole Grandi*.

E. Rosand, "Music in the Myth of Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 30 (1977), 511–37. PDF

Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano. Baltimore (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 1-35. PDF

Week 2

The *Serenissima* on Stage

W. Heller, "Tacitus Incognito: Opera as History in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/1(1999): 39-96. PDF

E. Muir, "Why Venice? Venetian Society and the Success of Early Opera," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36/3 (2006): 331-353. PDF

The Business of Opera

B. Glixon and J. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Ebook: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7693573>

J. Rushton, W.A. Mozart, *Don Giovanni*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Week 3

Vis comica

P. Vescovo, "Carlo Goldoni, Playwright and Reformer," in *A History of Italian Theatre*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Paolo Puppa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160-176. PDF

B. Galuppi, *Il filosofo di campagna: dramma giocoso in tre atti* (1754).

Opera Comica

Visit of Visit of Querini Stampalia Musuem

B. Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda* (1720). English translation in R. G. Pauly, "Benedetto Marcello's Satire on Early 18th-Century Opera," *Musical Quarterly* 34/2 (1948): 222-33. PDF

Week 4

Music and Architecture

L. Moretti, "Architectural Spaces for Music: Jacopo Sansovino and Adrian Willaert at St Mark's" *Early Music History* 23 (2004): 153-184.

G.M. Ongaro: "All Work and No Play? The Organization of Work among Musicians in Late Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25 (1995): 55-72.

The Madrigal in Venice

Visit of St. Mark's Basilica

M. Feldman, "The Academy of Domenico Venier, Music's Literary Muse in Mid-Cinquecento Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44/ 3 (1991): 476-512.

Week 5

Cloistered Virtuosity

J.L. Baldauf-Berdes, "Anna Maria della Pietà: The Woman Musician of Venice Personified," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 134-155.

M. Talbot, "The Pietà as viewed by Johann Christoph Maier (1795)," *Studi vivaldiani* 4 (2004): 75-118. PDF

The Red Priest

Visit of the Church of Santa Maria della Pietà (and museum)

H. C. Robbins Landon, *Vivaldi: Voice of the Baroque* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 34-166.

Week 6

New Mythologies

M. Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), chapter 9. PDF

J. Johnson, "The Myth of Venice in Nineteenth-Century Opera," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36/3 533-554. PDF

G. Verdi, *I due Foscari* (1844).

FINAL MEXAM

Draft