

MSC 20th Century Opera Syllabus

Session 1-

In this first session, we will examine Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*; why it's considered to be a seminal work of French music and why the musical structure and dramatic concept is unlike any other opera before it.

Session 2-

Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* is one of the few post-World War I German operas that has become established in the international repertoire. In this session, we will study the many, often complex ways the composer set this compelling psychological drama to music.

Session 3-

Although George did not create the first truly American opera with *Porgy and Bess*, he did create what is acknowledged world-wide as an enduring masterpiece. We all know most of the great tunes of this memorable work, but we'll dig a bit deeper into how the piece was skillfully assembled.

Session 4-

Dimitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was a huge success with the audience and critics alike when it premiered in 1934 but was banned by Stalin after he attended a performance 2 years later. Session #4 will be an exploration of this deeply absorbing, yet approachable opera that is one of the most brilliant achievements of this Russian composer's career.

Session 5-

The premiere in 1945 of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* guaranteed him a place in the pantheon of major operatic composers. In this session, we will attempt to discover how this remarkable piece of musical theater has become one of the finest achievements of the mid-20th century.

Session 6-

Just as Richard Strauss did with *Der Rosenkavalier*, Igor Stravinsky modeled his opera *The Rake's Progress* after Mozart. The final session will be an examination of how this "mock comic opera" is also an important example of the composer's neoclassic style.

