

MSC Essential Opera: Opera Exotica

Course Syllabus

Session One-

We'll begin this course with one of the seven operatic masterpieces that Mozart composed while living in Vienna as a freelance musician in the final ten years of his brief but remarkable life, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Looking at highlights from a production staged by the Bavarian State Opera, we will learn how Mozart combined the stylistic characteristics of the Italian opera seria tradition with the German singspiel.

Session Two-

This session is all about one of the trio of Rossini's opera buffa masterpieces, *L'Italiana in Algeri*. Composed early in his career, this delightful work is in the bel canto style that was all the rage in the early 19th century. This Met Opera production from 1980 starring Marilyn Horne is a perfect example of this popular genre as we will discover.

Session Three-

Aida, Verdi's "Egyptian opera" was written late in his long career and although is quite conventional in structure, we will learn how the composer included some exotic elements. Although this star-studded production from La Scala was obviously expensive, don't count on any elephants in the triumphal scene!

Session Four-

Camille Saint-Saens composed over a dozen operas but only *Samson et Dalilah* remains in the standard repertoire. Our exploration of highlights of this marvelous masterpiece will reveal why it has endured and how this facile composer's music evoked a quasi-biblical setting.

Session Five-

Principally known today for his ballet scores, *Coppelia* and *Sylvia*, during his lifetime, Leo Delibes was better known for his operetta and opera comiques. His unjustly neglected opera *Lakme* captures the eastern, "oriental" ambiance that was in fashion in late 19th century Europe particularly in the melodic writing, dances and orchestration.

Session Six-

Unlike most opera composers, almost all of Giacomo Puccini's twelve works have remained in the repertoire including *Madama Butterfly*. We will explore how the composer adapted this one act play by David Belasco and cleverly crafted a masterpiece of operatic melodrama that musically evokes its Japanese setting.

