EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
MUSIC
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Music Department
FA / MUSI 3900 3.0 SECTION A
RICHARD WAGNER: DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN
SUMMER 2019

Last Modified Date: 04/30/2019

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course considers Wagner's Ring cycle from various analytical perspectives. Topics include: the function of harmony, orchestration, and leitmotif; Attic and Nordic myths and sources; symbolism, philosophy, religion, and economics; in addition to themes such as envy, greed, abuse, love, death, loyalty, sacrifice, duty, honour, truth, freedom, and redemption.

INSTRUCTOR(S)
TBD

SPECIAL FEATURES

FA/MUSI 3900 3.0

Richard Wagner: Der Ring des Nibelungen

Das Rheingold; Die Walküre; Siegfried; Götterdämmerung

Richard Wagner's tetralogy The Ring of the Nibelung is considered by many to be one of the greatest musical dramas produced in the history of modern times. The work has spawned numerous scholarly publications and continues to generate a cult-like following and passionate and devoted aficionados. It is also one of the most controversial operatic works and, to some extent, this is the result of the nature of Wagner's complex life, his political and social writings, and certain "negative" aspects which haunt his posthumous reputation. However, the music and associated drama stand on their own as visionary examples of 19th C. creative techniques and originality; harmonic richness and depth; cultural commentary full of light and darkness, myth and ritual, symbol and metaphor; and artistic extensions of ancient Attic, Germanic, and Nordic literature, legends, and folk lore.

This course considers The Ring from several different perspectives including:
1. a) Harmonic and motivic structures, forms, and tonal prolongations
2. b) Dramatic influences on, and inspiration for, future artists and scholars
3. c) Interplay of "eternal" elements: symbolism, philosophy, religion, economics, power, sacrifice
4. d) Orchestral function and purpose; sonic imitator of the Greek chorus; the leitmotif
5. e) Thematic content: envy, theft, ownership, greed, abuse, ecology, nature, love, death, loyalty, sacrifice, duty, honour, truth, freedom, redemption, etc.

Numerous relevant texts by Cooke, Dahlhaus, Donington, Grout, Shaw, Millington, Newman, Rather, but especially the following:


Orchestral and piano vocal scores of all four operas are readily available from Dover Publications, New York. Some score excerpts are available online.

There are countless recordings, DVDs, and YouTube postings. Audio and DVD recordings are recommended by major conductors and labels such as Böhm (Phillips), Furtwangler (EMI), Boulez (Phillips), Krauss, (Allegro), Haitink (EMI), and Goodall (Chandos).

**Class Schedule:** Summer 2019 Term 11 April 29 to May 17
Tuesday and Wednesday 10:00 AM– 2:00 PM

**Grading Scheme:**
- Mid-term Listening test 20%
- Two oral reports/presentations/commentaries (5 minutes max) 30%
- End of term test: Written and Listening 20%
- Final Project/Analysis/Essay/Report 30%

**Grading:** The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests will bear corresponding number grade. (For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/2010-2011/academic/index.htm

**Important Course Information:** All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) - http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/ascp/documents/CourseInformationForStudentsAugust2012.pdf
- Senate Policy on Academic Honesty and the Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

Possible topics and suggested areas of interest for additional reading, research, analysis, and topics for short in class presentations and final papers:

- Wagner and Nietzsche
- The use of Magic in the Narrative of the Ring
- The Ring and the Function of Technology
- Greed as Manifest in the Ring
- The Ring as a Fairy Story
- Light and Darkness in the Ring Cycle
- Wagner and the Technique of the Leitmotif
- The Ring’s Harmonic Conception and Devices
- Wagner’s Orchestration
- The Role of Women Characters in the Ring
Wotan as Father Figure
The Sacred and Profane in the Imagery of the Ring
The Greek Influence on the Ring
Archetypes and the Ring
The Ring performed in English translation: Goodall’s Experiment
Beethoven’s Influence on Wagner
Berlioz (Les Troyens) and Wagner: Orchestration as Text Interpretation
The Ring’s use of Deception as Structural Device to Advance the Narrative
The Myth of King Arthur and the Ring
Tolkien and Wagner
The Lord of the Rings and the Ring Cycle
Wagner’s Voice Leading Techniques in the Ring Cycle
Wagner’s orchestration as a model for Hollywood film music
Wagner and Chromaticism: The Expansion of Tonality
James Merrill: The Ring Cycle
Anna Russell and her Interpretation of the Ring Cycle
Cartoons and the Influence of Wagner’s Ring Cycle
The Ring Cycle as Model for Games of Thrones
Wagner as Political and Musical Revolutionary
A Feminist Interpretation of the Ring
Laws and Ethics in the Ring
Wagner’s Vocal Writing
Wagner’s Melodic Conception

Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.
Moodle @ York University