

Opera Production and Performance

Undergraduate Fall 57471; Graduate Fall 57771

Undergraduate Spring 57472; Graduate Spring 57772

Monday-Friday 6:30-10:30pm; Saturday 10am-2:20pm

WQED Studio B

Instructor Information

Name	Crystal Manich, Director of Opera Studies (Interim)
Contact Info	cmanich@andrew.cmu.edu
Office Hours	By appointment
	Sari Gruber, Chair of Voice Division Melanie Holcomb, Production Manager

Course Description

The very nature of what we do is unique and special because it exists primarily outside of the digital space and is dependent on honest hard work and passion. Opera is the ultimate expression of vocal art forms as it is the synthesis of drama and music. Production and Performance is a practice that emulates current professional approaches to opera production nationwide regarding a high standard of musical preparation, characterization, and professional conduct. These values are driven in this course by vocal professors, coaches, stage directors, and conductors currently working in the professional opera field, which will give students a window into what it means to perform in opera today.

Production and Performance is a required course for all voice majors. Auditions for Opera Production are open only to Undergraduate and Graduate Voice Majors, qualified Voice Minors or Non-Music Majors studying full-time with a professor within the CMU School of Music. Advanced Certificate and Artist Diploma students may also be considered and cast for roles in Production, on a case-by-case basis. Other non-major students may be considered for chorus roles.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of Production is to provide students with experience through stage performance of operatic works as would occur in a professional setting.

Students will:

- Masterfully prepare a role both musically and dramatically, concerning character and circumstance within the drama
- Develop the stamina necessary to execute that role
- Deepen their understanding of stagecraft through a weeks-long process
- Gain an appreciation of what it means to be part of a complete operatic design
- Collaborate effectively with other performers in addition to a variety of stage directors and conductors
- Embody the nuance of performance practices related to historical and/or compositional music studies.

Casting

Auditions for Opera Productions take place during the final weeks of the Spring semester of the academic year. All qualified students will prepare material specifically reflecting the demands of the upcoming productions. Students are also asked to prepare a monologue. These auditions may be video-recorded for visiting directors/conductors. Students are encouraged to research roles and to present arias appropriate to the chosen productions.

Casting of roles and chorus parts will be decided in voice faculty meetings. Students will be cast in a total of four productions during their junior and senior year. Graduate students will be cast in two productions during their course of study. Casting will be announced before the final week of the spring semester and is subject to change. Individual casting can be changed at any time due to lack of preparation, schedule conflicts, unprofessionalism or any other reason determined by the Director of Opera Studies in conference with the Voice and Coaching Faculty and visiting guest stage directors or conductors. Students are expected to learn their roles OVER THE SUMMER before the production year. For more information on expectations regarding preparation, please refer to the Coaching syllabus.

Class Times

Staging and musical rehearsals will occur for three consecutive hours between 6:30pm and 10:30pm Monday-Friday at the discretion of the stage director and conductor, and four hours and 20 minutes on Saturdays from 10am-2:20pm. *Please note that these times are only for the staging process; please refer to the Coaching syllabus and schedule for coaching times.* Once the production moves into the technical rehearsal process, the class times will occur Monday-Friday from 6:30pm-10:30pm, and Saturdays at a time that will be

noted in the calendar you receive. Performance dates and times are provided to you at the auditions.

Attendance

There's an old saying in the theatre that goes, "If you show up on time, you're late." The creation of a production requires collaboration: even one person missing means that the entire group (and end product) is affected.

Attendance is mandatory for all coaching, music, and staging rehearsals for which a student is called within the standard rehearsal period. Attendance is also mandatory during technical rehearsals, orchestra rehearsals, and performances. Students should not accept any conflicting professional work or personal commitments during the allocated hours for the production process, as is outlined in the class times listed above. Showing up to Production late is not ideal given the collaborative nature of our work.

Non-compliance will affect your grade as follows:

Action:	Consequence:
Late 10 min or more	= one tardy
Three tardies	= one absence
One absence	= deduction of 5 percentage points
Two absences	= deduction of 10 percentage points
Three absences	= failure of the course

Students requesting a pre-approved absence from any rehearsal during coaching, staging, tech, or performance must complete an online [Request Release Form](#), which will be available one to two weeks prior to the beginning of the coaching process of each production. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and no request is guaranteed to be granted. Requests for absences after that deadline will not be considered for that production period. No releases will be granted for technical rehearsals, orchestra rehearsals, or performances. When you commit to an opera production, you must commit to the entire process.

If you are sick or expect to be late for any reason, you must follow the procedures below.

During coaching weeks:

PLEASE REFER TO THE SEPARATE COACHING SYLLABUS.

If you are sick or expect to be late, you must notify the lead coach.

During the staging, tech, and performance weeks:

If you are sick or if you expect to be late for any reason, you must notify the Stage Manager assigned to the production (phone number will be provided as each production begins). If you are unwell, please use your best judgment on whether coming to rehearsal may risk infecting others. In the case of a medical emergency, seek appropriate medical attention and, once you are able, call the Stage Manager.

Students who are vocally indisposed are still expected to attend rehearsal (as long as they are not contagious) even if they do not sing in the rehearsal.

Code of Expectations and Recommendations

All voice students are expected to do the following:

- Prepare music upon being cast in the production, and continue over the summer break as well as other preparations such as doing a word-for-word translation of their role.
- Roles should be thoroughly learned by the first coaching rehearsal. Please refer to the Coaching syllabus for a full set of expectations.
- Consult with your studio teachers and coaches for assistance on how to best develop a practice schedule, including vocal and dramatic work, language study, and/or characterization.
- All roles are to be memorized by the first music run-through prior to staging, otherwise your grade will be affected accordingly.
- At each staging rehearsal, cast members should write down all their blocking in their score.
- Any student who leaves the rehearsal room outside of designated breaks must inform Stage Management before doing so.
- All staging must be memorized just like your music. You are expected to have the initial staging learned and put to memory by the second rehearsal in which you are on your feet for any given scene.
- The goal is for each repeated rehearsal of a scene or moment to add clarity, exploration, and development to your character and the overall arc of the drama (a layering process of specifics).
- Take good care of your physical and mental health.

Devices, Recording, and Social Media

Opera is inherently (and most often) an analog activity that requires concentration, participation, and collaboration. Phones must be put on silent and put away during coachings, rehearsals, and performances. During tech rehearsals and performances, phones should not be brought to stage by a performer under any circumstances; if you have one onstage or in the wings, your grade will be deducted by five percentage points. Sometimes Stage Management will need to use their phones or record scenes to

be viewed internally for a myriad of reasons. We will always announce when such a recording will take place.

Students may not record (whether visual or audio) musical or staging rehearsals without the consent of the conductor, director, or coach. If you are granted permission to do such a recording, it is for study purposes only and must not be posted to social media. Should this rule be violated, no recordings of any kind will be permitted in rehearsals.

Production and Performance will have a specific social media page on which content will be posted to promote productions and assist with recruitment efforts. The Director of Opera Studies will determine “Media Days” during which rehearsals will be filmed for social media by an assigned person. Notification of such days will be published on the daily schedule.

Grading

Overall grade for Production will be divided into four sections of equal value: coaching week(s), staging and music rehearsal weeks, technical rehearsals, and performances. The process of making opera is a key component of this course, not just your final performance.

Before staging begins, your coach will establish a grade that will reflect your preparation and progress during the coaching, equaling 25% of your final Production grade. 75% of your grade is determined by your work in staging rehearsals, tech rehearsals, and performance as follows:

<u>Assessment:</u>	<u>% of grade</u>
Coaching period	25%
Staging and Music rehearsals	25%
Technical rehearsals	25%
Performances	25%
Total	100%

Letter Grade of ‘A’

The singer is on time to rehearsal and shows up with goodwill and openness toward the leadership team, their colleagues and all involved in the production process. The singer is fully memorized and uses the score only to note requests from the conductor or director and to note any mistakes. The singer easily implements suggestions, takes

direction well, leads with confidence and performs with musical and theatrical conviction.

Letter Grade of 'B'

All of the above criteria, but to a slightly lesser degree. The singer is mostly memorized for the sing-through and consults their score only a handful of times. The singer is able to take direction and easily implement suggestions.

Letter Grade of 'C'

The singer needs regular help with any of the following: notes, pitches, rhythms, basic pronunciation, translation, and staging. The singer slows down the rehearsal process and the conductor or director must stop frequently. The singer is unable to assimilate suggestions (musical or staging) due to a lack of preparedness.

Letter Grade of D/R

Any of the following criteria: The singer is unable to make it through any musical number or scene without having to frequently stop the rehearsal for either music or staging. The singer has not prepared the score in the ways described above. The singer does not take direction well or implement ideas easily and consistently. The singer is not memorized for the music run-thru. The singer is unable to repeat staging from rehearsal to rehearsal.

If your production spans two semesters, your grade will be 50% of the above criteria for each semester.

Grading Scale for Undergraduates

- A 100%-90%
- B 89%-80%
- C 79%-70%
- D 69%-60%
- R 59%-0%

Grading Scale for Graduates

- A+ 100%
- A 99%-93%
- A- 92%-90%
- B+ 89%-87%
- B 86%-83%
- B- 82%-80%
- C+ 79%-77%
- C 76%-73%
- C- 72%-70%
- D+ 69%-63%

- D- 62%-60%
- R 59%-0%

Letter Grade Descriptions

- The following standard is for all undergraduate students:
 - A 4.0 Excellent
 - B 3.0 Good
 - C 2.0 Satisfactory
 - D 1.0 Passing
 - R 0.0 Failure
 - W Withdrawal
 - I Incomplete
- The following standard is for all graduate students:
 - A+ 4.33
 - A 4.0
 - A- 3.67
 - B+ 3.33
 - B 3.0
 - B- 2.67
 - C+ 2.33
 - C 2.0
 - C- 1.67
 - D+ 1.33
 - D- 1.0
 - R 0.0
 - W Withdrawal
 - I Incomplete

Office Hours

The Director of Opera Studies is available for office hours by appointment in-person, by phone, or by Zoom. Please email cmanich@andrew.cmu.edu to schedule a time.

Considered Criteria

Participation and Attendance. How well the student employs technical understanding of stagecraft, professionalism, and attitude in rehearsal and final performances. Also, strongly valued is the student's professional behavior and deportment in all of the noted locales.

Final Ensemble Grade. You will be graded for the work you have completed in the given semester. If you are not cast in the fall opera, your grade will be the same as your Opera Workshop grade.

Respect for Diversity

Students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives are intended to be well served by this course. Students' learning needs will be addressed both in and out of class. The diversity that students bring to this class is viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. All are expected to be respectful of diversity in gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, and culture. Diversity is to be appreciated as it is fundamental to building and maintaining a healthy campus and community.

School of Music Expectations

School of Music students are expected to attend **all classes and final examinations, studio lessons, rehearsals, performances, convocations, graduate forums**, and to complete all scheduled **work-study assignments**. However, there is always the possibility of unforeseen, unavoidable circumstances. Please refer to the guidelines below to navigate such situations:

Bereavement

A student who experiences a **death in the family** will be excused from all classes for as long as is personally necessary. The **School of Music office should be notified immediately**. Faculty will do everything possible to support the student. However, if the absence extends to a point where coursework cannot be made up, a **Leave of Absence** may be recommended. Upon returning, students are encouraged to seek support from **Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS)**.

Faculty Absence

If a faculty member must miss a regularly scheduled class, you will be notified by email as early as possible. When faculty are out of town for professional engagements, a **qualified substitute** will be arranged. For extended absences, the School will assign a **replacement instructor**. Classes are rarely canceled at CMU or in the School of Music.

Student Leave of Absence

A **Leave of Absence** is appropriate when a student cannot fully participate in the program for an extended period of time. A **Leave of Absence Form** must be submitted.

- If the leave is taken **before the drop deadline**, all courses will be dropped from the transcript for that semester and will **not negatively impact** the student's academic record.
- If taken **before the first day of the semester**, all tuition payments will be refunded.
- For tuition adjustments **after the semester begins**, please refer to CMU's **tuition refund policy**.

Student Well-Being

If you need a safe, confidential environment within which to talk about academic and personal concerns, please reach out to the staff at [CAPS](#), 412-268-2922. David Chickering is our Associate Director for Residential Education and Housefellow and can also assist you: dchicker@andrew.cmu.edu

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a core CMU value, and as a member of the CMU community, it is important that the work you turn in for this class must be wholly your own. As your instructor, I will strive to ensure that you develop the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the learning objectives for this class, just as it is your task to put in the effort to complete the work and ask for help if you need it.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.