

COURSE DETAILS – WEEKEND WE0372

TITLE: MAGIC, MYTH AND FOLK-LORE AT THE OPERA

TUTOR: GWYN PARRY-JONES

LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

Ever since Monteverdi's *Orfeo* – given its première at the palace of the Duke of Mantua in 1607, and often cited as the first truly great opera – composers have returned again and again to stories with a magical or supernatural twist to them. Perhaps this isn't really surprising, for Dr. Johnson's description of opera as 'an expensive and irrational entertainment' is not as wide of the mark or as unfair as it may sound. Nevertheless, the combination of music and drama, with the addition of scenery and costume, can be both intoxicating and sensational, and lends itself perfectly to 'larger than life' subjects.

The ultimate example of this is probably the *Ring* cycle; yet there are countless examples of less monumental and (depending on your feelings about Wagner!) maybe more appealing works to be found throughout musical history. In this weekend course, we shall explore how composers as diverse as Humperdinck in his setting of the fairy-tale *Hansel and Gretel*, or Britten in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* use music to bring magic and legend to life, as well as exploring in detail two great short operas. One of these, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard* is a dark tale in which the character of the title brings his new bride, Judith, to his castle, and allows her to open one by one the doors that disclose his secrets. Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* is best translated as 'The Child and the Household Spirits', and is an enchanting setting of a most unusual ghost story for and about children by Collette.

Illustrations will include performances of the featured works on CD and video/DVD. No formal knowledge of music is necessary, though some scores will be available to enable those who wish to study them to do so.

EVENING SESSIONS:

First evening session – attendance is an essential part of the course.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

The tutor will instruct students in health and safety issues relevant to this course. There are no health and safety restrictions on access to this studio/teaching space in the absence of the tutor.

PAR5WE6

GWYN PARRY-JONES was Head of Musical Activities at the University of Reading. He is a freelance lecturer, conductor and competition adjudicator. He is also the composer of a number of published works for wind instruments and voices.

COURSE TIMETABLE (unless otherwise stated or agreed with the tutor during the course)

Course timetable for 2–9 day courses – each course starts with a welcome session on the first evening of the start date of the course and is followed by 2–9 days depending on the length of the course.

Arrival Day	From 4.00pm 7.00 8.15–9.15	Arrival for residential students. Non-residential students please arrive by 6.45pm for welcome chat and dinner. Dinner. First session.
Daily Timetable	9.15am 10.30 12.45pm 2.00pm 3.30 7.00	Morning classes. Coffee. Lunch. Afternoon classes. Tea. Dinner. Late afternoon/evening – some music courses involve late afternoon/evening teaching sessions. The tutor will advise at the start of the course.
Departure – last day	10.00am 3.00pm 3.30	Residential students are asked to vacate rooms. Classes finish. Tea then departure.