

Fall 2019
ITAL-UA 172

Drama Queens: Opera, Gender and the Poetics of Excess



What is a drama queen? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a drama queen is “a person who is prone to exaggeratedly dramatic behaviour” and “a person who thrives on being the centre of attention.” While drama queens certainly exist among us in real life, the world of opera is indeed one of their ideal environments. Echoing back to their tragic fates, the powerful voices of Dido, Medea, Violetta, and Tosca never ceased to affect their empathetic public. In fact, excess and overreactions are two main features of the operatic experience both on stage and in the audience. By focusing on the ways in which operatic characters are brought to life, the course explores the social, political, and gender dynamics that inform the melodramatic imagination. Along with a broad introduction to the development of the operatic genre and the opera libretto from 1600 to 1900, the course will provide students with a theoretical background across literature and musical culture, reception, voice/sound and gender studies. Case studies include highlights from operas by Monteverdi, Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini as well as readings from works by authors such as Balzac, Tolstoy, D’Annunzio, and theoretical writings by Abel, Butler, Dolar, Koestenbaum, among others. Students will have the opportunity to attend screenings and live performances. No musical skills required. This course will be taught in English.

Prof. Eugenio Refini
Mondays/Wednesdays 2:00PM-3:15
Room 306
Casa Italiana Zerilli - Marimò