

## SYLLABUS

### I Hear America Singing: Adventures in American Opera

Kip Cranna, Dramaturg Emeritus, San Francisco Opera  
January 18-March 1, 2022 (no class Feb. 15)  
Tuesdays, 1:00pm



This course will explore the question “Has the Golden Age American Opera Arrived?” Opera composers followed European models at first, but soon began striking out in distinctly new directions, giving home-grown opera a special character. Once the butt of critical derision for its departure from European modernism, the growing canon of distinguished American opera has now earned the loyal appreciation of devoted audiences.

Using audio and video examples (with subtitles—even though everything will be in English), San Francisco Opera’s Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna will take us on a journey through the multifarious world of American opera, exploring a wide variety of groundbreaking works from the early period of our musical history through our own time. Among the composers we’ll investigate are many of the men and women of this century who are creating fascinating new works, often dealing with issues of social justice and racial equality. Questions and comments are welcome.

## **Week by Week Outline**

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**Week 1 (Jan. 18): American Originals: John Philip Sousa, Victor Herbert, Scott Joplin, George Gershwin**

**Week 2 (Jan. 25): Mid-Century Milestones: William Grant Still, Virgil Thomson, Marc Blitzstein, Gian Carlo Menotti, Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber**

**Week 3 (Feb. 1): Opera Landmarks of the 1950's, 60's and 70's: Douglas Moore, Carlisle Floyd, Robert Ward; Dominick Argento, Jack Beeson, Thomas Pasatieri**

**Week 4 (Feb. 8): Modern Masters: Philip Glass, John Adams, André Previn**

**NOTE: NO CLASS FEB. 15**

**Week 5(Feb. 22): A Bay Area Great: Jake Heggie**

**Week 6 (March 1): The Lively 21st Century: Stewart Wallace, Mark Adamo, Kevin Puts, Laura Kaminsky, Ricky Ian Gordon, Terence Blanchard, Jennifer Higdon, Bright Sheng, Missie Mazzoli, Jeanine Tesori, Mason Bates**

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**Dramaturg Emeritus of San Francisco Opera, where he was on staff for over 40 years, Kip Cranna earned his Ph.D. in musicology at Stanford University. He lectures frequently on opera appreciation and teaches at the Fromm Institute at USF and at OLLI at U.C. Berkeley, SF State, and Dominican University. In 2008 he was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor.**

### **Suggested Reading:**

***American Opera*, by Elise K. Kirk. University of Chicago Press, 2001. This is a broad survey of the development of opera by American composers throughout our nation's history.**

***The Encyclopedia of American Opera*, by Ken Wlaschin. McFarland and Co., Inc., 2006. A comprehensive reference work on American opera with 1750 cross-referenced entries.**

***Opera in America: A Cultural History*, by John Dizikes. Yale University Press, 1993. This is the story of opera performances and opera companies in America, rather than opera exclusively by American composers, but offers a fascinating look at how a European artform became transplanted to the New World, and how great American artists used their distinct gifts to make opera thrive in this country.**