



Renaissance Institute

POETRY IN MUSIC

Renaissance Institute, Fall 2025

Tuesdays, 9:15 to 10:30 AM

Roger Brunyate, instructor

Poetry in Music

POETRY IS MUSIC IN WORDS, and music has always aspired to poetry. More than a history of text-setting over the past millennium, this class will look at some of the ways in which poetry has informed music over the ages: religious texts, in chant and later in measured polyphony; the development of the madrigal from stand-alone song to miniature music drama; the use of folksongs in both vocal and instrumental music; the explosion of art song in the 19th century, setting the works of great poets in their own right; instrumental forms such as the *Ballade* and *Song Without Words* that bring the aesthetic of poetry into pure music, and verse that imitates musical forms; texts written for declamation against music; and lyricists of the 20th and 21st centuries, writing texts intended from the start for musical setting. rb.



The Sound of Words

September 9. A kaleidoscopic spectrum of the ways in which poetry and music interrelate, from Gregorian chant to American rap. An audio-visual menu of many of the topics to be examined later in more detail.

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The Sacred in Text and Song

September 16. A return to the roots of vocal music in the simple declamation of text. Chant in church and temple. Choral singing and oratorio. Verse that enshrines a faith and the music that enfolds it.



Songs of the People

September 23. Popular songs and dances through the centuries. Poems about magic, loss, and longing. *The Beggar's*

Opera. The appearance of folk materials in classical music and opera. Modern folksong settings.

Songs of the Poets

September 30. The response of composers to the inspiration of poets. Shakespeare settings through the ages, Schubert's encounters with Goethe, and the extraordinary poetic sensibility of Benjamin Britten. .



Conversations Between Arts

October 7. The marriage of poetry and music in ways other than text-setting. Music that takes on the lyrical forms of poetry. Poetry that addresses the experience of listening to music. Dance inspired equally by both.

Words for Performance

October 14. Words written from the start for musical setting, whether for popular song, Broadway, or even the opera stage. Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Stephen Sondheim, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and perhaps a little rap.



Handouts for each class and related materials will be posted at:

www.brunyate.com/RenInstPoetry

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