



# Shakespeare and Verdi

Fall 2016 HNR5 2030, section 2

10:30-11:50 TTH, 249 MDA

Instructors:

Dr. Malcolm Richardson (English) and Dr. Andreas Giger (Music)

How can music interpret Shakespeare's words? How does contemporary culture affect both the music and the way in which audiences interpret those words? How do these works resonate with audiences differently today? The Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) worshiped Shakespeare's plays and wrote three operas based on them: *Macbeth*, *Otello* (based on *Othello*), and *Falstaff* (based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *1 Henry IV*). Verdi's operas are still performed world-wide, almost as often as the plays they're based on. In this team-taught course we'll investigate the historical and formal aspects of the four Shakespeare plays, the theatrical culture in which Shakespeare worked, the reasons why Verdi's chose these particular plays as operatic subjects, the methods and conventions he used to adapt them as operas, and the way in which the music becomes a method of *interpreting* – as opposed to simply setting to music -- some of the world's most celebrated plays.

This is an interdisciplinary course, requiring a commitment to study both in literature and music. And no, you don't have to be an opera fan. We'll watch and listen to examples of plays and operas on DVD and CD. You'll learn about music, Shakespeare, stagecraft, and much about Italian and English culture. We'll discuss media, too: changes in staging and acting styles, Shakespeare adapted to film and television, opera on film and television, etc.



Requirements: Students should be familiar with basic classical music concepts (at the level of LSU's music appreciation courses). You will be expected to tackle the structure and metrics of Italian librettos (but no prior knowledge of Italian is required). The course will focus on reading, listening, writing, and interpreting, with regular quizzes to identify short passages from Shakespeare's and Verdi's works on the exams and quizzes.

Photos: top: Michael Gambon (i.e., Dumbledore) as Falstaff; Ian McKellan and Judy Dench, Marion Cotillard and Michael Fassbender as Mr. and Mrs. Macbeth. Among the photos at the bottom: Vivian Leigh as Lady Macbeth; Lawrence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh in *Othello*; Placido Domingo in Verdi's *Otello*; (a young) Maggie Smith as Lady Macbeth; Patrick Stewart as Macbeth