The Queen's College, Oxford
Trinity Term 2020
Collection: 2nd-year Music

COMPULSORY TOPICS:

3 hours

Answer THREE questions, each from a different section.

A. THE RENAISSANCE MADRIGAL

1. The cultivation of the madrigal is intricately tied to aesthetic and literary debates. Discuss, using two contrasting musical case studies.

2. How important a role did academies play in the composition, dissemination and critical reception of madrigals?

3. How did madrigal composers’ approach to the task of setting Petrarch’s poetry differ from their approach to setting contemporary poetry?

4. For Alfred Einstein (1949), the madrigal emerged through a process that ‘can be followed as easily as the transformation of a chrysalis into a butterfly’. Explain why this theory has attracted criticism and re-assess what can be known about the madrigal’s real origin(s).

5. In her book on Modal Subjectivities (2004), Susan McClary challenges the view that Monteverdi fundamentally reinvented the madrigal tradition: ‘Monteverdi reaped the benefit of this heritage, but he did not [re-invent its principles.’ Would Monteverdi have agreed with this assessment? Do you?

6. For John Caldwell (1991), the English madrigal is ‘sui generis, an inimitable and unrepeatable mélange. Comparison with its Italian counterpart is a necessary stage in its criticism, but in the end it must be judged for what it is.’ What is the English madrigal, if not a product of cultural transfer and assimilation?

B. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OPERA

7. Martha Feldman (2015) proposes that ‘those castrati who attain pre-eminence through extraordinary musical and social performances come to represent the monarch or the “king’s men” not just by virtue of casting but by embodying, projecting, and indeed manipulating royal charisma and diffusing it geographically and temporally from city to city’.

How did eighteenth-century opera embody, project, and manipulate its social context? Illustrate your answer with reference to ONE work.
8 Is *dramma per musica* or *opera seria* the better term for Italian serious opera in the eighteenth century? Why?

9 Cynthia Verba (2013) notes that Rameau’s views ‘entail an expansive belief in music’s expressive and dramatic capacities’. How did these views manifest themselves in his operatic work?

10 Do you agree with Mary Hunter and James Webster (1997) that ‘*opera buffa* is interesting precisely because it is not canonic, and does not bear the cultural burden of Mozart’s masterworks’?

11 Should we see the various comic and national genres of eighteenth-century opera (*opera buffa, opéra comique, Singspiel, ballad opera*) as ‘peripheral’ to the story of opera’s development in the period?

12 Stefano Castelvecchi (2013) has proposed that late eighteenth-century operas that do not easily fit into generic categories are often seen as ‘weeds’ by music historians. How important was generic mixing to the development of opera in the eighteenth century?

C. PROGRAMME MUSIC IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

13 How did programme music contribute to the development of a) form, b) harmony, or c) orchestration in symphonic writing? Focus on ONE or TWO of these parameters in your answer.

14 Consider Beethoven’s legacy on the development of 19th-century programme music.

15 What compositional techniques did creators of 19th-century programme music use to summon specific (or imagined) landscapes?

16 How did programme music change with the transition between Romantic and modernist aesthetics?

17 Compare and contrast how two different 19th-century examples of programme music deal with a) narrative, b) mimesis, or c) the politics of nationalism. Focus on ONE or TWO of these topics in your answer.

18 Why were 19th-century devotees of absolute music discomforted by the notion of extra-musical representation?