

You will find that some courses are only available for WEA members at this time, as part of member's priority booking. Courses will become available for all at 11 am on Wednesday 3rd July. Alternatively, become a WEA member today to book right away. Click on the 'Become a member' link at the top of the page.

Early booking is a membership perk for WEA members, where courses are available exclusively before becoming available for everyone else.

Got it!

Course details

Course title

Music Appreciation: The Music of the Parisian Belle Epoque: The Innovations of the French Composers

Course code

Q00017603

Course date

Start: 07/01/25

End: 11/02/25

Number of classes

6 sessions

Timetable

Tue 7th Jan, 10:30 to 12:30

Tue 14th Jan, 10:30 to 12:30

Tue 21st Jan, 10:30 to 12:30

Tue 28th Jan, 10:30 to 12:30

Tue 4th Feb, 10:30 to 12:30

Tue 11th Feb, 10:30 to 12:30

Branch

Wallingford Branch

Tutor

Christopher Carter

Fee range

Free to £60.00

How you'll learn

You'll join a small group of fellow learners for classes at the venue indicated. Some materials may be provided in our virtual learning environment.

Got it!

In venue

Venue

Storton Lodge (Goring)

Icknield Road

Goring-on-Thames

Goring

RG8 0DL

Level of study

Beginners

Course overview

Paris between 1870 and 1925, in the period known as La Belle Epoque, saw an outburst of artistic creativity in which music played a major role. Composers such as Bizet, Debussy, Ravel and Satie produced innovations which advanced western musical development by overturning Wagner and re-writing the rule book on harmony and form. After a lull since its Romantic hey-day in the 1830s, Paris was once again the centre of the musical world. The city was now a melting pot for artistic endeavour, transforming influences from Russia, Spain, the Far East and the USA into music which became uniquely and elegantly French. In this course, we trace a period, book-ended by two devastating wars, through its achievements in verismo opera, "total art" ballet, impressionism, avant-garde and jazz.

Course description

A period as short as 50 years means that our French composers were all contemporaries. Our course will therefore see them crossing between sessions, more emphasis being placed perhaps on genres than sequential narrative. We start in 1870 and France's wartime defeat, when anti-German sentiment and the love-hate relationship with Wagner came to a head. You will learn how an initiative to train native-born composers and defy the stuffy stranglehold of the Paris Conservatoire emerged, with influential teachers like Saint-Saens and Faure in the lead. Meanwhile, Offenbach and Bizet turned from light to more serious music, each significantly raising international standards. You will then see how a more revolutionary challenge came from Debussy. Ignoring all conventions, he developed a sound world based on Far Eastern tonality and the symbolism of Verlaine and Mallarme. Though hating the word Impressionism, uniquely sensual harmonies and effects are his hallmark. Though you may hear them as similar, Ravel's music demonstrates more limpid restraint, elegance and formality. Because of his Basque heritage, he was also one of many influenced by Spain.

What financial support is available?

We don't want anything to stand in your way when it comes to bringing Adult learning within reach so if you need anything to support you to achieve your goals then speak to one of our education experts during your enrolment journey. Most of our courses are government funded but if you don't qualify or need alternative financial help to access them then let us know.

What other support is available?

All of our digital content, teaching and learning activities and assessments are designed to be accessible so if you need any additional support you can discuss this with the education experts during your enrolment journey and we will do all we can to make sure you have optimal access.

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