



## Thomas Kovach: "Dido's Lament" from Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas in the film Der Untergang



<https://german.arizona.edu/people/tkovach>

**Dr. Thomas Kovach came to The University of Arizona in the fall of 1994 to head the Department of German Studies. He received his B.A. in German Literature from Columbia University, and his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature with a German emphasis from Princeton University. His research interests range widely over German and Comparative Literature from the mid-eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries.**

In his presentation, Dr. Kovach will explore the perplexing decision to introduce the aria "Dido's lament" from Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas into the score of the controversial Hirschbiegel film Der Untergang (Downfall) from 2004. This aria has been called "the saddest piece of music ever written" and is the ultimate expression of victimhood, and is presented as background to the end of Hitler's rule. The question is: how does one view this choice, especially given that in the film little or no attention is paid to the Jewish and other victims of the Nazi regime? Who are the victims portrayed in the film — is it the German people as a whole, is it the high-ranking Nazi officials who occupy much of the film, or is it Hitler himself? This question will be explored in the presentation.

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