

Analysis of Modern and Contemporary Classical Music

Meeting time: Mondays, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Regular classroom: Skinner 303

Alternate Meeting location: Dean of the Faculty house, 22 Dean's Lane (also known as 172 College Av.) Directions: Exit the campus gate near Josselyn. Cross Raymond Av. by the roundabout. Proceed just a short way west on College Avenue until you see the "VC 172 College Avenue" address sign and a winding blacktop sidewalk to the left. Head left on the blacktop path through the trees to the front door with "22" above.

Professor: Jon Chenette

Office: Main 104 (Dean of the Faculty office suite)

Office phone: 437-5300

Office hours: by arrangement with Veronica Peccia (vepeccia@vassar.edu, X5300)

Course description

Study of analytical approaches helpful in understanding and performing music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics will include modal and post-tonal analysis, set theory and serialism, extended instrumental and vocal techniques, and innovative approaches to rhythm, meter, timbre, texture, and form. The course will culminate in individual projects devoted to detailed study of a work of each student's choosing. Students will enhance their abilities to express their understanding of music through essays and presentations commenting on analytical insights and their implications for performance.

Learning goals and measurement

Upon successful completion of this course, you should:

1. understand the historical context for and development of compositional techniques in important works of Western concert music from the last fifty years;
2. be able to recognize, describe, and analyze the application of these techniques;
3. be able to use analysis to explain and articulate aspects of a contemporary work including its high-level organization, the composer's intentions, perceptual features, and the implications of all these aspects for performance practice;
4. be able to express the results of analysis and their implications for performance in spoken and written prose;
5. be able to represent the results of analysis and their implications for performance visually, through images or multimedia.

I will base my assessment of your learning on participation and preparation (20%), homework (20%), formal writing and visualization assignments (35%), and group and individual presentations (25%).

Musical Scores for Study this Semester

- Required for purchase but also on reserve
 - Adams, John. *Lollapalooza* for orchestra. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1995. (\$30 [sheetmusicplus](#), \$25 [amazon](#))
 - Ligeti, György. *Études pour piano: premier livre*. Mainz, Germany: Schott, 1986. (Vassar College Store, \$30 [sheetmusicplus](#))
 - Thomas, Augusta Read. *Traces* for piano. New York: Schirmer, 2010. (\$15 [sheetmusicplus](#), \$13 [amazon](#))
- Class handouts and reserves
 - Berio, Luciano. *Sequenza VIIA* for oboe. London: Universal Edition, 1969/2000.
 - Larsen, Libby. *Try Me, Good King* for soprano and piano. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002
 - Takemitsu, Toru. *Spirit Garden* for orchestra. Tokyo: Schott Japan, 1996. OR *Fantasma/Cantos* for clarinet and orchestra. Tokyo: Schott Japan, 1993.

Participation and preparation

As much as possible, “factual” learning will take place outside of class or via brief in-class presentations. This will allow most of our in-class activities to focus on addressing questions and confusion, applying material, and synoptic activities. This means that if you do not come to class prepared, you will not get the full benefit of that class period. We will often do group work and presentations in class.

You should attend each class, arrive promptly, and participate fully. Particularly with a once-a-week seminar like this, missed class time will detract substantially from your and your classmates’ learning. Except in cases of illness or other emergency confirmed by communication from the Dean of Studies Office or when you make arrangements far in advance with me, each absence will result in a decrease by 5 in the 20-point participation component factored into your grade.

Good participation means that you are present, prepared (listened and analyzed carefully, completed readings, thought about assigned questions, etc.), and contributing thoughtfully and respectfully to class discussion. You participate by adding productively to discussions, listening attentively to others, asking questions when things are unclear, taking part in group work, etc. Here are general guidelines concerning my assessment of classroom participation:

- Excellent participation: Perfect attendance. Regular contributions to classroom discussion, showing evidence of thoughtful preparation (for instance, having listened and analyzed carefully, done assigned readings, engaged seriously with

study questions, completed any assigned written or group work conscientiously, etc.); regular participation in and contribution to classroom or out-of-class small group or other organized activities; listening and responding to classmates (16% or more out of 20%).

- Satisfactory participation: No more than one absence. Sometimes contributing to classroom discussion and/or activities, with contributions showing evidence of preparation (for instance, having done assigned listening, analysis, and reading; having thought about questions and concepts; etc); listening to classmates (11%-15%).
- Sub-standard participation: More than one absence and/or rarely contributing to classroom discussion and activities; contributions sometimes suggest insufficient preparation (6%-10%).
- Unsatisfactory participation: Multiple absences and/or almost never contributing to classroom discussion and activities or dominating classroom discussion in a disruptive fashion. Contributions often show evidence of insufficient preparation. (0%-5%).

With this seminar, much of your learning will be in your own and your classmates' hands. We will be learning together and from each other. We will need and welcome diverse opinions and will engage with each others' ideas seriously and thoughtfully.

Homework

Please complete homework during the week indicated on the Moodle site and submit it in class the following Monday, unless I specify a different deadline or mode of submission. I base the scope of my assignments on the assumption that you will spend six to eight hours per week outside of class in activities related to the class: listening, analyzing, reading, group work, writing, thinking, etc. Please let me know if the assignments take you substantially more or less time. You should work in smaller time segments throughout the week rather than saving the class work for the weekend.

While I have constructed the assignments for this course carefully and will try to adhere to the schedule and approximate scope of assignments, I may make changes in weekly assignments up to 5 p.m. on Tuesday. This flexibility is important because I want to make the course productive and appropriate to your level of musical training. Please consult the course Moodle site for the latest versions of assignments and check with me promptly if anything seems unclear.

Because of the once-a-week format of our class meetings, late work will be accepted only with adequate advance notice (24 hours before class start time) and in no case later than noon on the Wednesday after the due date, except with appropriate documentation from the Dean of Studies Office.

Essays

Double-space and type your essays in 12-point serif font. Please use MLA parenthetical citation and works cited formats to indicate all sources consulted in preparing your essays. One good online source for guidance on MLA format is the Purdue University Online Writing Lab <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>>. If your ideas and essay are shaped in any way by out-of-class conversation or consultation with someone else, please include appropriate acknowledgement and specifics either as footnotes (for specific ideas) or end-of-paper acknowledgements (for general influences). This includes consultations with peer consultants in the LTRC.

Presentations

Submit outlines for each group and individual presentation. On these outlines, please indicate the names of your collaborators, if any, and the primary areas of contribution for each. If all shared equally in every aspect of the work leading up to the presentation, please so indicate. Include information on all sources consulted.

Final Work

Your final work for this class will be a paper, performance guide, and visualization of an analysis in lieu of an examination. These will be due prior to the end of the third day of the exam period (5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 17.)

Grades

See the *Vassar College Catalogue* <<http://catalog.vassar.edu/>> → “Degree Requirements” → “Evaluation of Work” for the standards I will follow in grading your work this semester.

Academic integrity

All work in this course must be your own unless the assignment specifies collaboration. An exception is the help you might receive from a peer tutor or professional at the Writing Center. Indicate at the end of your written work if you have received help—from a friend, a relative, someone at the LTRC, etc. Please consult “Originality and Attribution” at the Dean of the College Web site <<http://deanofthecollege.vassar.edu/documents/originality/>> for a detailed explanation of the college’s expectations and practices pertaining to academic integrity and collaboration. Consult with me in a timely fashion if you have questions about appropriate collaboration, use of sources, or attribution.

Disability and Support Services

Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO). Students in need of disability (ADA/504) accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter.

Course Overview (consult course Moodle site for details)

Week 1-2, Sept. 8 & 15: Introduction; and analytical process for trying to understand unfamiliar music and convey that understanding through performance and visualization. Luciano Berio *Sequenza VII* for oboe (1969)

- 15th – Animated visualization due
- 22nd – Performance advice and critique essay due (3 pages)

Weeks 3-4, Sept. 22 & 29: Techniques of pitch organization, Libby Larsen *Anne Boleyn* (2001)

- 22nd – New tonal materials and practices
- 29th – Atonality and serialism – Paragraphs on techniques of pitch organization in 3 Ligeti *Études* and Adams *Lollapalooza* due

Week 5-6, Oct. 6 & 13: Techniques of rhythmic organization, Gyorgy Ligeti *Études pour piano*, Book I (1986)

- 6th – PC-set Analysis and comparative review of two performances of *Anne Boleyn* due
- 13th – Ligeti analysis and performance advice visualization due

Break

Weeks 7-8, Oct. 27 & Nov. 3: John Adams *Lollapalooza* (1995)

- 3rd – Oral presentations on *Lollapalooza* due
- Nov. 10th – *Lollapalooza* essay or animated visualization due

Weeks 9-10, Nov. 10 & 17: Augusta Read Thomas *Traces* (2006)

- 17th – Group-led presentations/discussions on movements 2 to 5 of *Traces* due

Week 11, Nov. 24: Toru Takemitsu *Spirit Garden* (1994) for study in class

Weeks 12-13, Dec. 1 & 8: Individual presentations of an analysis of a piece of music composed since 1988

Dec. 17: Final exercise due – Analysis essay (4-5 pages), performance guide, and visualization of the piece focused on in individual presentations



MUSI 322: Analysis of Modern Contemporary Classical Music (Fall 2014)

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MUSI 322-01, Fall 2014: Advanced Studies in Theory Analysis of Modern and Contemporary Classical Music



Syllabus



Analyzing and Animating Music Guide

Week 1: September 8 - September 14

"Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough." -- George Washington Carver.
How do you approach understanding unfamiliar music, maybe even music that seems incomprehensible, unattractive, strange, or whose mysteries you seek to unlock?

How can you present the results of that understanding?

- Luciano Berio's *Sequenza VII* for oboe (1969, 2000)
 - Audio
 - Score



Visualizing an analysis of Berio's *Sequenza VII*

Create a QuickTime video of a PowerPoint presentation of Berio's *Sequenza VII*, synchronizing the lines of the score with the audio recording and highlighting in some way the individual pitches as they enter. Include highlights, comments, symbols, or notations for a few other elements you consider important in defining the form and contour of the music and that you wish to draw to the attention of the

listener/potential performer (occurrences of important pitches, unusual timbres, dynamic patterns, held notes or rests, climaxes, etc.) End with a slide showing the full score with two to four major points of formal articulation or contrasting sections marked prominently along with indications of how the musical parameters change at those points to lead you to perceive them as special moments of change.

Submit electronically by noon on Monday, September 15. If viewing on the course Web page, click the assignment link above to submit.

Week 2: September 15 - September 21

How does an analytical understanding of a piece of music inform a performance? How does it inform music performance criticism?



Performance Advice & Critique Essay, Berio Sequenza VII

- What could you tell a performer of Berio's *Sequenza VII* about how to shape the most compelling interpretation imaginable in light of your discoveries through analysis? Write a short essay (1 to 2 pages, double-spaced, 12-point serif font) conveying your advice.
- Compare the following two recorded performances of *Sequenza VII*. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each in relation to your analytical understanding of the music? Which does a better job of projecting the elements you consider most important in the music? Explain. (1 page, double-spaced, 12-point serif font)





Read:

- "Messian's Modes of Limited Transposition ", pp. 95-98, in Pople, Anthony. *Messiaen: "Quatour pour la fin du Temps"*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Week 3: September 22 - September 28

Techniques of pitch organization I: New tonal practices

1. Octave displacement --



2. Modes of limited transposition (including octatonic and whole tone), synthetic, & other

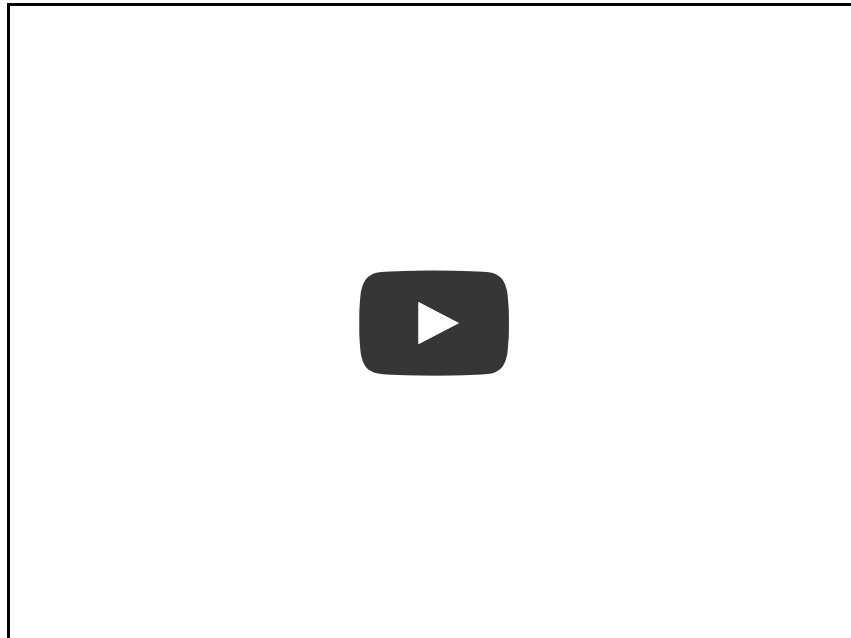
non-major/minor scales and modes

- Bela Bartok *Diminished 5th* for piano
- Dmitri Shostakovich "Fugue 1 in C" from *24 Preludes and Fugues* for piano
- Charles Griffes *Prelude #3* for piano (starting at 2:36)



3. Quartal harmony

- Charles Ives *The Cage* for voice and piano



4. Polytonality and polymodality

- Igor Stravinsky "Lento" from *Five Fingers* for piano



- Bright Sheng "I. Seasons" from *Seven Tunes Heard in China* for cello (1995)

Listen to 3 of Gyorgy Ligeti's *Études pour piano*, book I (1985):

- 1 "Désordre" ,
- 2 "Cordes à vide" ,
- 4 "Fanfares"

and to John Adams's *Lollapalooza* (1995):

- video:



- audio of another performance:

Identify and study new tonal materials or techniques from the list above that figure prominently in these pieces (at least one example for each étude and for *Lollapalooza*). Write a paragraph (typed or hand-written) about each piece identifying the new tonal materials or techniques, where they occur (e.g., measure numbers, hand, instruments), and what they contribute to the character, shape, or pitch organization of the music. For discussion, study the way the pitch materials are used, identify a tonal center ("key") if there is one, and make notes on how the composer establishes that pitch as primary, if relevant. If there seems to be no single tonal center, think about how the music establishes multiple tonal centers or no tonal center at all.

Read:

- "Introduction" and pages I.1 to I.3 in Tucker, Gary. *A Brief Introduction to Pitch-Class Set Analysis*. Mt. Allison University. 3 Oct. 2001. Web. 28 Aug. 2010. Test your understanding as you proceed by working exercises 1-1, 2-1, and 2-2 (answers provided in the exercises).

Week 4: September 29 - October 5

Techniques of pitch organization 2: Atonality and Serialism

Read:

- Pages I.4 to I.6 in Tucker, Gary. *A Brief Introduction to Pitch-Class Set Analysis*. Mt. Allison University. 3 Oct. 2001. Web. 28 Aug. 2010. Test your understanding as you proceed by working exercises 4-1, 5-1, and 5-2 (answers provided in the exercises).

Analyze by marking up the score:

- the use of the (0,1,6) pitch-class set in the piano part of the first 24 measures of Libby Larsen's "Anne Boleyn" from *Try Me, Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII*. Circle occurrences of this set and its transpositions and inversions. Often there are notes added to this set. Is there any consistency or pattern to the note or notes added?
 - Music (PDF)
- the most prevalent pitch-class set(s) from measures 25 to 31. Circle and label occurrences to show relations between pitch materials.
- the pitch materials from measure 32 to 40.
- recurrences of any of the above types of pitch materials after measure 40.
- the overall musical form of the piece. What musical elements change to mark off different sections? How do sections relate to or contrast with one another? How does the resulting musical form relate to the pitch materials?

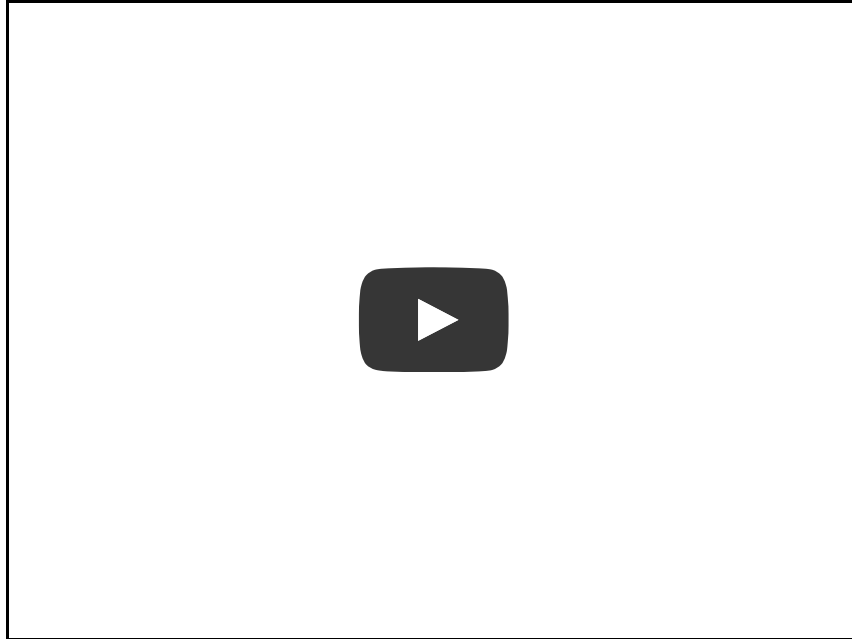


Write: Comparative review of two performances of "Try Me Good King"

Write a one- to two-page comparative review of the following two

performances of "Try Me Good King." Which, in your view, better conveys the important musical elements delineating the musical form as you understand it? Explain, calling on elements of your musical analysis.

1. Diana Newman, sop; Tomasz Lis, pno: Anne Boleyn (Try Me, Good King) by Libby Larsen



2. Ann Tedards, sop; Marva Duerksen, pno:

Week 5: October 6 - October 12

Timbre, texture, instrument exploration, and spectralism.



Listening and reading homework: Ligeti "Arc-en-ciel" ("Rainbow")

Read

- Olivier Messian's "Brief Theory of My Rhythmic Language" beginning on page 131 of the English translation of the "Preface" to *Quatour pour la fin du temps*. (from Rischin, Rebecca. *For the End of Time*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003. Appendix A, trans. Rischin.)
- Chapter 2, "Rhythm and Meter", from Joel Lester's *Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Norton, 1989. pp. 15-32.)



Ligeti performance analysis essay

Pierre-Laurent Aimard. *Gyorgy Ligeti Works for Piano (Gyorgy Ligeti Edition, Vol. 3.)* Sony Classical, 1996. CD.

Études Book I:

- 1. Désordre

- 2. Cordes à Vide
- 3. Touches Bloquée
- 4. Fanfares
- 5. Arc-en-ciel
- 6. Automne à Varsovie

Fredrik Ullén. *Gyorgy Ligeti Complete Piano Music*. BIS Records, 2006.

Études Book I:

- 1. Désordre
- 2. Cordes à Vide
- 3. Touches Bloquée
- 4. Fanfares
- 5. Arc-en-ciel
- 6. Automne à Varsovie

Week 6: October 13 - October 26 (incl. fall break)

Quotation, borrowing, and eclecticism.

Study in detail the durations of the rhythmic cycles, both regular and irregular, of all the motivic layers in the first 57 measures of John Adams's *Lollapalooza*. How many beats separate the starts of the repetitions of each motive? What is the range of durations (in beats) of the various motives? Which motives are regular in their repetitions and which vary? How does the number of distinct motivic layers change over this section and where are they at their maximum number? How does the layering contribute to the development and dramatic contour of the music in this opening section?

Fall Break: October 18-26


Week 7: October 27 - November 2

John Adams *Lollapalooza*.

 15-minute presentation

Week 8: November 3 - November 9

John Adams *Lollapalooza* presentations.

 Adams performance analysis essay or animated visualization

Week 9: November 10 - November 16

Augusta Read Thomas *Traces*.

Listen to Augusta Read Thomas *Traces* (2006, 2007, 2010) and read this interview with the composer.

1. Reverie
2. Caprice
3. Tango
4. Impromptu
5. Toccata



Responding to August Read Thomas's *Traces* I "Reverie"

"The idea was to take the distant perfumes of other musical idioms... and to imagine what it would be like to cross-fertilize them" (Augusta Read Thomas, program notes in the score.)

"One of the things that interests me a great deal is for the music to be very nuanced. So the notations are extremely specific, and I think that lends itself to a clear and crisp execution of the piece. Yet on the other hand, I want the pieces to sound really spontaneous -- 'There it goes! The orchestra's playing, and the train has left the station!' Or a pianist can sit down and play my piece *Traces*, and it almost sounds as if they're improvising but it's incredibly nuanced in the notation. That's something I've been working on for about 30 years to refine and refine and refine."

Questions:

1. Nearly every note has an expressive mark, dynamic, or performance instruction. What role do these play in the character, structure, and shape of the piece?
2. What is the form of this short piece, and how is it delineated?
3. Does the final high note seem like a compelling conclusion to you? Why or why not? Base your answer on your study of the pitch materials, register, dynamics, performance instructions, etc.



Responding to August Read Thomas's *Traces* II "Caprice"

Questions:

1. In what ways does "Caprice" evoke Scarlatti's Baroque ornamentation

■



crossed with Art Tatum?

■



2. "Caprice" uses several kinds of textures: monophonic, parallel motion, two-voice polyphony, flights of grace notes ending on trills. Identify where these different kinds of texture prevail, and discuss how their contrasts and recurrences contribute to a sense of form.

3. Trace the development of the fast opening phrase, especially bars 2 & 3, through the rest of "Caprice." Where are its recurrences relatively straightforward, and where are they more transformed or ornamented? What do these developments reveal about the musical structure and shape?

4. What accounts for the pitch choices? Are there prevalent pitch-class sets? a 12-tone row? particular modes or scales?

5. Where do you perceive the primary articulation points in the musical form to be, and why?

Week 10: November 17 - November 23

Augusta Read Thomas *Traces*: group-led presentations/discussions on "III. Tango", "IV. Impromptu", and "V. Toccata."



Responding to August Read Thomas's Traces III "Tango"

In what ways does "Tango" evoke Piazzolla

- Michelangelo 70 live



crossed with Coltrane?

- A Love Supreme live



Responding to August Read Thomas's Traces IV "Impromptu"

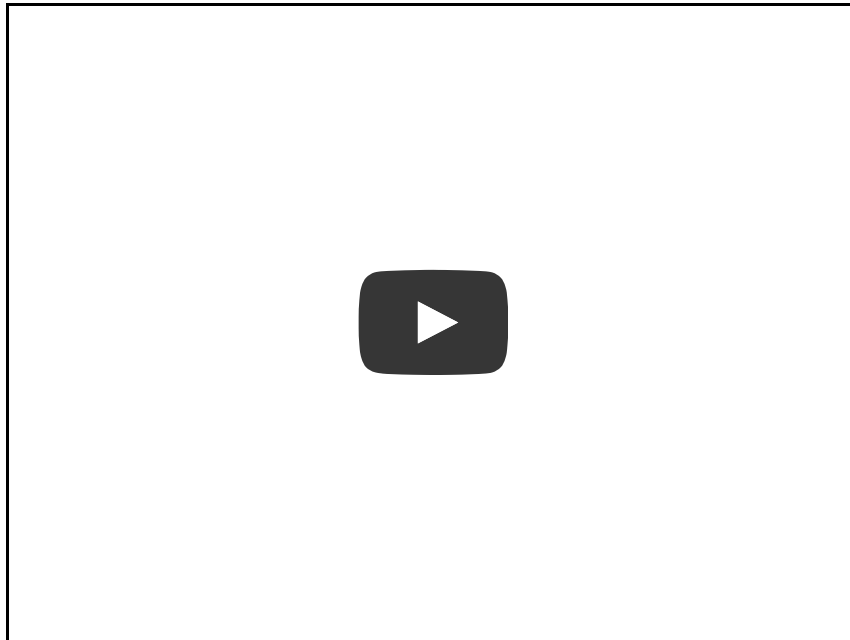
In what ways does "Impromptu" evoke Monk


- Straight No Chaser (focus on minute 1 to 2)



crossed with Chopin?

- Fantaisie-Impromptu



 Responding to August Read Thomas's Traces V "Toccata"

In what ways does "Toccata" evoke Bach

- Toccata for Clavier in G (Glenn Gould)



crossed with BeBop?

- Dizzy Gillespie BeBop (esp. beginning & solo starting at 2:35)



Week 11: November 24 - November 30

Toru Takemitsu *Spirit Garden* (1994) for orchestra; or *Fantasma/Cantos* (1991) for clarinet and orchestra.

- Spirit Garden



- Fantasma/Cosmos (music starts at 2:55)



Individual presentations



Upload soundfile for individual presentation

For Monday, December 1: Listen to music for student presentations. Write down a question for each composition about something interesting or unusual that you hear in this music. Be prepared to ask your question if it is not answered during the presentation.

Week 12: December 1 - December 7

Individual presentations.

For Monday, December 8: Listen to music for student presentations. Write down a question for each composition about something interesting or unusual that you hear in this music. Be prepared to ask your question if it is not answered during the presentation.

Week 13: December 8

Individual presentations. See assignment and upload instructions as above.



Final Exercise: Analysis Essay, Performance Guide, and Visualization (due Wednesday December 17, by 5 p.m.)

Write a short essay (four to five pages) about one particularly interesting and important musical trait of the composition you studied for your final presentation and the performance implications of your analysis focusing on that trait (or the ways in which that trait is or is not conveyed effectively in a particular recorded performance.) Develop a visualization of your analysis of that trait (and other elements of your analysis, if you wish). Your visualization may be static or animated. If a static visualization on paper, please scan it and submit it electronically. Animated visualizations will also be submitted electronically at the same time as you upload your essay.

Final Exercise due December 17

Final exercise due by 5 p.m.

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PEOPLE



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