Music 3001W: Foundations of Musical Thought

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Brief Description of the Course:

Foundations of Musical Thought focuses on ways to think about music and ways to think in or through music. The categories of thought that we discuss throughout the course are foundational in the sense that they can be applied to a wide range of musical traditions whose surface characteristics and underlying values are extremely varied. The goals of the course are principally threefold: 1) to introduce the student to a wide-ranging musical literature, and to develop the acuity of the student’s musical perceptivity; 2) to explore fundamental parallels as well as distinctions among diverse musical traditions; 3) to sharpen the student’s awareness of the corelations between musical thought/expressivity and other areas of human thought and expression.

Class requirements:

Attendance is required; more than three unexcused absences will result in failure.

MUS 3001W is a Writing Intensive course. The writing component is designed to develop your ability to think about the means and goals of musical expression as well as the constituents of musical form in its most inclusive sense. The course will include three types of writing assignments. First, students will be required to write three short, informal papers, each of which discusses music in light of a specific topic: gesture and meter, unity and contrast, and virtuosity. Second, the course will require a formal term paper -- this year, on the topic of linear and circular thought in music -- about 12 pages in length. An initial draft of the paper will be due during the 8th week of classes. The Professor, or one of his Teaching Assistants, will read the paper and make suggestions for revision. The final version will be due the last day of class. Third, there will be an essay-type final exam based on our class discussions.

All writing assignments will be graded on the basis of style (grammar, spelling, organization, etc.) and content (creativity, scholarship, perceptiveness, etc.). There will be a greater emphasis on content in the final exam and informal papers, and emphasis on both form and content especially in the revised version of the term paper. The informal writing assignments will comprise 1/4 of the final grade; the term paper and its revision will comprise 1/2 of the final grade; and, the final exam will comprise 1/4 of the final grade. I grade on a scale of 0-10: 9.5+=A; 9-9.4=A-; 8.5-8.9 =B+; 7.6-8.4 = B; 7-7.5=B-; 6.5-6.9 = C; 6-6.4=C-; 5-5.9=D; 0-4.9=F. In addition to the writing assignments, there are weekly listening assignments and occasional reading assignments; the only text required for the course will be a typescript prepared by Professor Cherlin. This will be available in the College Book Store on the West Bank.
Outline of the Course

1. Sound Sources — Instrumentation.

a) the voice as human prototypical instrument — the breath as a defining aspect of musical gesture; the heart as percussive prototype — the restful nature of slow tempi, the excited nature of fast tempi.

b) the typical division of instruments into winds, strings, percussion; the extended possibilities of sound through synthetic (including computer) generation.

c) provide a wide range of colors through recorded samples, but concentrate particularly on the symphonic orchestra, the video set on reserve will be useful in this regard. Students become familiar with the various choirs of the orchestra, and to the different sounds available within each choir.

d) the complex relationship of the music that is imagined and the capabilities of the instrument; of tactile to aural.

e) the influence of the human voice on instrumental technique and the influence of instrumental technique on the capabilities of the human voice.

Singing that approximates heightened speaking: how we imagine Homer; some chant; Bob Dylan, "The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest," [add Schoenberg example, from Gurrelieder, or Berg from Wozzeck]

Instruments imitating the human voice: Mozart Clarinet Concerto, 2nd movt.; Jimi Hendrix: Voodoo Child

Voice imitating instrumental technique: Bach, opening of "Jauchzet Gott in Allen Landen"; Mozart Queen of the Night Aria; Babbitt, Phonemena; Ella Fitzgerald, How High the Moon

f) emphasize gaining sensitivity to colors and natural abilities of various instruments and instrumental groups: design several listening exercises whereby voices (instruments) in an ensemble are isolated and then finally heard compositely.

Ma Rainey, Yonder Comes the Blues - tutti intro, verse to trombone, v. to bass sax, v. to trumpet, v. to clarinet, v. to tutti (color shifts help to articulate form)

Mozart, Piano Concerto in G (no.17), K.453; shifting colors in opening movement

Beethoven, Sixth Symphony; use of winds to build to climactic phrase endings, etc
Schoenberg, Op. 16/3 (Farben); use of orchestra to create a modulating scenic texture

Takemitsu, Gemeaux: shifting colors from large orchestral palette

VIDEO AND LISTENING: The three volumes of the video series "Orchestral!" (Sir Georg Solti, Dudley Moore) are on reserve in the Music Library. If you cannot internally imagine the sounds of the various orchestral instruments, alone and in various combinations with others, then you will find this series very useful. Everyone should do at least some viewing-listening.

NB. This and all subsequent listening and reading assignments are on reserve in the Music Library.

2 and 3. How time goes, meter vs gesture.

a) discuss debate of Leibniz and Newton on time; sunrise/sunset as gestural; clock time as metrical (i.e. based on congruences);

b) define attributes of gestural time in music; examples of gestural time in music would include chant (from several traditions); from non-western music (Japanese or Chinese); from western music (20th century especially); possible tie in with prose or non-metric poetic rhythms;

c) define attributes of metrical organization of time, discuss special potential for hierarchical organization (cf. hierarchy in gestural systems) into hypermetric organization (cf. yard stick divided into inches, feet, and subdivided in ½ inches, ¼ inches etc.); examples of musical time that is metrically organized (Bach, Beethoven); dance as a factor in formal design ("Mustang Sally").

d) example of gesture superimposed on meter — recurrent vs variable phrase rhythms in metric contexts: phrase rhythm in Mozart, K.545, first and second movements.

LISTENING: Gregorian Chant from the Aquitaine, Alleluja. Tu puer propheta Altissimi; Japanese shakuhachi, (Futaiken) Reibo (Ronnie Nyogetsu Seldin); J.S. Bach, WTC I/1; Beethoven 5th Symphony (concentrate on the third movement); Wilson Pickett, "Mustang Sally;" Mozart Piano Sonata, K.545. (concentrate on the first two movements).

INFORMAL PAPER: From this week’s listening, choose one work that is gestural and another that is metric. After several listennings, try to describe the aural clues that inform your hearing of gesture as compared to meter. (Approximately two pages in length, double spaced typescript.) Due end of week four.

4. Toward a more comprehensive concept of musical rhythm.

a) for the purposes of this topic we will choose two extended musical examples that will be studied in light of the topic; one example will be basically gestural in its treatment of musical
time and the other metric (e.g. Takemitsu, Gemeaux; Beethoven, 5th Symphony;) both examples include changes of orchestration, texture, register, etc. so that these components of rhythm should be included in the analysis and more important, in the perception of rhythm.

b) begin by counting out surface rhythms; if there are congruences (metric, hypermetric) note them as more inclusive levels of rhythmic organization; larger gestures (phrase rhythm, thematic presentation, shifts in timbre, etc.; finally on to largest rhythmic units (e.g. Minuet, Trio, Minuet) and then entire movement.

LISTENING: Takemitsu, Gemeaux; Beethoven, 5th Symphony.

5. Unity and contrast in music.

a) Schoenberg’s discussion of centrifugal and centripetal force in music; cf. Baroque ideal (J.S.Bach) with other musics based on single affect or on gradual change as process (Indian classical music, much minimalist music); cf. Classical style of contrasting moods (Beethoven); define and explore the "juxtaposition of incommensurables"(Ives)

b) discuss various means towards achieving contrast and unity (motivic development; harmony; timbre; texture...)

LISTENING: J.S.Bach WTC 1/1; Indian Classical Music, Rag Jog, Ustad Imrat Khan sitar and surbahar; John Adams The Chairman Dances; Beethoven, 5th Symphony; Ives Three Places in New England.

INFORMAL PAPER: Discuss aspects of unity and contrast in John Adams The Chairman Dances. (Same length as previous informal paper, due end of week 6).

6 and 7. Circular vs linear thought in music.

a) readings in Langer and in Paglia; emphasize that neither linear nor circular is likely to appear in pure form in music (or drama, literature, etc.);

b) examples of circularity evoking comedy (Mozart, "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja", Rossini, "Largo al factotum"), entrapment or depression (Schubert "Doppelgänger," Ma Rainey, "Yonder comes the blues"), sexuality ("Mustang Sally").

c) Beethoven 5th Symphony as a large scale linear design with internal circles.


TERM PAPER: The lectures, listening assignments and reading assignments of the past two weeks (weeks 6 and 7) have dealt with characteristics that we have called linear and circular musical thought. We have discussed the correlations of that thought with analogous thought in other areas of human endeavor, e.g. Langer’s concept of tragedy as linear and comedy as circular, or Paglia’s ideas concerning human sexuality, where male/Apollonian/linear is contrasted with female/Dionysian/circular. We have discussed the expressive content of circularity in music, including expressions of comedy, eroticism, and entrapment or depression. And, we have discussed the expressive content of linearity, as it interacts with circular thought to create larger dramatic or abstract musical forms.

Choose three or four contrasting examples from our listening list and discuss aspects of circular vs linear thought that you perceive in the music. If you find the readings to be suggestive, you may cite them, or, if you like, you may do additional readings. Be sure to cite reading and recordings properly. If you use other reference material, be sure to cite your sources with proper endnotes (or footnotes). Include a bibliography and discography. The first draft of your paper is due at the end of week 8. Your will receive suggestions concerning revision within a week or so. The revised paper will be due on the final day of class. Along with the revision, you are required to turn in the original draft so that the reader, Professor Cherlin or a TA, may be able to see how you have responded to the suggestions for revision.

8. Pure Design vs Depiction or Evocation in Music

a) give examples of visual art that are based on design — e.g. geometric patterns in pottery, Islamic design in architecture, Jungendstil, Celtic, Mondrian, Frank Stella; cf. examples of depiction — e.g. portrait by Van Dyke, Raphael, Picasso, African mask, etc.; cf. narrative poetry with lyric poetry — first tells a story, second contemplates something; it would seem that most visual art is lyrical in this sense, even when the picture is perceived as taking place within a narrative, there is a tendency to treat painting (or sculpture) as contemplative; emphasize that in music the distinction between design and depiction is not always clear;

b) examples of music as pure design — J.S.Bach WTC 1/1; J.S.Bach Musical Offering; Ockeghem Missa Prolationum; C.Parker-J.Gillespie "Anthropology."

c) comparing lyric contemplation and narrative in song — use examples of lyric song from classical and pop literature (e.g. "Ihr Bild," "Martha, my dear") and contrast these with examples of narrative song ("Erlkönig," "She’s leaving home," or "Rocky Racoon")

d) comparing lyric contemplation and implied narrative in instrumental music; discuss tendency toward drama (hence narrative) in common-practice tonality;
Beethoven’s Sixth is interesting to think about in this context. While sections can be conceived of as contemplative (of various scenes, emotions, etc.) the whole would depict a narrative of sorts.

**LISTENING:** J.S.Bach WTC 1/1; J.S.Bach Musical Offering; Ockeghem MissaProlationum, "Kyrie;" Parker-Gillespie "Anthropology;" Schubert songs: "Ihr Bild," "Erlkönig;" Beatle’s songs "Martha, my dear," "She’s leaving home." Beethoven 6th Symphony.

9. **Virtuosity and the Cognoscient**

a) note the tendency in many (but evidently not all) musical traditions for the "master" musician (or bard) to emerge; make the contrast between the kinds of technical virtuosity that place no particular perceptual or conceptual demands on the audience and the type of virtuosity that demands that the audience too has achieved a "virtuosity" of its own.

b) examples of the first kind of virtuosity might include Queen of the Night Aria ("Die Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen"); Figaro’s famous aria from "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" ("Largo al factotum"); Gottschalk’s variations on "Home Sweet Home." Although Ella Fitzgerald’s extended solo on "How high the moon" also exemplifies this first type of virtuosity, there are elements that are only understandable to the cognoscenti.

c) examples of the second kind of virtuosity might include parts of Bach’s Musical Offering, a complex Renaissance canon, a work by Milton Babbitt or Elliott Carter

**LISTENING:** Mozart, "Queen of the Night Aria" from Magic Flute ("Die Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen"); Rossini, Figaro’s aria from Il Barbiere di Siviglia ("Largo al factotum"); Gottschalk’s variations on "Home Sweet Home," Ella Fitzgerald’s extended solo on "How high the moon;" J.S.Bach Musical Offering; Milton Babbitt Semi-simple Variations.

**INFORMAL PAPER:** Discuss ideas concerning virtuosity in the music from this week’s listening, or from other musics within your own personal experience. (Same length as other informal papers, due end of week 10.)

10. **Music and Text**

a) music as heightening a text vs text as the occasion for musical expression; Gregorian Chant from the Aquitaine, Tibetan Buddhist Chant; narrative songs (Schubert "Erkönig," Bob Dylan "Jack of Hearts") and lyric songs (Schubert "Ihr Bild," Rogers-Hart "Manhattan"); Josquin - "Absolom, Fili Mi;" Pierre Boulez Pli Salon Pli, "Improvisation 1 - Sur Mallarmé".

b) discuss corelations between musical rhythms and poetic meters, and more generally between musical rhythms and speach rhythms.

11. **Grounded music** (based on a single tonal center); **Modulated music** (based on shifting tonal centers); **Ungrounded music** (the absence or fleeting nature of tonal centers); **Closed and Open Musical Universe**

LISTENING: Indian Classical Music, Rag Jog, Ustad Imrat Khan sitar and surbahar; Beethoven 5th Symphony; Schoenberg, Five Orchestral Pieces, op.16.

12 and 13. **Musical conception and the Rhetorical Tropes**

a) begin with discussion of tropes as in Burke, Bloom et.al.; basic means of organizing the world through language; music as a kind of language, the strengths and weaknesses of the parallel with spoken or written language — music(s) as language(s) of its (their) own kind; how music with or without text can use tropical shapings.

b) irony: ironic texts/music; expectation and denial in music; example of a phrase which is not completed or is surprisingly extended or transformed, etc. evocation of a genre to evoke its opposite (children’s song at the end of Wozzeck; evocation of a march in Mahler, something from rock music), dramatic irony in music (where the music pretends to be unaware of what we know will happen, where the music signals what will happen and where the protagonist is unaware);

synecdoche: where a fragment may stand for a larger whole (discuss the possibility of hearing the fragment as an analytic component — hence through the trope of metonymy); fragment of a song (etc.) in Ives, in rap music sampling, etc.; remembering a larger experience through a moment that evokes memory —

metonymy: association through juxtaposition, etc.; cataloging aspect — lists of chords, types of phrases, forms etc.

metaphor: how one thing can be heard through the perspective of another; chordal substitution, modifications to a melody, etc.

metalepsis: how a composer can transform the "tropes" of a previous composer...

LISTENING: think about any of our previous listening assignments through the conceptual lense of the various tropes.

SAMPLE Reserve List: Foundations of Musical Thought — MUS 3001

CDs

Adams - The Chairman Dances CD2580
Babbitt - Semi-simple variations CD2857
Bach - "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen" CD4177
Bach - WTC I ARH 1325
Bach - "Musical Offering" CD3637
Beatles White Album "Martha my dear," "Rocky Racoon" CD837 vol.10
Berg - Wozzeck CD824
Beethoven - Sym 5 CD2277
Beethoven - Sym 6 CD1005
Boulez - Pli Salon Pli CD4259
Bob Dylan - "Jack of Hearts"
Ella Fitzgerald "How High the Moon" (tape)
Gottschalk "Home Sweet Home Variations" CD2808
Ives — Three Places in New England CD432
Josquin - "Absolom, Fili Mi" CD3398, vol.3
Mozart - K545 CD1414
Mozart - Magic Flute CD4291
Nancarrow - Canons for Ursula - CD2544
Ockeghem - Missa Prolationum - CD3398, vol.3
Wilson Pickett - "Mustang Sally" (tape)
Ma Rainey, "Yonder Comes the Blues" (tape)
Rodgers-Hart (Dinah Washington) - Manhattan (tape)
Rossini - Barber of Seville CD56
Schoenberg - Op.16 CD2364
Schubert "Ihr Bild", "Erkönig," "Doppelgänger" CD1538, CD3514
Takemitsu - Gemeaux CD4563
Gregorian Chant from the Aquitaine, Alleluja. Tu puer propheta Altissimi. CD4306
Tibetan Buddhist Chant, Kabsumpa. CD2011
Japanese shakuhachi, (Futaiken) Reibo (Ronnie Nyogetsu Seldin). CD2246
Indian Classical Music, Rag Jog, Ustad Imrat Khan sitar and surbahar. CD534

VIDEO - The three volumes of the video series "Orchestra!" (Sir Georg Solti, Dudley Moore).

BOOKS:
Michael Cherlin. *The Foundations of Musical Thought* (typescript to be purchased at the University Bookstore)
Susanne K. Langer. *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1953) - 184 L262 f