

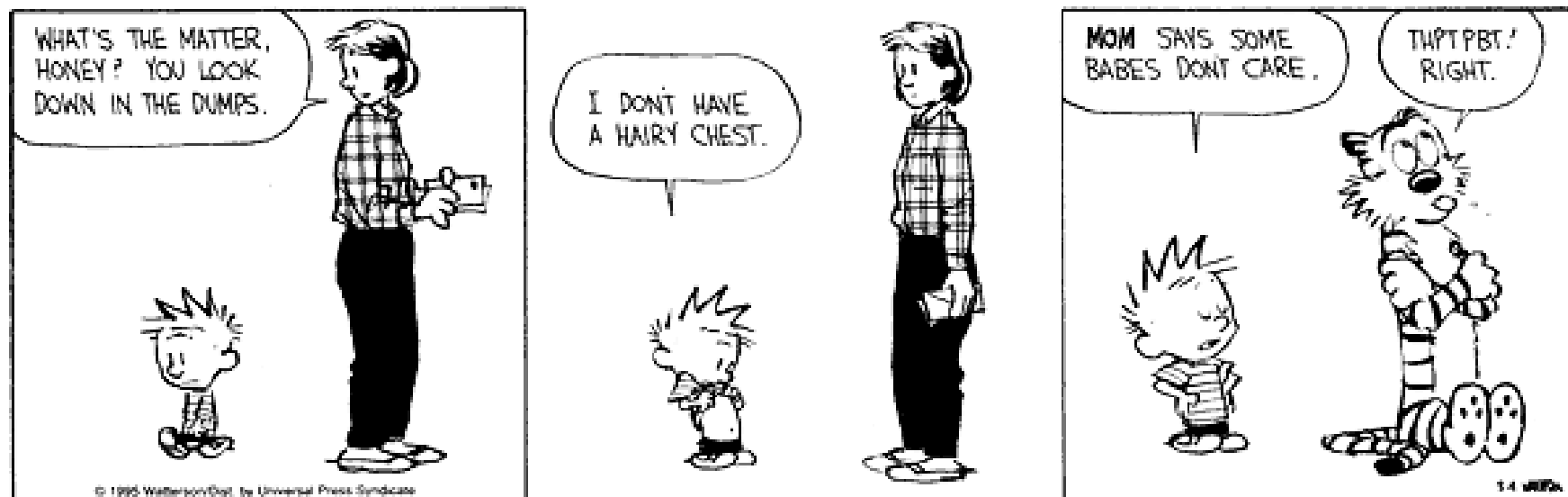
# Mu 110: Introduction to Music

Instructor: Dr. Alice Jones

Queensborough Community College

Spring 2016

Sections F5A (Fridays 12:10-3) and J5 (Fridays 3:10-6)



# Text matters, but it's not enough

- Analysis of a piece of music can't just be about the text
  - If the text is the only thing that matters, why is it being sung at all? Couldn't we just read the poetry and come away with the same sense of meaning?
- Ask yourself: How do the musical sounds reinforce, contradict, or add additional layers of nuance to the text?
- Ask yourself: How are things other things that I know about the world reflected in the music, affecting the music, or affecting me?
- If you're only analyzing the text, you're not getting the full picture of the musical experience

## Musical considerations:

- The singer's voice and their style
- Harmony
- Texture
- Melodic shape
- Rhythm
- Phrasing and form
- Instrumentation

## Extra-musical considerations:

- The performer's or composer's gender, ethnicity, socio-economic position, nationality, biography
- Your gender, ethnicity, socio-economic position, nationality, past (musical) experiences

# Gender

- Often conflated with sex (biological traits), but can be fluid and independent of sex
- Gender comes from social expectations
  - Society and culture create gender roles, gender expectations, and gender norms
  - Categories exist because we agree they exist
  - How do we or others “measure up” to those expectations?
  - Gender becomes internalized and acquires significance for the individual
- Gender is performative
  - Gender is something we “do” in order to be perceived by others in a certain way
  - Our gender activities may not be perceived the way we intend

# Thinking about gender in music

- What does “masculine” sound like? (How “should” a masculine voice or style sound?)
- What does “feminine” sound like? (What “should” a feminine voice or style sound?)

Elvis Presley (1935-77)  
Recorded 1956



Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton (1926-84)  
Recorded 1952



# Castrati

- European boys with promising voices were castrated before the onset of puberty to preserve the high range starting in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century
  - No women allowed in Catholic Church singing – soprano roles were sung by boys and castrati
  - Potential way out of poverty
- Powerful sonority in the upper register – could match a trumpet in volume
- Often grew very large and tall; broad chests; beardless
- Opera roles: heroes in Baroque operas, female roles where women weren't allowed on stage



Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755), Portrait of Antonio Maria Bernacchi, 1731



# Castrati

- Senesino (1686-1758)
- Farinelli (1705-82)
- Cusanino (c.1704-c.1760)



Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755), Caricature of Farinelli in a female role, 1724

William Hogarth (1697-1764), Francesca Cuzzoni, Gustavo Berenstadt and Senesino in Handel's *Flavio* (c.1728)

# Castrati

“What singing! Imagine a voice that combines the sweetness of the flute and the animated suavity of the human larynx — a voice which leaps and leaps, lightly and spontaneously, like a lark that flies through the air and is intoxicated with its own flight; and when it seems that the voice has reached the loftiest peaks of altitude it starts off again, leaping and leaping, still with equal highness and equal spontaneity, without the slightest sign of forcing or the faintest indication of artifice or effort; in a word, a voice that gives the immediate idea of sentiment transmuted into sound, and of the soul into the infinite on the wings of that sentiment.”

--Enrico Panzacchi (1840-1904), music historian describing castrati at the Vatican

# Alessandro Moreschi (1858-1922)

- Singer at the Sistine Chapel
- Recorded albums in 1902 (at the Vatican) and in 1904 (in Rome)





# Singing styles and purposes

## **Aria**

- Emotional outpouring
- Repetitive text and melody
- Singer's vocal technique and ability are put on display
- Many harmony changes (demonstrating the nuances of the singer's emotion)
- Full orchestra accompaniment

## **Recitative**

- Depicts characters' thoughts, plans, and dialogue
- Advances the plot
- Little to no text repetition
- Unpredictable and forgettable melody
- Few harmony changes
- Minimal instrumental accompaniment

# Trouser roles

- Also known as “breeches roles” or “pants roles”
- Women dressed as men
  - Roles originally for castrati
  - Continued preference for leading roles sung as high voices until c.1850 (even as castrati were no longer used)
  - Playing children and adolescent boys



A trouser role at the Penn State Opera, 2010

# Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, K.492 (1786), “Non so più cosa son”

- Role: Cherubino
  - Played by a woman
  - Transvestite
  - Lovesick boy going through puberty



# Email question: camp

- Theatricality, artifice, and stylization: irony, detachment, and sarcasm that challenge social norms, gender norms, politics, and the dominant social gaze (typically the cis, heteronormative, white male gaze)
- Carmen Miranda
- Drag queens
- Liberace
- The Village People
- David Bowie
- Marilyn Manson
- Psy
- Nicki Minaj

Email question:

What kind of voice or what music would be produced by these musicians if their sexual orientation was accepted? Would their style of voice and concepts of what they are singing be different?

# Announcements

- Class Blog Project
  - F5A: Melissa P., Gabrielle R., Nicole S.
  - J5: Jonathan M., Ted D., Thomasina A. and Anabel A. (at the same time)
  - Break for the holiday, no posts Saturday 3/26 through Monday 2/28
- Next class is Wednesday, March 23
  - Reading questions are due before Tuesday at noon
  - First draft of Project 1 due
- Sending Starfish flags this week if you are in danger of failing and/or have an excessive number of absences
- QCC job fair Wednesday, March 30, 12-3 in SUL
  - Opportunity for professional portraits