

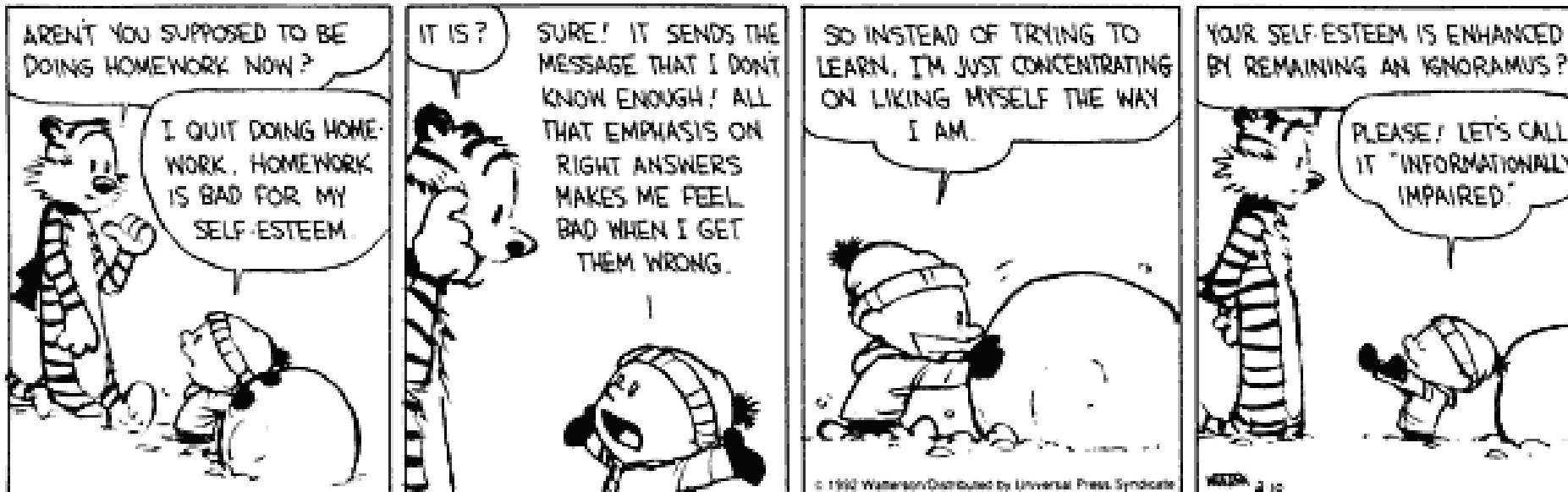
Mu 110: Introduction to Music

Instructor: Dr. Alice Jones

Queensborough Community College

Spring 2016

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



Warm-up writing

What is an idea? Where do ideas come from?

Ideas come from somewhere

- Wagner's music unites several Romantic ideas: captures all the sensuality, melodrama, and excess of the 19th century
 - *Berlioz + Schubert + Beethoven + Brahms*

I heard one of the master's [Beethoven's] symphonies for the first time [in 1828]; it was the Symphony [No. 8] in A major. The effect on me was indescribable. To this must be added the impression produced on me by Beethoven's features, which I saw in the lithographs that were circulated everywhere at that time, and by the fact that he was deaf, and lived a quiet secluded life. I soon conceived an image of him in my mind as a sublime and unique supernatural being, with whom none could compare. This image was associated in my brain with that of Shakespeare; in ecstatic dreams I met both of them, saw and spoke to them, and on awakening found myself bathed in tears. ...

As my musical instruction also did me no good, I continued in my willful process of self-education by copying out the scores of my beloved masters, and in so doing acquired a neat handwriting, which in later years has often been admired." —Richard Wagner, *My Life*, Volume 1 (1883)

What happens after Wagner?

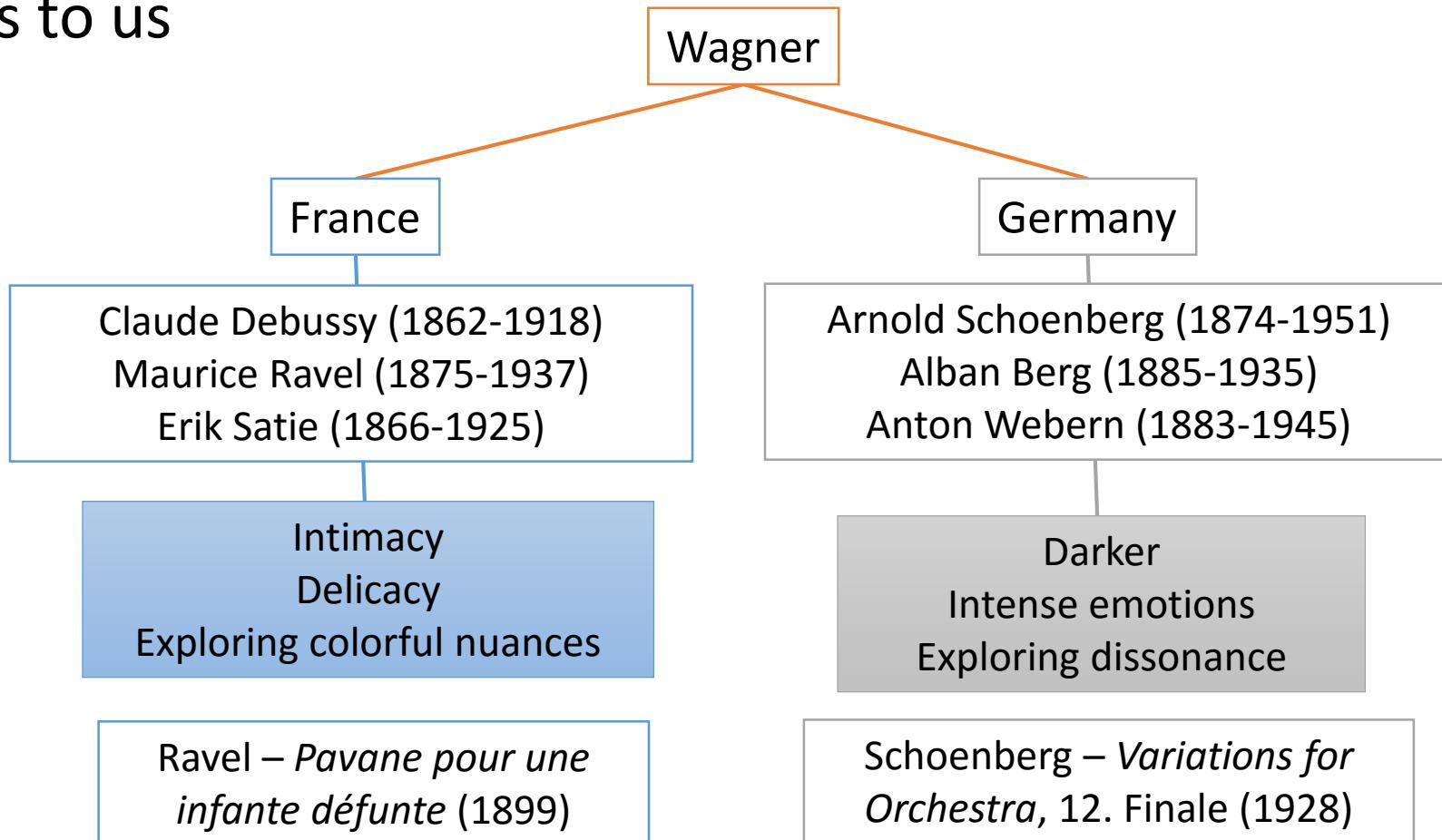
- Wagner believed that the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was the “artwork of the future”
- Imagine you are a young musician (around your own age) at the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century. What do you do?
 - Go back (revert to the past) Sounds tame in comparison
 - Imitate (follow Wagner)
 - Innovate (find a new path) Requires a unique set of skills: writing, composition, design, conducting



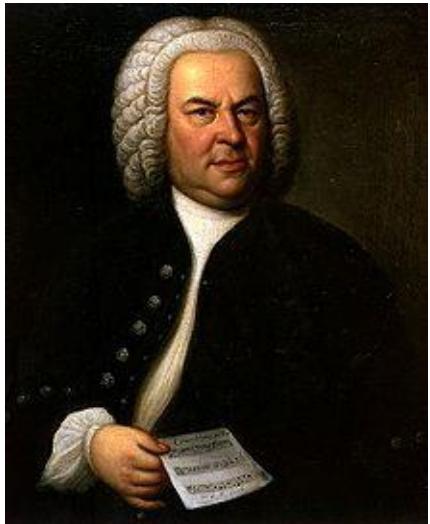
“I don’t see what anyone can do beyond *Tristan*.”
—Claude Debussy, 1890

Musical lineage

- Relationships with the past: history is a buffet table and we take what appeals to us



Ideas come from somewhere



Beethoven, after receiving a gift of works by Johann Sebastian Bach, said that the idea of publishing the complete works of Bach “does my heart good, my heart which beats fully for the elevated, great art of this original father of harmony.” (letter, 1801)



20th-century aesthetics

- Finding beauty (meaning) in the “unbeautiful”
- Reshaping and reconceiving older ideas
- Reacting against Romanticism
- Escaping from refinement
 - Primitivism
 - Spontaneous and uninhibited styles
- Using non-Western and non-traditional sources of inspiration



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) – *Don Quixote* (1955)

The Eiffel Tower, built for the 1889 World's Fair

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)



- 1872-84 Paris Conservatoire
 - Studied piano and composition
 - Won the Prix de Rome in 1884
- 1888 and 1889 traveled to Bayreuth to attend Wagner productions
 - Most composers at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th were enamored with the music of Wagner
- 1889 World's Fair in Paris – saw performances by a Javanese gamelan ensemble, felt refreshed musically



Wagner was “A beautiful sunset mistaken for a dawn.”

Claude Debussy, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1894)

- How Debussy thought about making music:
 - “There is no theory. You have only to listen. Pleasure is the law merely have to listen. Pleasure is the law.”
 - “Music is made up of color and rhythm.”
 - “Beauty must appeal to the senses, must provide us with immediate enjoyment, must impress us or insinuate itself into us without any effort on our part.”



Debussy and his daughter, 1916

Claude Debussy, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1894)



- Based on poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1876)
 - Depicts several scenes but not a specific narrative
- The orchestra is a wide array of timbres and tone colors (especially woodwinds and harp)
 - No trumpets, trombones, or percussion



Faun costume design by Léon Bakst (1866-1924)

Franz von Stuck (1863-1928), *Fishing Game (Faun and Nymph)* (1904)

Comparing artistic styles

Impressionism



Claude Monet (1840-1926), *The Walk, Woman with a Parasol* (1875)

Expressionism



Edvard Munch (1863-1944), *The Scream* (1893)

Musical style: Expressionism

- German, 20th century
- Wild, violent, turbulent, irrational psychological explorations
 - Subconscious, hallucinations, dreams
- The content of the art is mood and emotion
- Extreme ranges
- Disjunct melodies
- Composers: Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern



Arnold Schoenberg, *The Red Gaze* (1910)

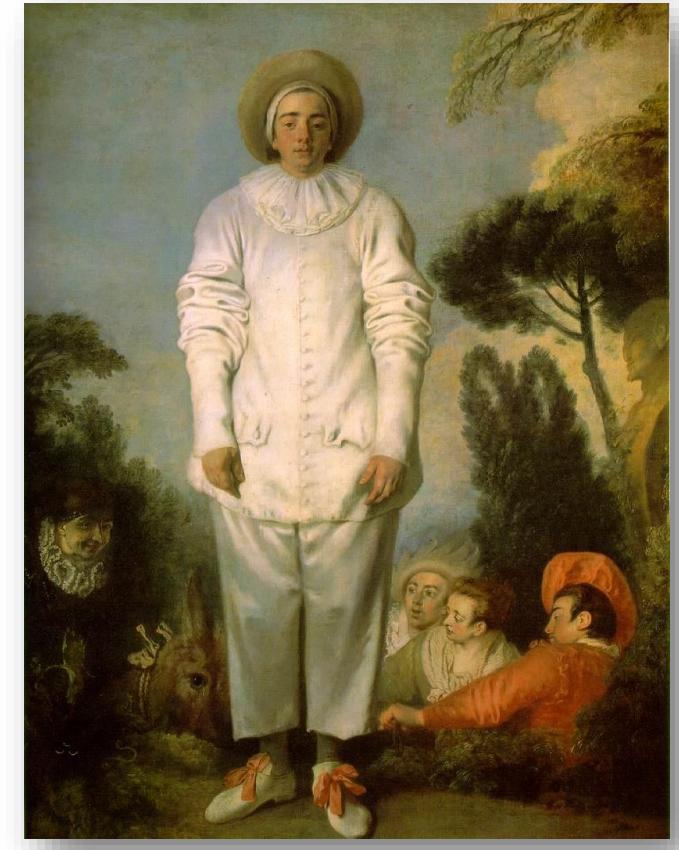
Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

- Active teacher in Vienna, Austria, and Berlin, Germany
- Wrote music that was difficult to understand
- 1918 Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna
 - Well-rehearsed performances
 - Frequent performances of works to eliminate unfamiliarity with the style
 - No criticism, no clapping, no newspaper reviews
- 1933 dismissed from the Akademie der Künste in Berlin
- 1933 Emigrated to Los Angeles



Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912)

- Chamber music ensemble: voice, flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, cello, piano
- Setting of 21 poems by Albert Giraud (song cycle)
- *Sprechstimme* (speech-voice) – a kind of vocal delivery that involves speaking pitches in rhythm instead of singing them



Antoine Watteau (1684-1721),
Pierrot (1718)

Aesthetics

“To lay claim to one’s interest, a thing must be worth saying, and must not yet have been said.”

—Arnold Schoenberg,
Style and Idea (1950), 102

“From Schoenberg I learned that tradition is a home we must love and forgo.”

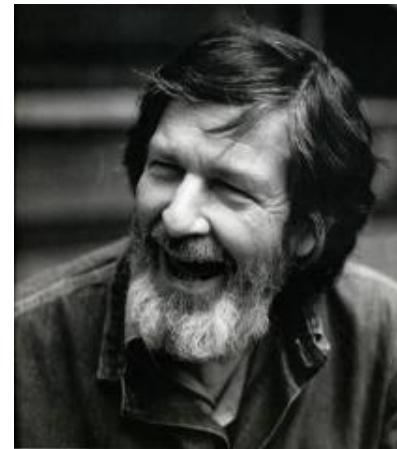
—Lukas Foss (1922-2009)



Robert Motherwell (1915-91),
Untitled, from *Lyric Suite* series

20th century art music: exploring sounds

- John Cage (1912-92)
- Steve Reich (b. 1936)
- George Crumb (b. 1929)



- Artists who shape the attitudes of those who are in the audience by altering their idea of what is aesthetically significant
 - What is sound?
 - What is music?
 - What happens if...?

John Cage, 4'33 (1952)



Cage in Japan, 1962

“To what end does one write music?” Music conditions one’s mind, leading to “moments in life that are complete and fulfilled.” (1948)

“Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music.”

—after visiting an anechoic chamber at Harvard University, 1951

George Crumb, *Black Angels* (1970)

- Subtitle: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land: a parable on our troubled contemporary world
- Finding overwhelming beauty all around:
 - Insects
 - Melodies that evoke different musics from around the world
 - Percussive sounds
 - Spiritual sounds of the universe, becoming aware of the big-ness of the world

Music is “a system of proportions in the service of a spiritual impulse”

“Debussy really was one of the first composers to make the sheer sound a very special aspect of the music... everything in sound is useable if its' justified in the music itself... All of the sounds I've borrowed from eastern music, Asian music, and so forth, are sounds that are in my ear.” (interview, 1988)

Class business

- Student Blog Post project continues over spring break
 - #15 through Saturday (F5A: Faraz A., J5: Wendell G.)
 - #16 Sunday through Tuesday (F5A: Monica P., J5: Seamus F. AND Clara S.)
- Next class: May 6
 - Revised course calendar with reading assignments online
- Final class: May 13
 - In-class extra credit assignment
 - Final exam review
 - Concert response essay due
- Final exam: May 27
 - Class blog response final essay due