

Attendance/reading Quiz!

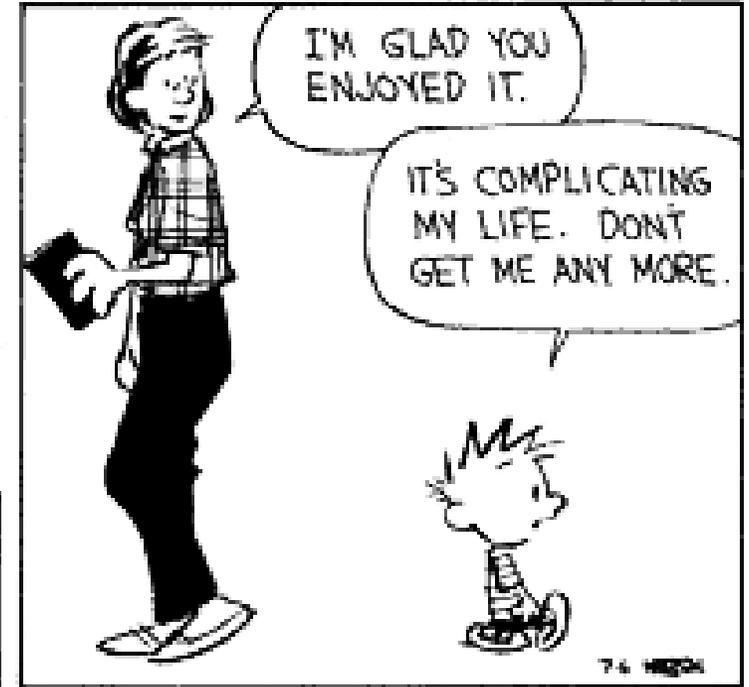
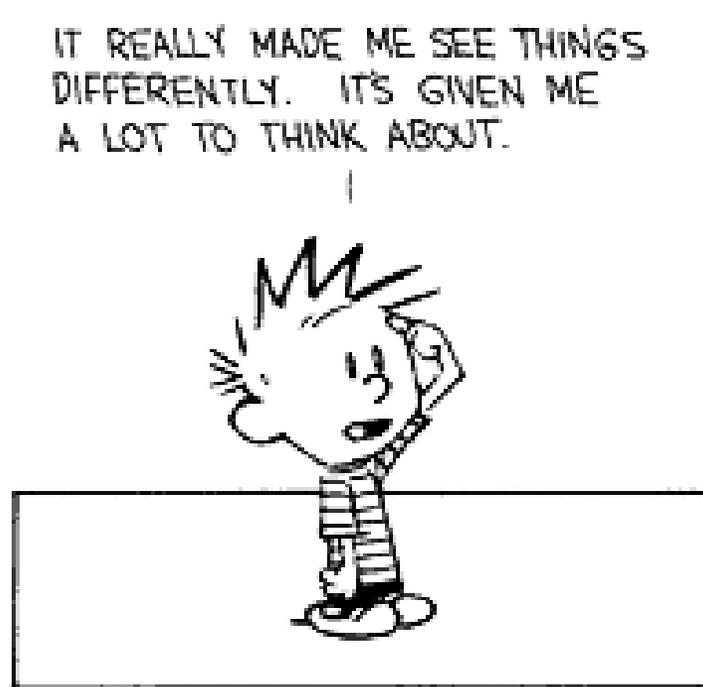
Mu 110: Introduction to Music

Instructor: Dr. Alice Jones

Queensborough Community College

Fall 2016

Sections C5A (Fridays 9:10-12) and F5A (Fridays 12:10-3)



Recap

- You all already possess the tools necessary to unpack any piece of music
 - There is no such thing as music that you cannot understand, at least on some level
 - Questions beget questions – this is where critical thinking happens, in continuing to ask questions and finding the right questions to ask
 - There is no such thing as music that is boring
- Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912)

Other musical influences and precedents

- Arnold Schoenberg's musical style is influenced by other artistic trends:
 - Gothic Romanticism – taking pleasure in horror
 - Expressionism – German aesthetic trend, early 20th century in which the content of the art is deep, often troubling, psychological explorations rather than a plot or storyline
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843) – assigned for reading last class
 - Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818); Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886); Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)
- Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865)

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865)

- Composed 1856-59 while in exile in Switzerland (and having an affair with his host's wife)
- Libretto is written by Wagner based on 13th century poetry by Gottfried von Strassburg (d. 1210)
- Premiered 1865
 - Hans von Bülow conducted



The story's "all-pervading tragedy ... impressed me so deeply that I felt convinced it should stand out in bold relief, regardless of minor details."

—Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), Prelude

- Prelude – piece for orchestra alone played before the music drama begins
 - Each act begins with a prelude
- Sets the tone for the drama
 - Presents musical ideas that will return throughout the drama

Bayreuth Staatsoper – Zubin Mehta, conductor

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), in Wagner's words

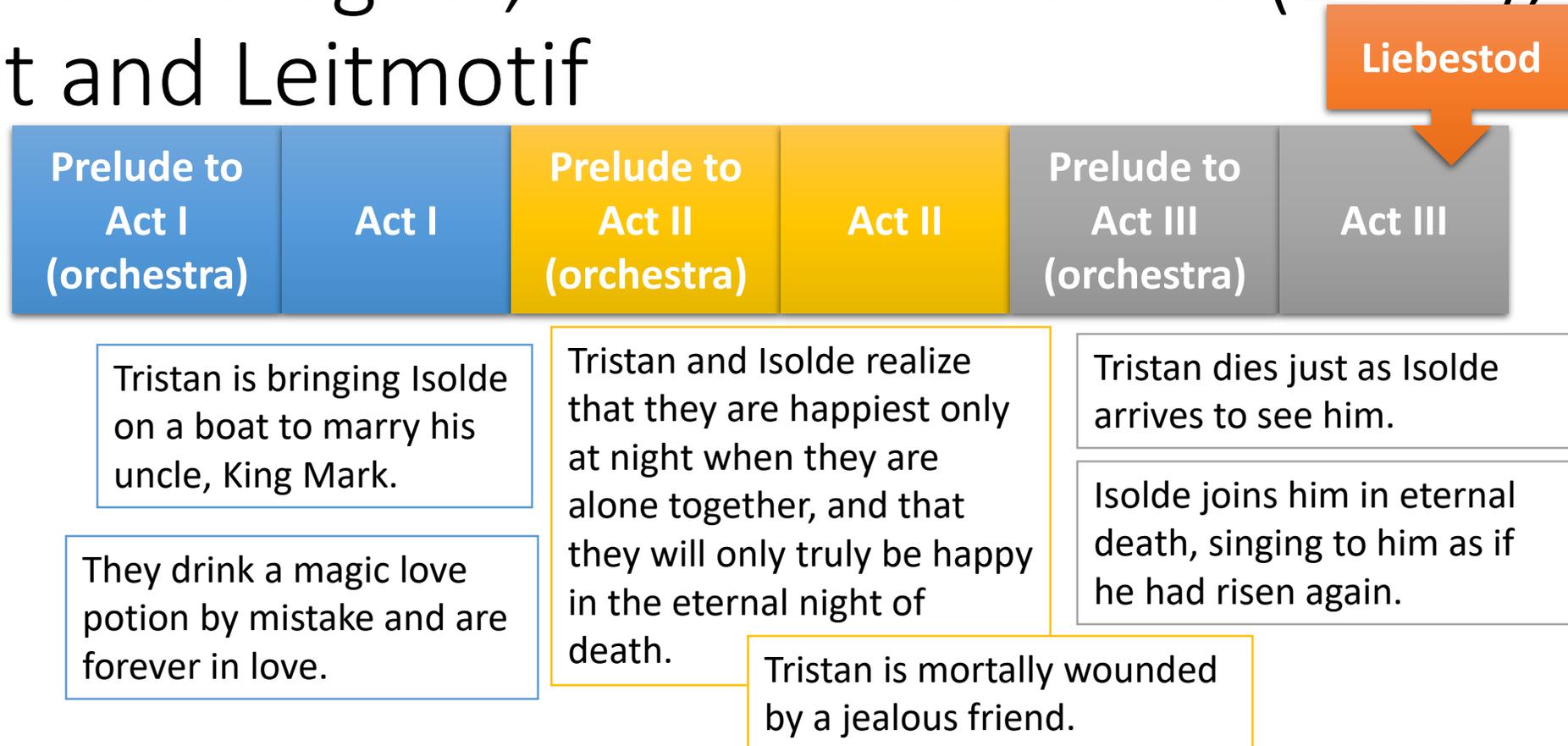
An old, old tale, inexhaustible in its variations, and ever sung anew in all the languages of medieval Europe, tells us of Tristan and Isolde. For this king [Mark] the trusty vassal [Tristan] had wooed a maid he dared not tell himself he loved, Isolde; as his master's bride she followed him, because, powerless, she had no choice but to follow the suitor. The Goddess of Love, jealous of her downtrodden rights, avenged herself: the love potion destined by the bride's careful mother for the partners in this merely political marriage, in accordance with the customs of the age, the Goddess foists on the youthful pair through a blunder diversely accounted for; fired by its draught, their love leaps suddenly to vivid flame, and they have to acknowledge that they belong only to each other. Henceforth no end to the yearning, longing, rapture, and misery of love: world, power, fame, honor, chivalry, loyalty and friendship, scattered like an insubstantial dream; one thing alone left living: longing, longing unquenchable, desire forever renewing itself, craving and languishing; one sole redemption: death, surcease of being, the sleep that knows no waking!

(continued)

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), in Wagner's words

...insatiable longing swell[s] up from the timidest avowal of the most delicate attraction, through anxious sighs, hopes and fears, laments and wishes, raptures and torments, to the mightiest onset and to the most powerful effort to find the breach that will reveal to the infinitely craving heart the path into the sea of love's endless rapture. In vain! Its power spent, the heart sinks back to languish in longing, in longing without attainment, since each attainment brings in its wake only renewed desire, until in final exhaustion the breaking glance catches a glimmer of the attainment of the highest rapture: it is the rapture of dying, of ceasing to be, of the final redemption into that wondrous realm from which we stray the furthest when we strive to enter it by force. Shall we call it Death? Or is it the miraculous world of Night, from which, as the story tells, an ivy and a vine sprang of old in inseparable embrace over the grave of Tristan and Isolde?

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), Plot and Leitmotif



Leitmotif: represents longing and desire

- Prelude
- Liebestod (just as Isolde dies)

Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, (1865) Act III Liebestod [Love-death transfiguration]

- Idealizes death (a climactic, beautiful, romanticized event)
- Isolde hallucinates about Tristan
- The orchestra is equally important as the singer
- The voice is sometimes engulfed by the orchestra (just like Isolde is engulfed by her passion)



Leontyne Price (b. 1927), soprano

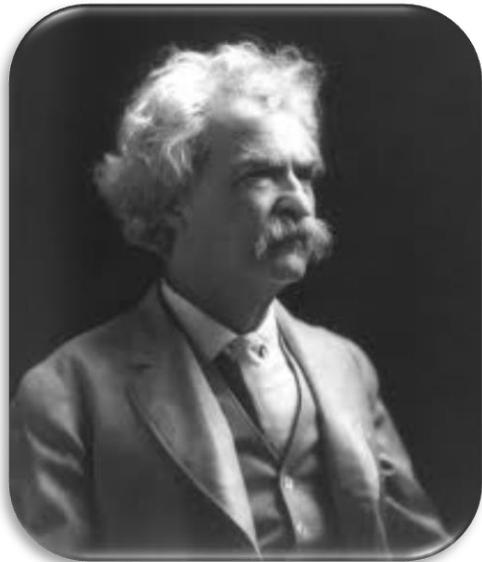
Reactions to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*

“Not to mince words, it is the glorification of sensual pleasure, tricked out with every titillating device, it is unremitting materialism, according to which human beings have no higher destiny than, after living the life of turtle doves, ‘to vanish in sweet odors, like a breath’... [Wagner] makes sensuality itself the true subject of his drama.... We think that the stage presentation of the poem *Tristan und Isolde* amounts to an act of indecency. Wagner does not show us the life of heroes of Nordic sagas which would edify and strengthen the spirit of his German audiences. What he does present is the ruination of the life of heroes through sensuality.”

–*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, July 5, 1865

Reactions to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*

"I know of some, and have heard of many, who could not sleep after it, but cried the night away. I feel strongly out of place here. Sometimes I feel like the one sane person in the community of the mad." –Mark Twain, 1891



It was "the most repugnant thing I have ever seen or heard in all my life."
–Clara Schumann (pianist and close friend of Johannes Brahms)

Reactions to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*



"So there I sat in the topmost gallery of the Berlin Opera House, and from the first sound of the cellos my heart contracted spasmodically... Never before has my soul been deluged with such floods of sound and passion, never had my heart been consumed by such yearning and sublime bliss... A new epoch had begun: Wagner was my god, and I wanted to become his prophet."

–Bruno Walter, 1889

"There was only Beethoven and Richard [Wagner] – and after them, nobody."

–Gustav Mahler



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)

Ideas come from somewhere – all music is in dialogue with the past



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



What happens after Wagner?

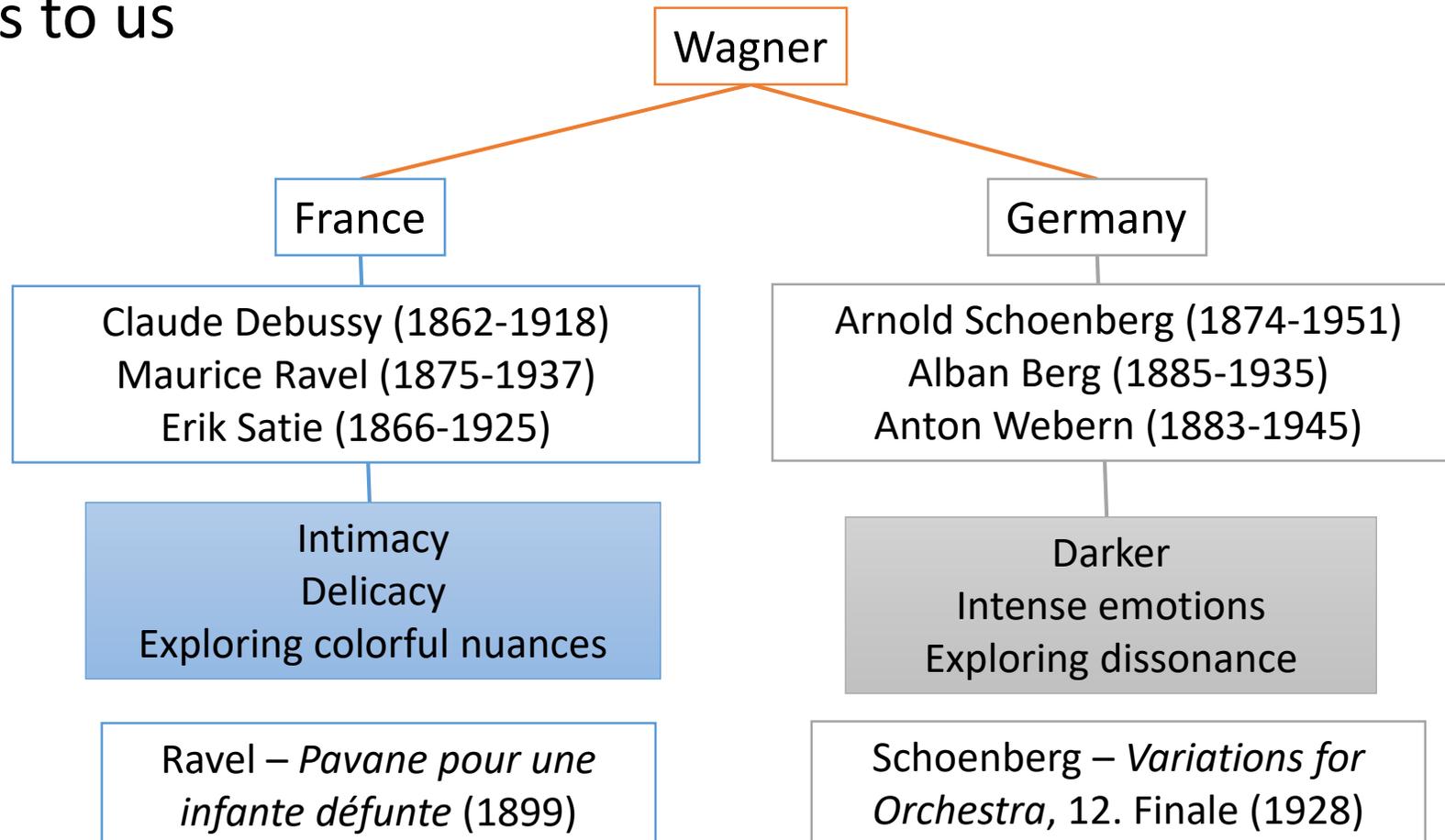
- Wagner believed that his musical style was the “artwork of the future”
- Imagine you are a young musician (around your own age) at the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century. What do you do?
 - Go back (revert to the past) Sounds tame in comparison
 - Imitate (follow Wagner) Requires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



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

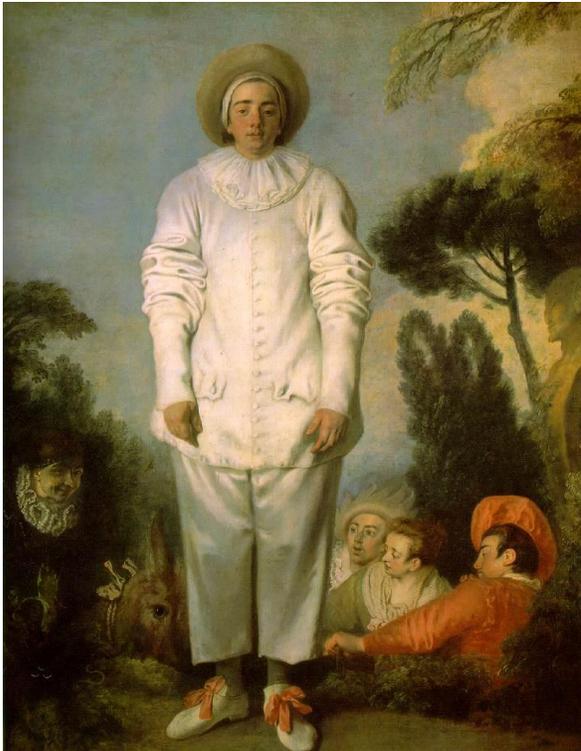
Musical lineage

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



Comparing Pierrots

- Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912)
- Claude Debussy, *Pierrot: Le bon Pierrot que la foule contemple* (1881)



Antoine Watteau,
Gilles (1718)



James Ensor, *The Despair
of Pierrot* (1892)

Charles
Léandre, a
cantomime of
Pierrot and
Columbine
(1899)



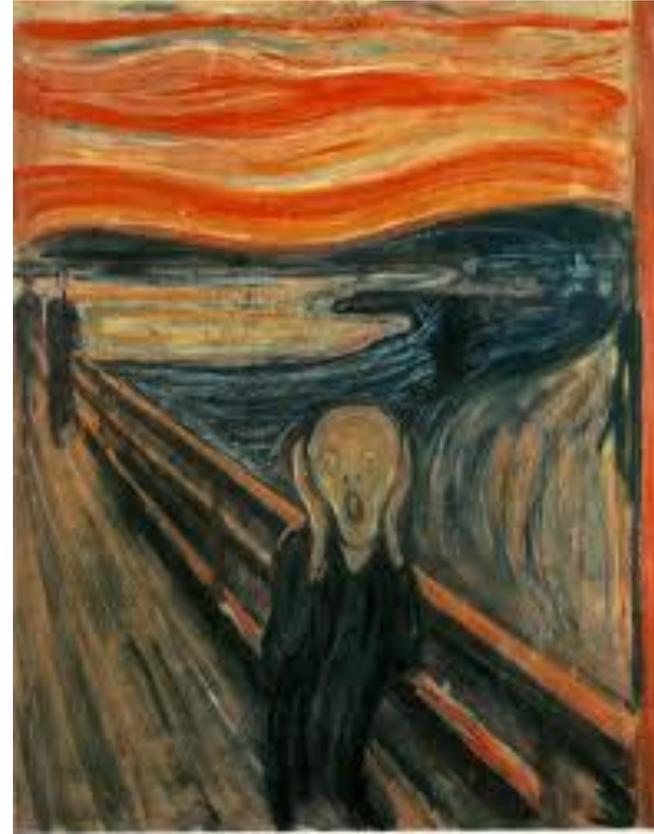
Comparing aesthetic styles

Impressionism



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

Expressionism



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

Diverging musical styles

- Painting style in France: Impressionism
- Literary style in France: Symbolism
 - Absolute truths can only be described indirectly
- Anti-realism; emphasis on dreams, spirituality, the imagination
- Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*
- Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal*
 - Translated the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe into French, 1852-1865

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



Debussy said that 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.”
 - “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)



Faun costume design by Léon Bakst (1866-1924)

- 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



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

“Was it a dream I loved?”
–Stéphane Mallarmé, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1876)

Claude Debussy, *La Mer* (1905)

- Atmospheric rather than programmatic
- Common feature in Debussy's music: joy at having one's senses overwhelmed

3 movements:

1. From dawn to noon on the sea
2. Play of the waves
3. Dialogue of the wind and sea



Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (c.1830-32)

Maurice Ravel, *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912)



Léon Bakst, *Daphnis et Chloé*, Act II set

- Ravel (1875-1937) is admired for his orchestration
 - Arranged other composers' works for orchestra
- Story from Greek mythology
 - Shepherds/goat herders who fall in love but are so naïve that they don't understand what's happening to them

End quiz

1. Musical ideas come out of nowhere, with no connection to anything that's come before them.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. French composers' use of Greek mythology is a kind of exoticism.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. What does musical analysis consist of?