

Mu 110: Introduction to Music

Instructor: Dr. Alice Jones

Queensborough Community College

Fall 2016

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



Recap

- Music made by people in ethnic, gender, and racial minorities
 - Frederic Chopin, Clara Schumann, Scott Joplin, Robert Johnson, Billie Holiday
- A musician's identity informs and affects the kind of music they make

In-class writing/discussion

No artist is totally free to make up whatever they want.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

Suite on Finnish Themes,
I. Energico (1939)

- 1919-30 studied at the Petrograd Conservatory (formerly St. Petersburg)
- Wrote propaganda music: 3 ballets, 8 theater pieces, 10 film scores
 - Preparing the population to loyally accept any policy changes the government enacted
 - Pieces are powerful and moving + unambiguous political message = brainwashing public with subliminal messages
- Propaganda art (like Shostakovich's music) primed the public to accept big government changes or programs
 - The Great Terror (1934) – series of mass purges of dissenters



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

- 1934 opera *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District* premiered; huge success
 - Shostakovich was popular
 - 1936 denounced in an anonymous review: “muddle instead of music,” “leftist confusion instead of natural human music” – repeated in newspapers across the country
 - Shostakovich went from being revered to being a warning to other musicians not to write elitist, corrupted music



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

- 1934, The Great Terror (intimidation): dissenters were murdered and deported (especially writers)
 - 7 million people sent to the gulag in the first year alone
 - Nearly every family in Moscow and St. Petersburg lost someone
 - A van could come in the middle of the night and that person would never be heard from again
 - Shostakovich's brother-in-law, mother-in-law, uncle, and librettists of his operas were taken; his sister was exiled
- Shostakovich contemplated suicide
- Shostakovich was forced to musically “apologize” – write music that was what the government wanted: pleasant, easy to listen to, memorable
 - How can you write something you don't believe in?
 - Result: Symphony No. 5
- Enormous source of guilt and embarrassment for Shostakovich later in life to have participated in the propaganda that made this possible



Gulag (work camps in Siberia)

Soviet musical production

- “I don’t like it” – the reaction Soviet censors had to Shostakovich’s music
 - It was jazzy, complicated, dissonant, and difficult to understand – all the things celebrated in the West
- Bad music: “[Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth* is made up of] purposely graceless and jumbled stream of sounds. Little shreds of melody, little stabs at a musical phrase, sink, resurface and disappear once more in the rumbling grating, screeching din. It is hard enough to follow this ‘music’; to remember it is impossible.” –*Pravda*, Jan. 38, 1936
 - Sounds just like a description of Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire* or Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*
- A simple “I don’t like it” ends up ruining the life of a composer

Shostakovich – Symphony No. 5 in d minor, Op. 47 (1937)

- The Soviet government found Beethoven’s music acceptable (heroic, lyrical, 19th century) – Shostakovich looked to him as a model
- Shostakovich’s symphony does what it is “supposed” to, form-wise:
 - I. Sonata form
 - II. Scherzo (dance-like)
 - III. Lyrical slow movement
 - IV. Triumphant (?) finale
- But the government’s description of what music “should” sound like is so vague that they are 1) difficult to obey; and 2) can be manipulated against any composer
- Government was clear about what music should not sound like: “delinquent” genres like jazz and popular music

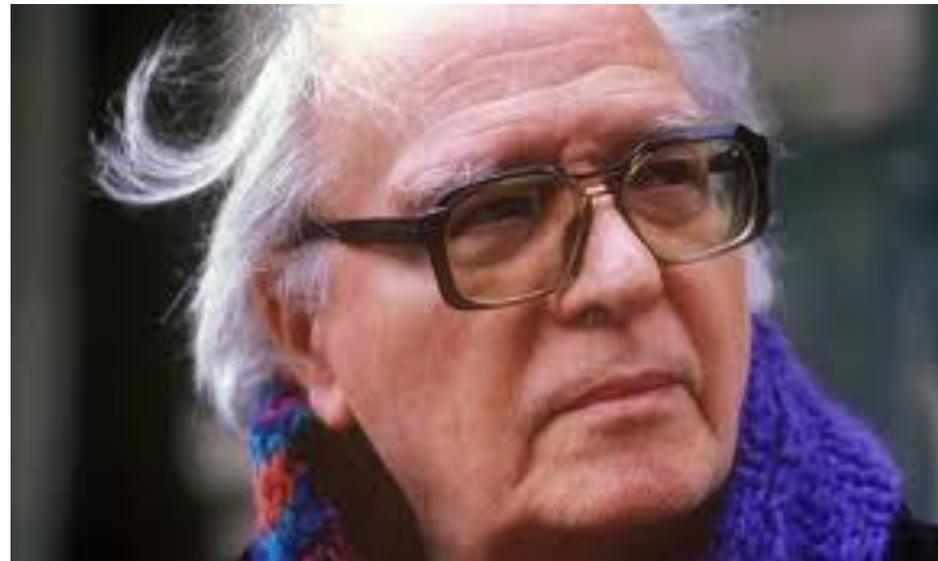
“[Music should resemble] symphonic sonorities or with the plain language of music that can be understood by all... [not] only appeal to aesthetes and formalists who have lost all healthy taste.” –*Pravda*, Jan. 28, 1936

Olivier Messiaen (1908-92)

- Studied composition and organ at the Paris Conservatoire
- Drafted into the French army
- May 1940 – captured by the German army and imprisoned at a prisoner-of-war camp in Poland called Stalag VIII-A



Stalag VIII-A (1939)



Olivier Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time*, 8. “In Praise of the Immortality of Jesus” (1941)

- Premiered for prisoners and guards in January 1941
 - “Never have I been heard with as much attention and understanding.”
- For clarinet, violin, cello, piano
 - Professional musicians all prisoners in the camp

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire...and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth... And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever... that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.”

—*Revelation* 10:1-7, King James Version

Homework and reminders

- Midterm exam rewrite – optional (F5A due today, C5A due today)
- Free-write essay rewrite – optional (F5A was due last week, C5A due December 2)
- Analytical Essay, final draft – due in class November 18
- Online Class Discussion #6 – ends Saturday night
- Student Blog Post #11 – November 13-16
 - C5A: Jeff S. and Shaquille S. // F5A: Daniel B. and Chris K.
- Student Blog post #12 – November 16-19
 - C5A: Omari D. and Jamal R. // F5A: Myrtle D. and Casey G.
- Blog Response Essay – due in class December 2
 - Prompt is available online but I will hand it out in class on November 18
- Concert Response Essay (not optional) – due December 16

End write

What is a topic we've covered in class that you're still unsure about or have questions about?