

Reading/attendance 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

- Blending of different musical cultures and styles is a common feature of 20th century music
 - Western and non-Western
 - Pop and classical
- Form – noticing repetition and contrast happening in multiple musical features simultaneously

Gamelan

- Percussion ensemble from Indonesia (islands of Java and Bali)
- Hypnotic cycles of repetition
 - Large gong marks the beginning of each pattern
- Group meditation
 - No one instrumental part plays the complete melody – it requires all the parts interlocking to make the music happen
- “Inner melody” (*lagu batin*)
 - The players listen not for anything played by the musicians out loud but instead for an inner melody that each of them feels
 - Each player focuses and mentally travels inward (instead of thinking about the surface) to find the musical “truth”
- Experience of traveling inward, of leaving one’s conscious self behind by becoming ever more deeply engrossed in the music and the music-making process
- Heightened state is experienced by both players and listeners – anyone sensitive enough to “get it”

Gamelan instruments

- High – play elaborate and rhythmically fast lines; the leader of the ensemble (gambang, bonang)
- Middle – play relaxed, simple lines that form the heart of the piece (slenthem)
- Low – play structural notes even slower and longer than the middle group; mark the beginning of rhythmic cycles (saron, gongs)
- Drums – provide rhythmic clarity and improvised rhythmic ideas (kendhang)
- Non-percussion instruments: suling (multiple sizes), rebab
 - Play an improvised version of the melody (heterophony)



John Cage (1912-92), Sonata No. 1 (1946)

Prepared piano – placing objects inside the instrument to alter the sounds it produces

Tōru Takemitsu (1930-96)

“...in my own life, in my own development, for a long period I struggled to avoid being ‘Japanese,’ to avoid ‘Japanese’ qualities. It was largely through my contact with John Cage that I came to recognize the value of my own tradition.”

On John Cage’s death, 1992: “In the sorrow that grips me I see not the void but the clear blue sky, and I sense the vast realm of undying death.”



Tōru Takemitsu (1930-96), *Signals from Heaven* (1987)



Two movements:

I. Day Signal

II. Night Signal

Brass ensemble: 2 horns, piccolo trumpet, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, and tuba

1993: “My music is something like a signal sent to the unknown. Moreover, I imagine and believe that my signal meets another’s signal, and the resulting physical change creates a new harmony from the original two.”

George Crumb (b. 1929)

- West Virginia
- Educated at Mason College of Music (BA 1950), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (MM), University of Michigan (DMA 1959)
- Music explores extended timbres and big philosophical questions: what is time, why are we here, what does it mean to be human (evolution, relationship to the natural world)
- Experimental (sound production and theatricality) but conservative (often sonically pleasant)



George Crumb (b. 1929)

Eleven Echoes of Autumn (1965)

Echoes of Time and the River
(*Echoes II*) (1967)

Ancient Voices of Children (1970)

Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)
(1971)

Music for a Summer Evening
(*Makrokosmos III*) (1974)

Dream Sequence (Images II) (1976)

Star-Child (1977)

Celestial Mechanics (1979)

An Idyll for the Misbegotten
(*Images III*) (1986)

A Haunted Landscape (1987)

Mundus Canis (A Dog's World)
(1998)

Eine Kleine Mitternachtmusik (A
Little Midnight Music) (2001)

Otherworldly Resonances (2003)

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)

George Crumb, *Black Angels* (1970)

I. Departure

1. Threnody I:
Night of the
Electric Insects

2. Sounds of
Bones and
Flutes

3. Lost Bells

4. Devil-music

5. Danse macabre

II. Absence

6. Pavana
lachrymae

7. Threnody II:
Black Angels!

8. Sarabana de
la Muerte
Oscura

9. Lost Bells (Echo)

III. Return

10. God-Music

11. Ancient Voices

12. Ancient
Voices (Echo)

13. Threnody III:
Night of the
Electric Insects

Whitney George (b. 1985)

- California Institute of the Arts (BM Interdisciplinary Collaboration), Brooklyn College (MM Composition), CUNY Graduate Center (DMA Composition in progress)
- Formed an ensemble to ensure that her music is performed (The Curiosity Cabinet)
- Conducts other ensembles regularly – networking, being part of the music scene



Whitney George (b. 1985)

- Scorings to films by Frans Zwartjes
- *The Yellow Wallpaper* (2010) – opera based on the proto-feminist short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892)
- *Night, like velvet: In Twelve Letters* (2013) – based on letters between Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes
- *The Curious Case of Ed Leedskalnin* (2015) – puppet show and mixed media
- *The Strange Library* (2015) – semi-staged presentation of a graphic novella by Haruki Murakami
- *To Hold My Head High Above the Water* (2016) – woodwind quintet

Whitney George, *Extinction Series* (2014-)

Mysterious Starling



Imperial Woodpecker



Final thoughts?

Not all music is worth listening to multiple times, but all music is worth listening to once

To commit to education is to commit to growing

“Just listen with the vastness of the world in mind. You can’t fail to get the message.” —Pierre Boulez



Reminders

- I'll send you Individual grade updates on Sunday via email
- Online Class Discussion #8 ends Saturday night
- Concert Response Essay – due December 16
- December 16 – Final exam and Extra Credit project
 - Listening-based exam – 5 unfamiliar pieces
 - Blog post for the extra credit project is available starting December 9 (class discussion)
 - Concert response essay due
 - Optional: Analytical essay revision
 - Optional: Essay on compositional control – coming full circle on a free-write essay

