

## Attendance/reading Quiz!

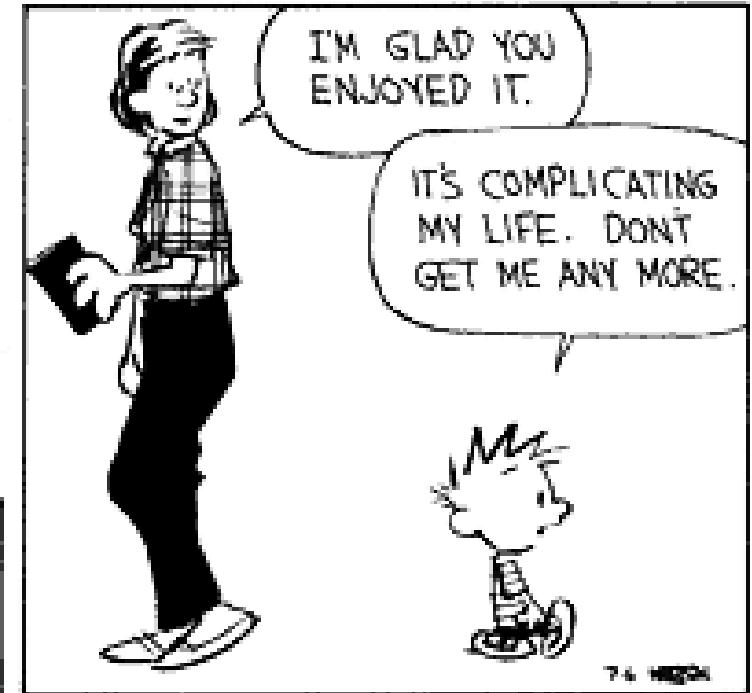
# Mu 110: Introduction to Music

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Queensborough Community College  
Spring 2017

Sections F1 (Mondays 12:10-3) and F4 (Thursdays 12:10-3)



IT REALLY MADE ME SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. IT'S GIVEN ME A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.



# Recap

- Richard Wagner
- Context illuminates and complicates music
- Critical thinking = making substantive, meaningful connections that aren't immediately obvious

# Music as a stand-in for civilization

- People often use music as an indicator of people's taste, class, and refinement
- Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *A General History of Music* (1788-1801)

# Music defines a community

- Music is a product of a community, its values, its hopes, and its fears
- Music influences that same community, its values, its hopes, and its fears
- Music gives a community a public face – it acts as an emissary or ambassador to people outside that community

# US history: lightning round

- 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries: Transatlantic slave trade
- 1860-65: Civil War
- 1865-77: Reconstruction
- 1890-1965: Jim Crow laws passed in Southern, Plains/Midwestern, and Western states – state-sanctioned racial discrimination and oppression against Blacks, Latinos, and Asians (separate but equal facilities, voting restrictions, residential segregation, anti-miscegenation, sundown towns)
  - Lynchings were common
- 1954-68: Civil Rights movement
- Happily ever after, no more problems

# Robert Johnson, *Cross Roads Blues* (1936)

- Musical story-telling
  - Captures a state of mind or a feeling
  - Personal but universal
  - The text is a series of related but not necessarily chronological events consisting of vivid but non-specific metaphors and allusions
- Often melancholy; seemingly simple but wise
- Improvisatory
  - Words, melody, accompaniment can be made up on the spot to be expressive, extend a song, or shorten a song
- Sound quality – rough around the edges (voice and guitar)



Robert Johnson (1911-37)

# Robert Johnson, *Cross Roads Blues* (1936)

- Blues pattern
  - Repetitive harmony and melody forces you to focus on the words and their emotional content
  - Inescapable cycling through same harmonies
- Music enhances, expands, and intensifies what is said in the text



Simple statement

Line 2  
(repeat)

Line 3  
(new)

More emphatic because of  
different harmony – reaffirms line 1

Resolution – gives  
nuance or context,  
continues the story

I went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees.  
I went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees.  
Asked the Lord above, "Have mercy, now save poor Bob if you please."

# Robert Johnson, *Cross Roads Blues* (1936)

- Improvised music is a little different in every performance
- Recorded in a hotel room in Dallas, TX, 1936
  - 2 takes of the same song
- Same basic story-arc and melody
- Accompaniment can change (tempo, contour, gestures)
- Different wordless sounds
- Can end on any verse (or go on forever)

# Remakes

- Meaning comes from musical sound, who the performer is, who the audience is
  - Meaning doesn't just come from the text
- Alters the meaning of the music (even if the notes and words are the same)
  - No longer a personal statement from one man
  - Pre-planned structure (not an in-the-moment inspiration)
  - Refined sound – intonation, sound quality, regular pulse and tempo throughout, controlled sound/pitch of the voice, clear enunciation of words
  - Energized – electric instruments, faster tempo, clear rhythm



Cream, *Crossroads* (1968)

# Musical identity

- Identity: place, time, class, gender, sexual orientation
- Musical choices (style, accompaniment, text content, allusions) tell an astute listener about the musician's identity
- Portray an identity, create an identity, pretend an identity, claim an identity

# Jazz

Duke Ellington, *Cotton Club Stomp* (1929)

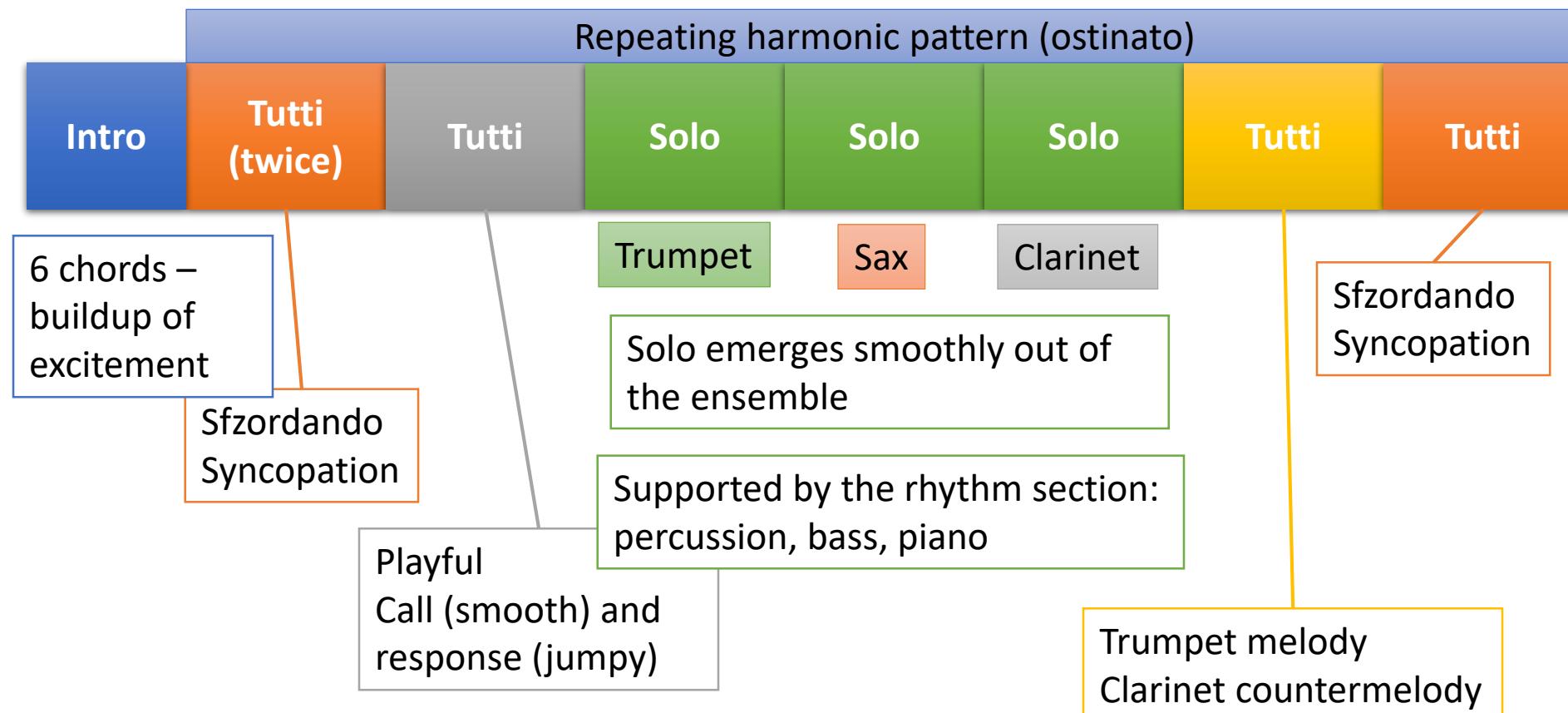
Paul Whiteman, *Dardenella* (1928)

- Jazz ensemble: trumpets, trombone, saxes, double bass, piano, drums
- Structured, repeating harmonic pattern (ostinato) and each member of the ensemble gets to “speak”
  - Riffs on a common idea (i.e. the harmony being played)
  - The “piece” is different each time
- Jumpy, energetic rhythms (syncopation)
- Ellington played at the Cotton Club in Harlem 1927-32 for white audiences
  - Wrote approx. 2000 jazz pieces
  - Brings rough, dirty sound of blues into club jazz

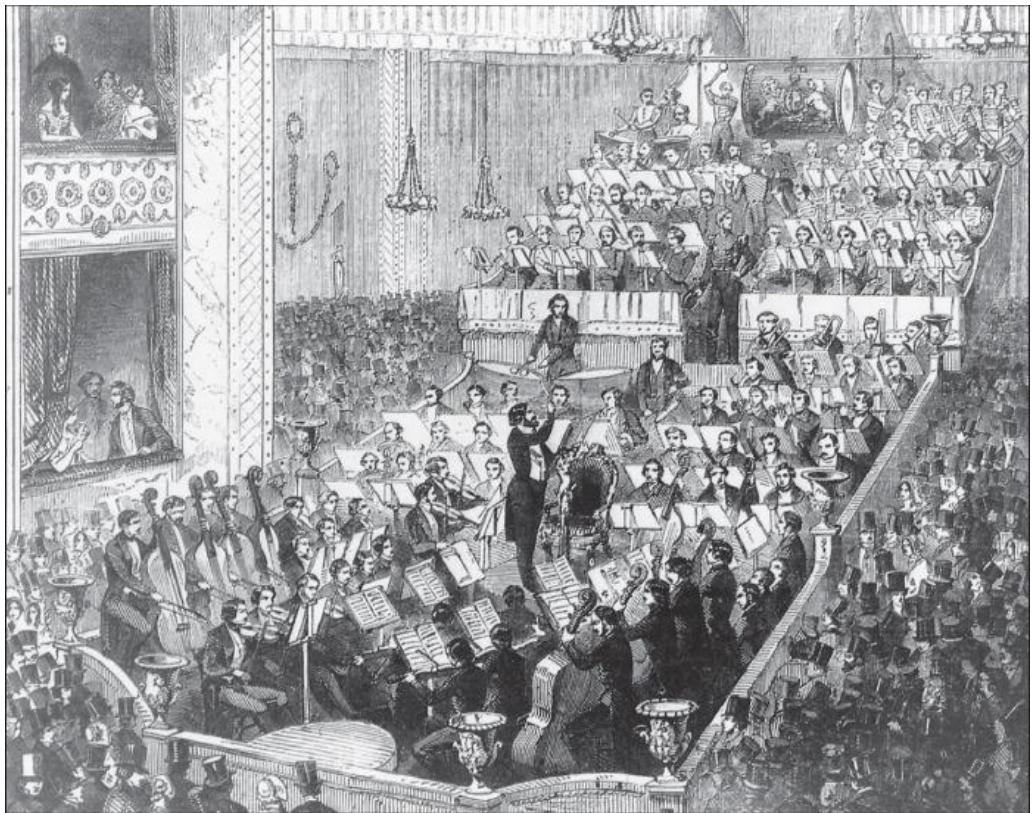


Duke Ellington (1899-1974)

# Duke Ellington, *Cotton Club Stomp* (1929)



# The symphonic tradition



Covent Garden Theater, London (1846)

- Multi-movement (usually 4) work for orchestra
  - I. Sonata allegro
  - II. Slow movement
  - III. Minuet (or scherzo)
  - IV. Rondo
- Conductor
- Performed in public concert halls
- Serious
- Art
- Developed during the Classical era

# William Grant Still (1895-1978), Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major “Afro-American,” I. Moderato assai (1930)

In-class writing: Why would Still write a symphony when he could create anything he pleased?



# William Grant Still (1895-1978), Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major “Afro-American,” I. Moderato assai (1930)

“I knew I wanted to write a symphony; I knew that it had to be an American work; and I wanted to demonstrate how the blues, so often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to the highest musical level.”



# Hip-hop

- An expression of geography, identity, ethnicity through DJing, break dancing, graffiti, and MCing
  - Who am I/let me tell you who I am – defined by my home, my persona, other people like me
- Unites ideas from blues and jazz in a new sound world:
  - Repetitive harmonic pattern/structuring on top of which the rest of the piece is built
  - Personal expression and story telling – create the feeling of being there as the story unfolds
  - MCs taking turns to “solo” riffing on a common idea (the topic of the song, rhythm in the track)
  - Expressing shared issues/experiences/pain

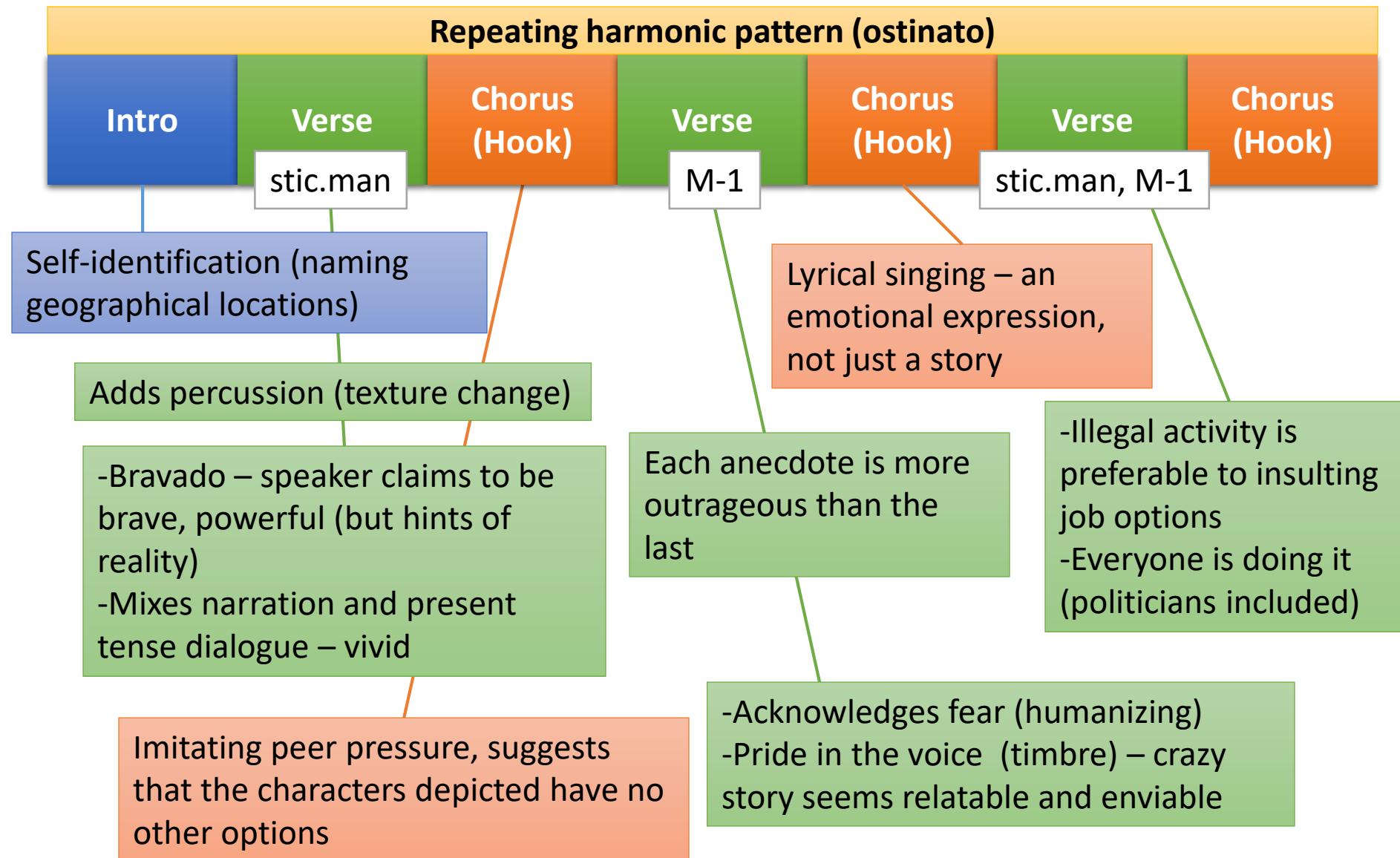


Dead Prez (stic.man and M-1)

# Dead Prez, *Hell Yeah (Pimp the System)* (2003)

- Simple accompaniment
  - Listener's focus is on the text, rhythm, skill of the MC
  - Repeating ostinato – inescapable
- Drawing attention to social problems
  - Shock value – outrageous anecdotes that turn out to be unfortunately “normal” for the people described
  - Exploits cliché fears about a certain group of people
  - To persuade listeners that certain life choices that actually aren't choices at all – the people depicted have no realistic options

# Dead Prez, Hell Yeah (Pimp the System) (2003)



# Dead Prez, *Hell Yeah (Pimp the System)* (2003)

- Contradictions
  - Powerful/positive: bravado of voice, pride in illegal actions, musical sound quality (harsh, strong, assertive), playful quality (“game”, rhythmic/syncopated vocal delivery)
  - Powerless/negative: signs of weakness (having only \$2-3, extreme hunger, no electricity, only one gun), “claiming gangsta,” mentions fear, repeating harmonic pattern that is inescapable
  - Lyrical, vulnerable, tender quality of singing in hook sections
- Irony
  - Is what is said meant to be taken at face value (romanticized celebration of a lifestyle) or is it a vivid illustration of a pervasive problem (lamenting social reality)?

# Homework and reminders

- Weekly reading is available online (religion, Renaissance, Olivier Messaien)
- Online Discussion #8: music and propaganda (ends Sunday)
- Final Online Discussion #9: April 3-9
- Student Blog Post discussions begin April 12
  - Tagline for the class site?
- Course Intro Essay rewrite (optional) – due April 6
- Midterm rewrites (optional) – due April 27
- Concert Response Essay – due at the final exam (May 25)
- Have a great week!



# End quiz

1. A performance of a blues song is exactly the same every time.
  - a) True
  - b) False
2. Which of the following instruments is **not** usually found in a jazz ensemble?
  - a) Saxophone
  - b) Trumpet
  - c) Violin
  - d) Double bass
3. Name one way that a musician's identity affects the sound of their music.