

Fall Meeting: October 18-19 2024 at the Library of Congress

We are delighted to announce a joint meeting of the MLA Atlantic Chapter and the AMS Capital Chapter **October 18-19, 2024** at the Library of Congress! In addition to engaging presentations AtMLA and AMS-CC members, there will be a display of Music Division treasures, an option to tour the beautiful and historic Jefferson Building, and a (free!) concert that kicks off the Library 100th anniversary concert series—Eddie Palmieri leading a jazz sextet.

We warmly invite you to attend the meeting. Please register no later than **Monday, September 9**, using this [form](#).

See [Fall 2024 Meeting Accommodations](#) for information on staying in DC and getting around.

The program is listed below; please find abstracts at [Fall 2024 Meeting Abstracts](#).

Please contact Lisa at Lshiota@umd.edu if you have any questions.

Timeslot	Presentation	Presenters	Location
Friday, October 18			
10:00am – 11:00am	Tour of Jefferson Building (optional, registration required)	LC docents	Jefferson Building
11:30am – 1:00pm	Registration	Program Committee members	outside Dining Room A, Madison Buildi
	Show and Tell (concurrent)	Music Division Staff	West Dining Room, 6th floor, Madison Building
1:00pm – 1:15pm	Welcome, opening remarks	Janet, LC Music Division Chief Susan Vita,	Dining Room A, 6th floor, Madison Building
1:15pm – 2:00pm	Concerts from the Library of Congress at 100: A Study in Sustainable Philanthropy and Engagement	Asst. Chief Nick Brown, Music Division Staff	
2:00pm – 2:15pm	Break		
Session 1			
2:15pm – 2:45pm	A Novel Approach to Student-Led Research through Collaboration between Musicologists and University Archives	Elizabeth Massey, Ben Jackson	
2:45pm – 3:15pm	Breadcrumb Trails Through Early American Musical Theater: Archival Resources and Children’s Theater in Victor Herbert’s Babes in Toyland (1903)	Virginia Christy Lamothe	
3:15pm – 3:45pm	Schism or Continuation? Gendered Narratives in the Construction of Minimalism in Print, 1973–1999	Elizabeth Busch	
3:45pm – 4:00pm	Break		
4:00pm – 5:00pm	Boulanger Initiative presentation	Boulanger Initiative	
5:00pm – 6:30pm	Dinner (headcount needed)		TBD
8:00pm	Concert – Eddie Palmieri jazz (free, tickets required)		Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Building

**Saturday,
October 19**

8:30am – Breakfast (optional – sponsored by AMS) Dining Room A, 6th floor, Madison
9:00am Building

Session 2

9:00am – OpenRefine for Music Librarians and Researchers Emily Baumgart
9:30am

9:30am – Subscription Lists, Concert Notices, and Musical Clues: Reconstructing Elizabeth Paula Maust
10:00am Turner’s Mid-Eighteenth-Century Musical Network

10:00am – “Deep River” and the Development of the Solo Concert Spiritual Randy Jones
10:30am

10:30am – Break
10:40am

Session 3

10:40am – Longing for Freedom: Gendered Madness in Kate Soper’s Voices from the Killing Jar Jacob LaBarge
11:10am

11:10am – Crawl, Don’t Run: How Web Archives Support Contemporary Music Research Melissa Wertheimer
11:40am

11:40am – **Business Meetings (lunch provided by AtMLA)** Dining Room A and West Dining Room
1:10pm 6th floor, Madison Building

Session 4

1:10pm – Elevating diverse voices: a workshop on improving discovery for music from Kathleen DeLaurenti and Kirk-
1:40pm historically excluded composers Evan Billet

1:40pm – Poochie’s Missing Chronicle: The Lost History of Richmond Jazz Scott Gray Douglass
2:10pm

2:10pm – Break
2:20pm

Session 5

2:20pm – Why Can’t I Search by Instrumentation?: Results from a Survey of Performers Christina Taylor Gibson, Adam
2:50pm Zukowski, Michael Diener

2:50pm – “More Possibility for Ecstasy”: Forging a Musical Voice in John Adams’s 1976-77 William Robin
3:20pm Journal

3:20pm – Closing remarks/adjournment
3:50pm

Fall 2024 Abstracts

Concerts from the Library of Congress at 100: A Study in Sustainable Philanthropy and Engagement

Nicholas Brown-Cáceres and Library of Congress Music Division

Attendees will learn best practices for establishing or growing programming and engagement initiatives through the sustainable public-private funding model of the “Concerts from the Library of Congress” series, which celebrates 100 years in 2024 and 2025. A program of the Library of Congress Music Division, the series was founded in 1925 by an act of Congress through the leadership and philanthropic support of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953). Over the past 100 years, the series has been an important avenue for the Library of Congress to engage with the American and global public through radio broadcasts, digital media, commissioning of new works, and live events in Washington, DC. This presentation features speakers from the Music Division’s leadership and Concert Office who will provide an overview of the history of the series, how its major supporters have cultivated a legacy of philanthropy, how the series has enriched the Library’s collections, and how the Music Division leverages private funding to advance its mission. Attendees will also learn tactics for developing strategic institutional partnerships that strengthen engagement with specific cultural communities.

A Novel Approach to Student-Led Research through Collaboration between Musicologists and University Archives

Elizabeth Massey, Ben Jackson

There is a growing focus on threshold and transferable skills in both library instruction and music history pedagogy conversations. Those in an educator role—whether professors, librarians, or archivists—must balance demands to make education practical for students’ future goals, desires to remain authentic to their fields, and calls to provide a positive and meaningful learning community. This paper, co-presented by a music history professor and a performing arts archivist within a university library system, examines how a focus on original primary source research can help navigate the various demands on professors, librarians, and archivists, ultimately providing a learning experience that is student-driven and community-focused.

Together, the co-presenters will explore their case study of creating a collaborative environment at the University of Maryland that is structured according to skills, giving the choice of content over to the students as they select their own primary sources through archival research. Students enrolled in Massey’s research courses within the First-Year Innovation & Research Experience Program—the sweeping majority of whom are not music majors—were trained in foundational concepts of the music history field, such as canonicity, cultural relativism, and social function. These musicological concepts also align with and exemplify the American Library Association’s Framework for Information Literacy, naturally preparing students to experience research as a creative discovery of sources and the information within, analyze the production and impact of that information, and reflect upon using their findings to create positive change in scholarly and general understanding. With physical and digitized archival sources as the students’ initial point of entry into the research process, students authentically engaged with musicological analysis as they formed research questions that then guided their next steps, and with scholarly conversations as they connected new primary sources to existing literature and arguments.

Alongside the primary source research experience and the creative and novel research products that arise from working directly with artifacts as new sources of information, the proposed model is equally beneficial to archival repositories themselves. Like many archives, Special Collections in Performing Arts has long sought to broaden its user base beyond the typical patrons of tenured professors, or advanced independent researchers. Undergraduate courses help to diversify the patron base and serve to strengthen cross-campus connections between the archive and other institutions or departments. The co-presenters will demonstrate how a partnership between a repository and instructor beginning at the planning stages of the course leads to broader use of archival collections and a greater awareness of holdings within the larger community.

Ultimately, we found that this course structure and research experience were mutually beneficial to all involved. Students were excited by and engaged with the difficult task of finding, analyzing, and applying primary sources. The professor, mainly positioned as a guide for skill acquisition and analytical frameworks, was able to concentrate on increasing the complexity of skills for each student as well as creating a positive learning community. Assisting in navigating and contextualizing archival collections, the archivist was able to connect students to a wide range of artifacts and sources that they used in new and engaging ways.

Breadcrumb Trails Through Early American Musical Theater: Archival Resources and Children’s Theater in Victor Herbert’s *Babes in Toyland* (1903)

Virginia Christy Lamothe

Victor Herbert's and Glen MacDonough's *Babes in Toyland* (1903) is a beloved musical that has undergone significant transformations since its creation, captivating audiences still today. By examining the original production's journey from pre-Broadway tours in Chicago, Pittsburg, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., this study uncovers the multifaceted process of its creation. These pre-Broadway performances served as a testing ground, revealing the complexities of understanding *Babes in Toyland* due to the absence of a definitive surviving libretto and the common practice of cutting or replacing songs for different audiences.

Two pathways help to unravel this musical's developmental history and better understand its historical context. The first involves a meticulous analysis of artifacts housed in the Victor Herbert collection at the Library of Congress. The manuscript holograph, copyist's, and printed piano-vocal scores, along with Herbert's correspondence, offer crucial insights into the compositional process and orchestration of the songs. These documents contain specific notes between Herbert and his collaborators about the creation and adaptation process, highlighting when songs were written, distributed to performers, and fully orchestrated for production.

The second pathway examines the broader cultural context of the new idea of "childhood" and the emergence of children's theater between 1900 and 1910. This cultural perspective sheds light on the reasons behind the replacement of certain songs, providing a deeper understanding of the musical's transformation and an audience's expectations. The final pre-Broadway production in September 1903 in Washington D.C. differed significantly from the Broadway premiere, reflecting the producers' awareness of their target audience in New York: children.

By positioning this research within the framework of existing scholarship on early 20th-century musicals and children's theater, this presentation contributes to the musicological community's understanding of the dynamic and adaptive nature of theatrical productions. It underscores the significance of archival research by including example documents from the Victor Herbert collection at the Library of Congress, and contextual analysis in reconstructing the developmental trajectories of historical musicals. Ultimately, this study not only illuminates the complex evolution of *Babes in Toyland* but also enhances our appreciation of the interplay between artistic creation and audience reception in early American musical theater.

Schism or Continuation? Gendered Narratives in the Construction of Minimalism in Print, 1973–1999

Elizabeth Busch

Defining minimalism for the 1986 version of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, Ruth Dreier noted that the style's "narrowness of musical means and lack of notated complexity place minimalism in direct opposition not only to serialism, but to virtually all developmental principles of Western art music after 1600." Dreier's emphasis on the distinction between minimalism and preceding musics exemplifies early critics' approaches to defining the movement. Despite the efforts of both composers and critics to present minimalism as something completely new, the movement's reception and historicization quickly took on a familiar characteristic: an emphasis on a small group of men as representative of (and even synonymous with) the entire style. In minimalism, this group consists of "The Big Four:" La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass.

This paper argues that although scholars, critics, and composers often position minimalism in opposition to serialism and other traditions of the academy, the movement retains a patriarchal canonizing impulse that continues a long tradition of both overt and covert masculinity in twentieth-century music. Drawing on minimalist scholarship that centers questions of canonicity and historiography (Shelley 2013, Nickleson 2023) as well as work in masculinity, gender, and feminist studies (McClary 1989, 1998; Citron 1995; Ake 1998; Cusick 1999; Early 2002), I demonstrate the ways in which composers and critics fail to fully separate minimalism from the traditions of the gendered academy. I explore the masculinity implied throughout the "Big Four" narrative through a reception history based on an analysis of twenty-three print sources spanning the formative years of 1973 to 1999. The majority of these articles treat the "Big Four" grouping and its associations with musical paternity as emblematic of definitions of minimalism. In addition to this standard narrative, I examine alternative (and opposing) approaches to gender, reception, and minimalism through articles by Tom Johnson and Beth Anderson.

These patterns in minimalist scholarship reveal how closely linked minimalism, its reception, and its surrounding historical narratives are to their parent (and paternal) traditions in the academy. This paper underlines the patriarchal implications of monolithic narratives and suggests the need for further research into the role of gender in minimalist historiography.

Making Space on the Shelves: A Guide to Adding Gender-Marginalized Composers to your Music Library

Laura Colgate, Boulanger Initiative

Boulanger Initiative advocates for women and all gender marginalized composers. We foster inclusivity and representation to expand and enrich the collective understanding of what music is, has been, and can be. We promote music composed by women through performance, education, research, consulting, and commissions. We will take you on a brief tour of multiple BI projects, including the Boulanger Initiative Database, which provides access to thousands of works by women and gender-marginalized composers, Redefining the Canon, an unprecedented initiative which aims to update the most widely-used orchestral audition excerpts to include excerpts by historically underrepresented composers, and a variety of education programming including workshops and residencies. In this presentation we will discuss why updating your library's holdings matters, the formation and perpetuation of the exclusionary musical canon, and how you can update your musical catalog to be more equitable.

OpenRefine for Music Librarians and Researchers

Emily Baumgart

Music librarians and researchers of all kinds often work through projects that are hampered by inconsistent data. Billing itself as a “power tool for messy data,” OpenRefine is a robust method for cleaning and transforming data of all kinds. Whether you are writing an inventory for a collection development plan, ingesting entries into an archival finding aid, or compiling data for a digital humanities project, OpenRefine can help automate and standardize much of the process. While the program has a bit of a learning curve, its barrier to entry is much lower than a coding language like Python or PHP, making it an excellent tool for librarians and researchers with varying levels of technical confidence.

In this technical demonstration, I will provide a brief overview of some of the basics of OpenRefine, including ingesting files, faceting, filtering, and common transformations and expressions. I will then present a use-case scenario showing how to use several of its functions for sorting data that has category headings, leading articles, and other oddities common to library and music research work. Audience members will come away with a basic understanding of OpenRefine and how it can improve workflows and speed data transformation and cleanup. A handout with the steps needed to sort various data, as well as other useful expressions, will also be provided.

Subscription Lists, Concert Notices, and Musical Clues: Reconstructing Elizabeth Turner's Mid-Eighteenth-Century Musical Network

Paula Maust

Upon the death of composer and soprano Elizabeth Turner (d.1756), The London Evening Post wrote that her “extraordinary Genius and Abilities in Musick, make her justly lamented by all Lovers of Harmony.” Turner's significant contributions to mid-century London's musical landscape include published collections of songs (1750) and harpsichord lessons (1756) and performances of works by George Frideric Handel and William Boyce at prominent festivals and concert series. Laudatory odes published after her death describe her as a beloved musician, and several of her songs were reprinted in The Lady's Magazine more than thirty years posthumously. Despite these accomplishments, Turner and her musical works have largely been overlooked in contemporary scholarship, perhaps in part because the sole scholarly article on her work dismisses Turner as a second-rate composer. Additionally, the critical gaps in Turner's biography have likely further disconnected her from historical narratives, as she cannot be definitively placed into a musical family nor connected to a particular teacher.

My presentation situates Turner into the musical landscape of mid-century London by tracing her professional connections through the subscriber lists to her publications, concert notices, and musical clues in her compositions. While we may never know when Turner was born nor the identities of her parents and teachers, a close examination of her published musical collections reveals the vast reaches of her professional network. Each of Turner's books had more than 350 subscribers, including many professional musicians who are listed with her in concert notices, aristocrats, lawyers, doctors, and individuals from across social classes, thereby connecting her work to a broad audience. Further evidence of Turner's immersion in the rich cosmopolitan musical culture of mid-century London can be found in her music, which depicts clear influences from her London contemporaries and from composers working on the continent, including Domenico Scarlatti and Jean-Philippe Rameau. As I will demonstrate, tracing Turner's professional network codifies her position in the historical narrative and points to the ways women's professional connections were vital to eighteenth-century London's musical economy. Ultimately, my work also provides a methodological framework for reconstructing an early modern biographical narrative from scant sources.

“Deep River” and the Development of the Solo Concert Spiritual

Randy Jones

Voice teachers and other educators are seeking more ways to expose their students to a more diverse range of music, an effort music libraries support in the expansion of their collections. One genre that has seen a resurgence is the Negro spiritual, expressed recently in concert performance for solo and/or choral voices. This presentation briefly discusses how solo concert spirituals developed during the 20th and 21st centuries and how they were influenced by cultural and historical events. The presentation will include historical recordings and access to extensive related bibliographic and discographic resources.

Longing for Freedom: Gendered Madness in Kate Soper's Voices from the Killing Jar

Jacob LaBarge

In her 2011 dissertation, composer Kate Soper describes a killing jar as “a tool used by entomologists to kill butterflies and other insects without damaging their bodies: a hermetically sealable glass container, lined with poison, in which the specimen will quickly suffocate.” *Voices from the Killing Jar*, her 2012 monodrama for soprano and chamber ensemble, enacts this concept by depicting eight literary women trapped in their own metaphorical killing jars—what she describes as “hopeless situations, inescapable fates, impossible fantasies, and other unlikely circumstances.” Each of the work’s eight movements explores the internal lives of characters such as May Kasahara from Haruki Murakami’s surrealist *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and Daisy Buchanan from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

This paper reveals how *Voices from the Killing Jar* engages with gendered discourses regarding madness by examining Soper’s adaptation of Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* in the fifth movement, “Mad Scene: Emma Bovary.” I argue that Soper employs madness to resonate with audiences rather than utilizing a mad woman as a spectacle for entertainment as is historically prominent—particularly by artists who are men. Soper establishes Emma’s mad scene in two sections: the first contains short musical cells that repeat a designated number of times, and the second foregoes the repetition for allusions to Verdi’s *La Traviata* and Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*. Following the work of Susan McClary and Rebecca Leydon, I assert that Soper’s use of repetition emphasizes Emma’s desire to escape into fiction. The operatic quotations that follow further illustrate her longing to avoid reality; she cries out “madness” in an attempt to mimic Violetta, and Count Almaviva seduces her during a late-night garden rendezvous. Still, Soper constructs barriers of language, music, and physical space that prevent Emma from fully integrating into her desired fictional world—reinforcing her madness. Through this analysis, this paper builds on broader conversations regarding gendered tropes in opera and contemporary composers’ engagement with current issues through the application of historic images.

Crawl, Don't Run: How Web Archives Support Contemporary Music Research

Melissa Wertheimer

Websites play a special role as evidence of culture and creativity. In the performing arts, and the music field in particular, websites include content specific to the profession, such as concert programs, multimedia of performances and compositions, press kits and promotional materials, repertoire lists, biographical sketches, discographies, tour calendars, digital publications, and more. Websites are also born-digital records that are uniquely ephemeral because they can change or disappear at any time. Web archiving uses technology to create copies of websites so that the information, look, and feel of the content is both preserved and accessible. With the vast amount of contemporary music content and musical heritage represented on the internet—often without analog equivalents—web archive collections ensure that digital preservation can provide long-term access to these vital resources. Web archives are therefore rich resources necessary to fully research, understand, explore, and document the performing arts in the 20th and 21st centuries. How can musicologists, digital humanists, archivists, and librarians collaborate on the curation, stewardship, and use of these collections? How can cases be made to start a web archiving initiative in an institution for the first time? These and other questions will be raised to discuss current collecting efforts across cultural heritage institutions with a special focus on Library of Congress web archives.

Elevating diverse voices: a workshop on improving discovery for music from historically excluded composers

Kathleen DeLaurenti, Kirk-Evan Billet

This workshop seeks feedback on a pilot project at the Peabody Conservatory to elevate access to musical works by historically excluded composers for programming and research considerations.

Many high quality resources exist to provide lists of repertoire for music of composers who have been historically excluded from mainstream programming in classical music. These databases and research projects list repertoire, but they do not connect it to access to scores, recordings, and research materials for music faculty and students who may want more immediate access to the music itself.

Peabody has been engaged in increasing the breadth of creative voices represented in our collections in alignment with our organizational commitment to DEI initiatives. However, there remains a significant amount of friction between the acquisition of this music and discoverability.

As our community increasingly asks for these tools, we have sought a path forward that aims to use ethical methodologies for helping our students tap into the resources available. In this workshop, we would like to present this project and engage in a structured opportunity to receive feedback from the broader ATMLA community. Attendees will be asked to provide perspectives with an aim to shape our pilot to ensure it remains transparent, ethical, and promotes access to the works of creative voices that may not be championed by industry or have been traditionally excluded from our musical history.

Poochie's Missing Chronicle: The Lost History of Richmond Jazz

Scott Gray Douglass, scottgraydouglass.substack.com

Saxophonist and bassoonist Dr. George Joseph “Poochie” Ross was one of Virginia and Maryland’s preeminent musicians, educators, and composers. He grew up in Richmond’s Church Hill neighborhood and attended segregated Richmond Public Schools, where he was a classmate of keyboardist Lonnie Liston Smith and a student of Chicago saxophonist Jay Peters, a veteran of Lionel Hampton’s orchestra. Ross studied with master music educators Undine Smith Moore and Nathaniel Gatlin at Virginia State College, later earning both his MA and DMA degrees from Eastman, as Black students were barred from Virginia’s graduate schools then. At the time of Ross’s untimely death in 1993 at age 54, he was Associate Professor of Music and director of Jazz Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

According to the Washington Post and numerous colleagues and friends, Dr. Ross had been writing a manuscript based on audio-taped oral history interviews on the history of jazz in Richmond, from the 1920s through the 1980s. According to Ray Mabry of the Richmond Public Library, Ross’s magnum opus was “the definitive book on jazz in Richmond.” Yet not a trace of this work survives. What was the status of the project when Ross died? Where are the taped interviews—possibly numbering in the dozens—and the manuscript? And, most beguiling of all, will we ever know?

Following in Ross’s footsteps, I conducted oral history interviews, combed historical Black and collegiate newspapers, and reviewed archival records at numerous libraries to trace the arc of his career, document his influence, and investigate the fate of his missing history of Richmond jazz and his prolific output of musical compositions for students.

I have interviewed childhood friends and classmates of Ross’s (like Smith and VSC classmate Sonny Carrington, founder of the Boston Jazz Society), some of his students and fellow musicians, members of the Richmond Jazz Society and Richmond Public Schools music department (and also VCU music department, where Ross was an adjunct), and even one local jazz pianist—Tommy Witten—who has been around long enough to have been interviewed by Ross himself for the lost book.

In my paper, I connect the tragic loss of Ross’s archives to the ongoing but chronically underfunded 45-year project of the Richmond Jazz Society to archive, preserve, and publicize Richmond’s jazz history. While so much of the Black musical past has been needlessly lost, there is still plenty we can do to protect Richmond’s culture history for future generations.

Why Can't I Search by Instrumentation?: Results from a Survey of Performers

Christina Taylor Gibson, Adam Zukowski, Michael Diener

In *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective*, Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant present a graphic representation of a functioning music ecosystem (2016, <https://huibschippers.org/research/>). One high-impact way libraries can contribute to a sustainable music practice ecosystem is to make new music scores more discoverable. Living composers rely on discoverability to make a living. And yet, generally, libraries do a poor job of making their work available.

Because reducing friction in the contemporary composer-librarian relationship is difficult, it has been the subject of several studies (Berndt-Morris and Malmon, 2020; Underwood, 2016; Szeto, 2018), and will continue to be a problem requiring a multifaceted approach. Others have observed that the systems providing music discovery rely on both metadata and interface

design to work properly (Holden, et.al., 2019; Newcomer, 2023; Newcomer, et.al., 2013). The third party in every search is the user themselves. The rapidly changing information landscape alters users' expectations around what a discovery system should be able to do. Several recent studies revisit information searching habits of musicians, with particular focus on music directors (Chandler, 2019; Fena, 2020; Firkins, et.al., 2024).

Our study adds to this literature with a preliminary survey of 139 self-identifying music performers on their preferences for discovering new music. Results indicate that many performing musicians do not even use a library to locate music. Of our respondents, 47 out of 139 reported not using a library at all—that's over one third of participants. Regardless of their role (e.g. solo performer, pedagogue, or conductor) a majority of those surveyed preferred to search by instrumentation, if possible, followed by musical style. While these elements can be recorded in library MARC records, library interfaces do not make searching by these elements simple. Perhaps that is why participants reported many other avenues for music discovery such as online music retailers, conversations with colleagues, YouTube, IMSLP, or internet searches.

Libraries could support musicians better by acknowledging their potential contributions to the music ecosystem and designing cataloging schema, interfaces, and outreach that respond to performers' needs. Ideally, musicians and librarians would collaborate to develop separate cataloging schema and interfaces that seamlessly interact with library systems while satisfying the musicians' unique search and discovery needs. Short of that utopia, however, there are smaller changes institutions can make to better serve their performer populations. Active collection of diverse, contemporary music, fully cataloged and creatively displayed, would help users search and discover new music titles more efficiently.

“More Possibility for Ecstasy”: Forging a Musical Voice in John Adams’s 1976-77 Journal

William Robin

The newly-processed “John Adams Music Manuscripts and Papers” collection in the Library of Congress’s Music Division represents a treasure trove for scholars of American music at the turn of the twenty-first century. Among the documents is a twenty-five-page journal that the young composer kept from the winter of 1976 to the spring of 1977, in which he shared intensely personal reflections about his ambitions, fears, and musical priorities. The journal provides insight into a crucial time in Adams’s career: the months following his now-mythologized revelation, while driving in the Sierra mountains and listening to Wagner, that he wanted to pivot away from the insularity of the avant-garde and instead, as he described in his memoir, compose music defined by its “pure expressivity.” The works Adams created in this period, including “Phrygian Gates” and “Shaker Loops,” represented a break-through fusion of minimalism and neo-Romanticism that cemented his musical style.

This paper analyzes several key discourses in Adams’s journal, in order to place it within his musical development and a critical moment in American composition. First, the journal provides contemporaneous evidence of Adams navigating his relationship to minimalism, in which he extensively muses on the appeal of Steve Reich’s music and the “possibility for ecstasy in a non-changing pulse.” Second is the document’s discussion of neo-Romanticism: the journal evinces an ongoing discussion with the composer David Del Tredici – who had just been ushered into a national spotlight with his post-Straussian “Final Alice” – in which Adams questions the merits of pleasing audiences. And, finally, the journal reveals Adams imagining his future: much of the text comprises ideas for a planned symphonic work, foreshadowing the orchestral compositions of the early 1980s that brought Adams to national repute. More broadly, this paper sheds new light on how American composers navigated the turning point from modernism to postmodernism—a collision of musical and ethical values—and how one of the United States’s most-programmed living composers crystallized the sound for which he is known today.