

AMS/SMT Vancouver 2016 Abstracts

Addendum

Thursday evening

Ludomusicology outside Video Games (AMS)

Michael Austin (Howard University), Chair

Sponsored by the AMS Ludomusicology Study Group

Music, Card Games, and the Play of Sensation:

Kant's Ludomusical Aesthetics

Tekla Babyak (Cornell University)

In the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Immanuel Kant distinguishes between agreeable and beautiful types of music. He describes agreeable music as table-music (*Tafelmusik*) that accompanies other activities, while beautiful music engages the listener in a more complex process of reflection. Mark Evan Bonds and Emily Dolan have examined many of the concepts that shape this Kantian dichotomy, including timbre, musical autonomy, sensory perception, and sound waves.

The ludomusical dimensions of Kant's aesthetics, however, have remained unexplored. My paper argues that the idea of play is central to Kant's distinction between agreeable and beautiful music. For Kant, agreeable music affords a playful diversion tantamount to jokes or card games. Beautiful music enacts a more serious and abstract form of play: the "free play (*Spiele*) of sensations." Kant thus establishes a dichotomy between amusing and serious forms of musical play.

Building on Roger Moseley's analysis of the relationships between music and games (*JAMS*, Spring 2016), I argue that Kant's theories of play offer us new insights into the musical cultures of the late eighteenth century. Elaine Sisman has situated Mozart's "Jupiter" symphony (1788) in the context of the Kantian sublime, but I suggest that the contrapuntal play of motives brings this symphony closer to Kant's conception of the beautiful. Agreeable play, the other pole of Kant's dichotomy, finds musical expression in Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (1787). I conclude that Kant's ludomusical aesthetics enable us to hear modes of play in the works of Mozart and his contemporaries.

Beyond (the) Halo: Chant in Video Games

Karen Cook (University of Hartford)

A current trend in ludomusicology is the study of previously composed music, whether popular or “art,” in games: for example, William Gibbons’s analyses of popular music in *Bioshock* and classical music in Nintendo games; or Kiri Miller’s work on the radio in *Grand Theft Auto*. Yet in that vein, little has been articulated about plainchant in video games, perhaps for several reasons: first, from a technological-musical standpoint, chant presumes voice, which eliminates a large swath of game soundtracks from contention; second, separating the texts and melodies of plainchant from modern variants or interpretations is difficult; and third, from a historical-musical standpoint, what might thus be considered “actual” plainchant occurs only minimally (and from a liturgical standpoint, it could be argued that none occurs at all). Those instances in which the texts and melodies of plainchant are manipulated in a game’s soundscape are thus all the more interesting and warrant further investigation. Drawing on scholarship in chant studies, medievalism, video game music, and film studies, I discuss the function of chant as trope, signifying three main themes: a spiritual or religious setting; a particular geographic or historical scene; and the presence of evil, battle, or death. I question whether chant actually necessitates vocality or whether it can occur in a purely instrumental or digital fashion. Lastly, I explore several digital tools for composers that help to explain the presence of certain elements of chant within video games.

Glass Beads and Graphic Analysis: A Ludist Account of Contemporary Music Theory

Steven Reale (Youngstown State University)

In positing “ludomusicology” not so much as the study of music in games than as a scholarship of music as informed by play, Roger Mosely (2012) draws a specialized focus on what McKenzie Wark (2007) calls “gamer theory,” a methodology that employs the logic of gameplay for the purposes of engaging in any kind of critical analysis. Casting scholarship as play is not a recent invention: historian Johan Huizinga’s influential *Homo Ludens* (1938) examines art, poetry, and philosophy as byproducts of the drive to play. Similarly, scholarship-as-play is a central theme of Hermann Hesse’s final novel, *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), concerning an isolated, monastic order of scholars playing the titular game by manipulating a secret language of hieroglyphs. The musicologically-oriented reader for whom the glass bead game calls to mind Schenkerian techniques is vindicated when the novel reveals its origin as an exercise in musical analysis. With remarkable prescience, the novel invites us to examine the discipline of music theory—with its rule-based systems of musical abstraction—from the standpoint of gamer theory. This presentation draws Wark to Hesse and considers several glass bead games played by music theorists: the pedagogical pencil puzzle of part-writing, the second-order *Singericht* of score analysis, and the

real-time strategy game of diplomacy and resource management of which academics are constant players.

Anne Young's "Musical Games" (1801):
Music Theory, Gender, and Game Design
Carmel Raz (Columbia University)

In 1801, Anne Young of Edinburgh was granted a royal patent for a set of six "Musical Games" accompanied by "an Oblong Square Box, [with] two faces or Tables, and various dice, pins, counters . . . to render familiar and impress upon the memory, the fundamental principles of the science of music." Included with the games was a three-hundred-page theory treatise doubling as an instruction manual. The first British patent ever granted for a board game, this was also the only patent awarded that year to a female inventor. As a music theorist, game designer, and entrepreneur, Young constituted a remarkable figure within the nineteenth-century musical landscape. She achieved significant critical success: her "Musical Games" were well reviewed in literary magazines, and her treatise appeared in two subsequent editions.

This talk investigates the role of gender in the creation and reception of Young's "Musical Games." Focusing on understandings of play within philosophies of education around 1800, I argue that designing educational games for children provided female musicians with a socially sanctioned platform to engage with music theory. I further show that female game designers frequently had to contend with the assertion that their inventions were overly complex, a charge that tended to arise when the demands of a game revealed aspirations beyond a juvenile audience. I finish by discussing a 1907 critique of Young's invention by the prominent anti-suffragist Bertha Harrison, who maintained that female musical game designers tended to become so "engrossed with details, as to lose sight of the main issue."

Not Just Fun and Games:
Musical Indeterminacy as User-Generated Content
Kirsten Carithers (Northwestern University)

In the past decade, narratives of musical experimentalism have flourished, with a much-needed critical apparatus currently in development. In this paper, I examine some serious games (Ortner 2006) that challenge conventional modes of inquiry: Happenings, Fluxus events, and open-ended graphic and text notations, all of which trouble the fine line between work and play. As it turns out, concepts from gaming illuminate the heightened political stakes of this repertoire, that is to say, issues of power, control, and authorship. For example, much of the creative labor involved in realizing non-traditional notation can usefully be understood in term of modding and user-generated content, with musicians and gamers making similar investments in their creative worlds. Likewise, composer-performers including Cornelius Cardew

and Charlotte Moorman hacked the scores with which they were tasked, subverting the authorial power of composers like Stockhausen and Cage. These issues all operate within the realm of what I am calling “interpretive labor”—i.e., the effort required to translate experimental scores into a sounding musical experience.

At the same time, thinking about avant-gardism in this way reveals the interconnectedness of these recent phenomena: both (video) games and experimental music are necessarily plural—art and craft, commerce and hobby, free and constrained. Ludomusicology, then, gives us an ideal toolkit for investigating and deconstructing indeterminacy in the arts—an otherwise undertheorized challenge to conventional composer/performer/audience relationships. By considering indeterminacy in terms of hacking and modding, we gain essential insight into its laden socio-cultural and political meanings.

Friday morning

Classical Music on the Big Screen (AMS)

Mary Simonson (Colgate University), Chair

Movies at the Met? Space and Meaning in Early Film Screenings

Erin Brooks (SUNY Potsdam)

On 1 October 1915, thousands of spectators crowded Boston’s Symphony Hall for the premiere of Paramount’s *Carmen*, a film starring soprano Geraldine Farrar, directed by Cecil B. DeMille, and accompanied by re-orchestrated snippets of Bizet’s music. Noting the first incursion of film into Symphony Hall, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* commented that this venue, “probably the largest auditorium devoted exclusively to music of the better sort, lends a spirit of serious artistic endeavor to Miss Farrar’s photodramatic enterprise.” Symphony Hall was not the only “serious” venue sharing space with early films; opera houses such as Covent Garden also hosted screenings in the 1910s and ‘20s. The Metropolitan Opera, on the other hand, frequently refused such rental requests. While early film screenings in classical music venues have been noted by scholars, analysis of these events through a “phenomenology of *space*,” to borrow Robert Fink’s wording, has received less critical attention.

In this paper, I draw on reviews, publicity materials, and archival sources from orchestral and operatic institutions to analyze the spatial semiotics of early film screenings in symphony halls and opera houses. Marvin Carlson has analyzed how theater spaces are “deeply involved with the preservation and configuration of cultural memory,” and classical music venues indeed had powerful preexistent meanings for early cinema-goers. From the physical locations of the buildings to their architecture,

interior decorations, and personnel, these spaces were “ghosted” by the memories of past *musical* performances. While today we regularly view opera at our local cinema multiplex or go to the symphony to watch films accompanied by live orchestra, I broaden this history of shared spaces by situating the performance practices and reception of the 1915 *Carmen* film and other screenings of the 1910s and ’20s within a longer narrative of cohabitation between music, opera, and cinema. Drawing from spectral studies and recent musicological considerations of space, I ultimately argue that early film screenings in classical music venues offer not only glimpses of contemporary audience experiences of both film and music, but also a new perspective on the complex debate over the cultural value of both music and moving image.

“Bach Is a Great Responsibility”: The B-minor Mass
in the Maksimova-Vasiliev film *Fouetté* (1986)

Olga Haldey (University of Maryland)

Soviet cinema of the 1980s—dark, gritty, and heavily politicized—has until recently been analyzed by both Russian and Western scholars primarily for its “message.” That is, it was seen as a kind of filmed literature—better yet, filmed newspaper reportage, unleashing upon its viewers unvarnished truth about the horrors of their past and the challenges of their present. In his article on Tengiz Abuladze’s 1984 *Repentance*, Peter Schmelz echoes cultural historian Mikhail Yampolsky’s admonition to see Soviet film as “not only character, plot, and conflict, [but] a dance of light, sound, face and body on the screen.”

Yampolsky’s insight proves particularly astute when confronting a less known contemporary of *Repentance*, the 1986 film *Fouetté*, directed by the Soviet ballet’s power couple, Ekaterina Maksimova and Sergei Vasiliev, who also star. *Fouetté* shares many features with the best of late Soviet cinema, including *Repentance*: its plot is layered rather than directional; realistic yet filled with metaphor and allegory; and beyond what it “says,” it has to be seen and, more importantly, heard. Outwardly a predictable “dance movie”—a rebel choreographer and an aging prima infatuated with him fight to stage a radical modern ballet at a stogy theater (i.e., the Kirov)—*Fouetté* quickly shows itself nothing of the kind. The storyline of the protagonists’ ballet—*The Master and Margarita*, after Mikhail Bulgakov’s cult novel—invades the main plot, injecting a dose of magic into its realism. And crucially, the film’s core message is contained not in its dialogue, but its unique blend of music and dance. The centerpiece of the soundtrack is J. S. Bach’s B-minor Mass—as one character pompously puts it, “a great responsibility.” First silent, then brittle and fragmented, the Mass is gradually reassembled to replace, and eventually displace spoken word for the final *pas-de-deux*, danced to *Et incarnatus est*. Fused into a complex counterpoint with the language of gesture, Bach’s score serves as the inner voice of *Fouetté*’s often silent main

characters, while also reflecting the polyphonic, polytemporal nature of the film's literary inspiration.

“A Combination Made for Experiment”: Casa
Ricordi, *Aida*, and Opera on Screen in 1911
Christy Thomas (Bates College)

Opera's circulation via media technologies has sparked considerable musicological interest in recent years. In contrast to such contemporary phenomena as HD broadcasts, television opera, or mobile streaming, however, comparatively little attention has been paid to the impact of early-twentieth-century media technologies on the world of opera. The frequent assumption is that the operatic and emerging film industries remained largely separate until the mid-twentieth century, with opera's influence on the new medium being unintentional and unilateral. Yet during the golden age of Italian silent cinema (1911–14), just over a decade after the medium's birth, Casa Ricordi—Italy's foremost music publisher—invested its own experience and reputation in a handful of joint endeavors with film companies. Because there was little precedent for how an opera might be represented in or appropriated by cinema, these ventures were highly experimental. Although these collaborations and their material products shed significant light on early encounters between opera and cinema, they are virtually unknown in musicological scholarship.

Drawing on extensive research in the Archivio Storico Ricordi, this paper examines the music publisher's earliest such collaboration, that with Film d'Arte Italiana in 1911. This partnership resulted in a radically shortened adaptation of *Aida* roughly fifteen minutes long, one version of which still survives in various archival copies. Notwithstanding its brevity, Film d'Arte Italiana's *Aida* was tied to Verdi's opera—and, strikingly, to its original staging manual (*disposizione scenica*)—on both visual and dramatic levels. Additionally, many of its divergences from the original opera were made to accommodate the cinematic format, both in terms of its constraints as well as in the opportunities it afforded. As a rare surviving artifact, the 1911 *Aida* provides an exceptional opportunity to consider not only the resulting material products born of this collaboration across two industries but also the rationale behind the changes made to the structure, plot, and music in adapting the opera to the screen. Ultimately, this historical endeavor represents an alternative model for early twentieth-century perceptions of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, one informed by material and institutional histories and challenging assumptions about opera's unilateral influence on cinema.

As Seen on TV: Putting the NBC Opera Theatre on Stage
Danielle Ward-Griffin (Christopher Newport University)

Best known for Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the NBC Opera introduced millions of Americans to English-language television versions of new and old operas from 1949 to 1964. According to conductor Peter Herman Adler, the program not only aimed to broaden the audience for opera but also to "restore its theatrical values" in a new media landscape. While scholars such as Barnes (2003), Citron (2000), and Rose (1986) have focused on the ways in which television brought opera to mass audiences, few have described the ways in which this new medium was intended to reinvigorate the stage. Rather than treat television opera separately from live performance, this paper situates the NBC Opera's production techniques within a broader effort to reform operatic practices in America in the 1950s and '60s. To this end, I focus on the NBC's short-lived touring arm, which brought live, stage performances of television productions of *Madam Butterfly*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *La Traviata* to communities across America (1956–57). Drawing upon the NBC History Files, television kinescopes, and photographs and accounts of the stage productions, this paper traces how these small-scale opera performances were recalibrated to suit a television-watching public. Instead of relying on the stylized presentation and grand operatic gestures common at major opera houses, the NBC performances blended intimate television aesthetics with Broadway typecasting and naturalistic direction. Fostering an aesthetic that Elise K. Kirk has coined the "new American verismo," this performance style became a principal export of the NBC Opera as the troupe conducted college workshops and influenced productions of the New York City Opera. Beyond the NBC, this paper tells a new story of opera performance in the United States, one in which the production style of early television opera did not simply respond to the exigencies of the screen, but also sought to transform the stage into a more intimate and supposedly more accessible site in the mid-twentieth century.