Expressive Culture: Sounds  
Fall, 2004  
Professor Boorman

This course will start by distinguishing different ranges of sound, considering their general characteristics and functions. It will concentrate on organized sound, especially music. No previous ability in music is expected: a basic introduction to concepts and terminology will be provided.

The course requires attendance at a preceptorial session each week. There will be two informal examinations during the semester, and a final examination. A paper is required, due in the 12th week of class.

The course will be structured in five large sections:

Section 1: Basics and Essentials.  
Noise, speech, music
Content and expression
Sound as communication
Structural concepts:
   - pitch and pitch centers
   - rhythm and metre
   - structure, form and organization of compositions
   - loudness

Section 2: Musical Expression and Function: from Bach to Beethoven
Changes in noise type and levels; the Industrial Revolution
Functions: “affect” and communication with the listener
Changes in social strata, and their impact on sonic arts
Political and social messages: The Marriage of Figaro.
Classical structures and the knowledgeable listener
Emerging romanticism: the concept of the “genius”
The unexpected and the dramatic in drama and music
Program music

Section 3: Nationalism and politics, and music.
Nationalist expression and identity
   - general and niche styles
   - dialect and accent
   - special repertoires
19th-century nationalism: “folk-music” and collecting
Nationalist adoption of non-nationalistic musics
Political music in modern America

Section 4: Indonesia, the gamelan.
The roles of myth and doctrine in national culture and social life
   - Gamelan: Wayang, music and drama and narrative
   - Improvisation and performance
   - Local traditions and the American influence on popular music

Section 5: Contemporary views of organized sound and music.
New definitions of poetry, music and noise
John Cage; music, silence
New constructions, and mathematical models
Questioning the presumed essentials, aesthetic and technical
The powers of the media; eclecticism and world music
Grading.

Two informal examinations: 15% each 30%
Final examination 20%
Paper 20%
Reports, and assignments for preceptorial sections 30%

Regular attendance is part of the requirements for this course: unexplained absences may lead to a reduction in the final grade.

For students showing a continuous improvement over the semester, the first examinations and the early assignments will carry less weight in the final grade.

The two informal examinations will focus on material from the preceding weeks: for the first, anything in Section 1, and for the second anything in Sections 2 and 3. Both examinations will include listening sections. The final examination will cover the whole of the semester's work.

Plagiarism.

The MAP office is distributing a note on academic behavior, including how to use other scholars' work. In the case of plagiarism or using other people's work without due acknowledgement, I shall regard the student as having failed the course.

Assignments.

The course will include both listening and reading assignments. The readings will either be distributed in class, or placed on the class web-site. Listening assignments will be available through the Avery Fisher Center and its web-site, though you will not be able to download them. The area "Assignments" on the class web-site will list all assignments, including some to be done on the website.

The preceptors will set regular assignments, which (with regular attendance at their sessions) will comprise an important part of the final grade.

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