EXPRESSIVE CULTURE: SOUNDS: MUSIC AND LANGUAGE
Fall 2012 Mon/Wed 3:30-4:45
Silver Center, Room 320

Professor Lauren Ninoshvili (LN31@nyu.edu)
Office hours: Mon 5-6, Thurs 4:30-5:30
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BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Language and music are universal aspects of human communication, expression, and social life. They are so ubiquitous that we often fail to appreciate how intertwined they are and how they shape, and are shaped by, our daily experiences. This course explores a broad spectrum of practices and ideas pertaining to the intersections of language, music, and the human voice—informal and formal, popular and elite. It addresses contemporary and historic phenomena in both Euro-American and non-Western cultures. Specific cases to be explored include: stories and narratives told about song, the relationship of vocal style and lyric choice to place, identity, and musical genre (rap will be treated as a specific case study); speech surrogates (for example, Morse code, “talking” drums and whistle speech); jazz “scat” and other popular vocal styles built around linguistic “nonsense”; and the controversies surrounding contemporary technological manipulations of the human voice (for example, vocal synthesis software and the mechanical “correction” of pop stars’ voices by professional sound engineers).

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

- Preparation for, and thoughtful participation in, lectures and recitation sections (20%)

  Students are expected not only to complete the reading assignments for each class, but to spend significant time thoughtfully listening to the audio examples, as directed by the instructor. Due to the fact that there is no textbook associated with this class, there is absolutely no substitute for attendance at lectures and recitation sections. Assigned reading materials will supplement and augment—not replace—the lectures and recitations. A maximum of two unexcused absences from lecture and one unexcused absence from recitation are permitted; further absences not excused by a doctor’s note, notice of death in the family, or proof of other emergency will result in a lower participation grade. Persistent lateness to class will also result in a lower grade.

  Laptops are permitted in class exclusively for the purpose of taking notes. Use of a laptop in class for any other purpose will result in a lower participation grade.

- Brief writing assignments (approximately 500 words, double-spaced, in a standard 12-point font) which interpret an audio example, specified by the instructor, in light of the current lecture topic and reading assignments (15%)

  These will be due approximately every other week, on a Wednesday, and turned in to the recitation instructor at the beginning of the lecture. They will be discussed in the recitation sections and evaluated using a +, 0, – system.
- Presentation, in the recitation section, of one of the above writing assignments/analyses (5%)
- Brief listening/reading quizzes at the end of each unit (30%)
- Final project: 6-8-page analysis of the linguistic and musical aspects of a live concert recording (30%)

MATERIALS FOR PURCHASE

All reading and many listening materials are posted to Blackboard, where they can be found under “Course Documents.” Some listening materials are available for streaming on the internet (and indicated as such below and on Blackboard), and others must be purchased and downloaded on iTunes (or other music downloading service, if you prefer). If you do not have an Apple ID/iTunes account and need help setting one up, please see the instructor or one of the teaching assistants. The total required music purchases for the semester should total less than $25.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

September 5. Is Morse code music?

September 10. Modeling the music-language relationship


UNIT 1. LANGUAGE ABOUT MUSIC

September 12. Speech around song


September 17. Speech about sound in the studio

September 19. Metaphors for music


IN CLASS: Language and the “Construction of Personal Musical Style” (Siv Lie)

UNIT 2. THE SPEECH-SONG CONTINUUM

September 24. Speech, song, and the spaces in between: country music

QUIZ #1


♫ George Jones. “He Stopped Loving Her Today.” I Am What I Am. [iTunes]

September 26. Speech, song, and the spaces in between: African American vocality


♫ “Town crier’s announcement.”

October 1. Expression and communication in European opera

READING ASSIGNMENT TBA.

♫ Claudio Monteverdi. Recitative Tu se’ morta and aria Possente spirto from L’Orfeo (1607).
♫ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Scene 1 from Don Giovanni (1787).

UNIT 3. THE MUSIC OF LANGUAGE

October 3. Melodic speech: tone languages

QUIZ #2

[Print the text or open in a separate window to follow along with the content of the whistling]

**October 8. Making music in tone languages**

Guest lecture: Composer Wang Jie

**UNIT 4. INSTRUMENTS AS VOICES**

**October 10. Western technologies of vocal imitation**


**October 17. African talking drums**

- “Pressing patrons with proverbs” [http://www.sil.org/anthro/articles/proverbs/notes.htm#note1](http://www.sil.org/anthro/articles/proverbs/notes.htm#note1)

♫ Yoruba praise poetry on bata
♫ Yoruba praise poetry on dundun (same text as on bata)
♫ Yoruba proverbs on bata
♫ King Sunny Adé. “Ase.” From *King of Juju*. [iTunes]

**October 22. The Brazilian cuica**

- Watch video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9xIRblfmk&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9xIRblfmk&feature=related) (don’t worry about the Portuguese text, just listen for the sounds produced and watch for the playing technique)

♫ Samba New York! “Bateria no Caminho.” [iTunes]

IN CLASS: Guest artists Philip Galinsky (Samba New York!) and Zé Mauricio (cuica)
October 24. Speech-masking instruments


UNIT 5. SENSES OF NONSENSE AND PLAY

October 29. Modernist experiments in sung language

QUIZ #3


October 31. Irish lilting, Scottish mouth music, and Scottish waulking songs


Guest lecture: Mick Maloney, Professor of Music and Irish Studies, NYU

November 5. Voices as instruments


♫ Ella Fitzgerald. “Blues Skies.” Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving Berlin Songbook. [iTunes]
♫ Betty Carter. “Giant Steps.” www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4AyCqCHCK0

JUST FOR FUN! Click on each horse’s head and see what happens:
http://www.svt.se/hogafflahage/hogafflaHage_site/Kor/hestekor.swf
November 7. Vocables in “world” music


♫ Orera. “Lalebi.”


UNIT 6. LANGUAGE IN MUSIC

November 14. TBA

QUIZ #4

November 19. The song text in popular music


♫ Bruce Springsteen. “Born in the U.S.A.” Born in the U.S.A. [iTunes]

November 21. Case study: rap and hip-hop (roots)


♫ Goldie Ranks. “Kill up a Sound.” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igV9yV__PDO
♫ Bo Diddley. “Say Man.” Chess 50th Anniversary Collection. [iTunes]

November 23. Rap and hip-hop (rhetoric)


UNIT 7. VOICE

November 28. Capturing the voice

QUIZ #5


December 5. Voice “types” in popular music


December 10. The human voice in the digital age: Vocaloid


♫ Peruse the official Vocaloid website and listen to samples: http://www.vocaloid.com/en/

December 12. The human voice in the digital age: Auto-Tune

QUIZ #6


Wednesday, December 19. FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 4 pm