

Symposium 2009

The University of Western Ontario Music Graduate Student Symposium

ABSTRACTS:

Popular Music and Culture

Lauren Acton (York University):

That's Entertainment: Hopping on *The Band Wagon* or Grooving to The Jam?

In our current era and culture, entertainment is all around us. It is in the music on our iPods, the books, papers and blogs we read, the movies we see and the advertising that encourages us to buy even more entertainment products. Entertainment is a word that is used so frequently in this "Entertainment Age" that it has become difficult to determine what is *meant* when one says that something is entertainment. The very familiarity of the term has meant that it has been seldom questioned or defined. Further, in an academic context, entertainment has been under-researched because of its association with what is "easy" or "lowbrow" and "not good." While one can say that jazz, for example, entertains *but also* has artistic, cultural and musical merits (Dyer, 1988), studying how music is used as entertainment sets aside these loftier ideals of art and culture and focuses explicitly on the aspects of music that many academics and musicians find the most distasteful: music's ability to entertain audiences (and, in the process, make money).

This paper will attempt to answer the question "what is entertainment?" by examining two songs from very different musical traditions that assert (from the viewpoint of their writers at least) what entertainment *is*. Two songs, both entitled "That's Entertainment," might provide a way into the study of entertainment if we consider the list of items that each song claims is entertainment, and if we examine the ways in which these songs are presented as entertainment in and of themselves. The show biz anthem from the 1953 MGM musical *The Band Wagon* is an unabashed celebration of every type of entertainment there is – high or low. On the other hand, another song sharing the same title of "That's Entertainment" by British punk/mod-revival band The Jam, casts a cynical reflection on things in real life that would not normally come under the moniker of entertainment. By examining the content and context of these two songs, and juxtaposing them one against the other, I hope to shed light on the study of entertainment and come to a better understanding of how music operates as entertainment.

Gerry Shatford (York University):

Fresh Grist for the Mill: Expanding the "Standard" Jazz Repertoire

Historically, jazz musicians have drawn a large portion of their repertoire from the music of the Broadway stage, a body of work often referred to as "The Great American Songbook". The strong, familiar melodies of "Tin Pan Alley" established a line of communication between the

marginal jazz world, with its advanced harmonic and rhythmic concepts, and emphasis on improvisation, and mainstream audiences unaccustomed to jazz.

“Fresh Grist For The Mill” had its genesis in my own observations, as a performing jazz pianist of a gradual communication breakdown, as younger audiences with little or no cultural connection to the classic melodies of the Broadway stage were unlikely to be drawn to jazz through the musicians’ appropriations of “Tin Pan Alley” repertoire. Responding to this situation, many jazz musicians have begun appropriating more “contemporary” pop material, adapting for jazz use repertoire from artists such as The Beatles, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Prince, Nirvana and Radiohead.

Morgan Jones (University of Western Ontario):

A New Role for the “Piano Man”: Billy Joel as Balladeer on “Allentown” and “The Downeaster ‘Alexa’”

Prior to 1982’s *The Nylon Curtain*, Billy Joel’s music was primarily insular, concentrating on his own experiences as a musician, (“Piano Man,” “The Entertainer”) his social circle, (“Captain Jack,” “Scenes from an Italian Restaurant”) or even his own neuroses (“My Life,” “Big Shot”). In what some critics have seen as his attempt to reach a more mature audience, Joel made the unexpected turn towards socially conscious music on *The Nylon Curtain*, and then again later on his penultimate album, *Storm Front*. Two songs, one from each album, illustrate this move away from self-centered music, towards a style that showed that the Piano Man was sensitive to the world around him. Both “Allentown,” Joel’s epitaph for the Pennsylvania steel industry and the best selling single from *The Nylon Curtain*, and “The Downeaster ‘Alexa’,” a song in the folk vein about a topic far closer to Joel’s heart, the plight of the Long Island fisheries, contain elements that indicate Joel’s desire to write music with a social conscience. Through analyses of the lyrics, music and text-music relationships in these two songs, I demonstrate Joel’s interest in writing folk music, in that these songs are about the folk, for the folk. Furthermore, a thorough examination of the videos for these two songs provides support for evidence that arises from the text-music analysis, evidence of a significant evolutionary leap in Joel’s songwriting style and, indeed, in his attitude towards the world around him.

Josie Zocco (York University):

Fleet Foxes: Indie or Oldie? Baroque and Renaissance Revival in Contemporary Pop Music

Out of the nebulous genre that is “indie” music, something innovative and unique has emerged in the band Fleet Foxes. Originally from Seattle, Washington, Fleet Foxes was formed in 2007 and has become increasingly popular since then, due mostly to word of mouth. In just two months the songs posted to their MySpace page drew nearly a quarter of a million plays. Fleet Foxes’ first full length studio album *Fleet Foxes* combines a non-classical blend of musical influences including West Coast hippie rock, nostalgic folk rock, harmonious choral music, film scores, world music from Ireland to Japan, and psychedelic rock. In 2008 *Fleet Foxes* won album of the year from many critics including National Public Radio’s “All Songs Considered” and Pitchfork Media’s “Best of 2008”.

Known for using a wide variety of instruments, Fleet Foxes have described their music as “baroque harmonic pop jams”. In turn, critics have described Fleet Foxes’ sound as anything

from “a blend of Elizabethan madrigals and West Coast hippie rock” to having a “studiously rural aesthetic” to “poppy rock”. There are two prominent underlying themes that run through the reviews for their self-titled album: nature and antiquity. The former refers to the music invoking images of sunlight and the geographical peculiarities of the Pacific Northwest. The latter is particularly interesting as the music unquestionably evokes the itinerant days of yore. It is undeniable that Fleet Foxes derive a great deal of inspiration from many Renaissance and Baroque idioms, for example: the madrigal and the chorale. The aim of this paper is three-fold: (1) to explore to what extent the music of Fleet Foxes uses Renaissance and Baroque elements, (2) how these elements are used, and (3) to examine which influence is stronger – the Renaissance or the Baroque.

Theory

Peter Lea (University of Western Ontario):

Cycles and Circles: Transformations in George Crumb's “Come Lovely and Soothing Death”

In assessing the impact of George Crumb’s music, Gilbert Chase has noted the plethora of approaches to Crumb’s music. From the whimsical to the serious and from the coldly analytic to ecological, Gilbert finds that “Crumb’s music seems to evoke the most disparate, contradictory, and inconsistent responses.” These responses result from the tools the analyst utilizes; Schenkerian theory, Set Theory, and various transformational approaches have been employed to describe aspects of Crumb’s music with varying degrees of success.

Crumb’s “Come Lovely and Soothing Death” from *Apparition* (1979) invites such apparent contradictory responses. An extended chord progression, which is reiterated and transposed two times, contains diatonic, whole-tone, and octatonic elements. Both a tonal analysis and transformational analysis using Klumpenhouwer networks illuminate common structural properties of the progression, although neither method is entirely satisfactory. In response I explore a transformational model, resembling a self-repeating right-handed helix, which retains aspects of both approaches listed above. In addition, the motion around the vertical axis of the bounded helix and rotation around the helix’s axis of symmetry may be an effective metaphor in conveying Crumb’s notion that his music “might *sound* circular, like a wheel going around.”

Sundar Subramanian (SUNY Buffalo):

Pitch Structures in Reginald Smith Brindle's *El Polifemo de Oro* (*Quattro Frammenti per Chitarra*)

El Polifemo de Oro is a solo guitar work by Reginald Smith Brindle in 1956, inspired by a poem by Lorca. It has become an important piece in contemporary guitar repertoire and remains, like the poem, both immediately accessible and hauntingly enigmatic. The work is notable for incorporating atonal and serial compositional techniques while remaining highly idiomatic for the instrument, e.g. including allusions to flamenco techniques and jazz-like passages. The composition has been analysed as a serial or dodecaphonic piece. While the piece does use relatively free serial procedures (comparable in some ways to those used by Schoenberg in his

last work for solo piano, *Klavierstück*, op. 33b), I will argue that this does not explain significant portions of the work, particularly in the third and fourth movements. In fact, major portions of the piece draw on pitch material from outside the 12-tone row matrix. A discussion of the piece simply in terms of set classes that are sometimes but not always associated with subsegments of 12-tone rows may enhance the serial analysis in considering how the piece functions. I will also discuss how the use of contrasts between thirds (ic3 and ic4) and tritones (ic6) is central to how the piece functions. Ultimately, I believe that it is the tension between serially-derived material and material derived from (sometimes diatonic) deviations from serial procedures which *defines* the piece and gives it its unique character.

Makoto Mikawa (University of Western Ontario):

“Omnipresent Anarchy” in Kagel’s *Antithese* versus Adorno’s *Verfransung* Theory

In the face of trans-boundary between art genres, where technical, material, and theoretical concepts of musical composition are now partly hybridized with those of other fields in art and vice versa, Theodor W. Adorno analyzes the ongoing upheaval with a catchword *Verfransung* [straying off course]. This term first appeared in an essay *Die Kunst und die Künste* (1966) [Art and the Arts]. While his insightful observation with profundity of aesthetic thought depicts well the early phase of the interdisciplinary phenomenon and its process, analyses for that of musical composition leave debatable issues worth reconsidering. Already four years earlier than the publication of this essay, an Argentinean-German composer Mauricio Kagel presented a significant interdisciplinary musical work *Antithese for a performer with electronic and public sounds* (1962) where upon his compositional concept exceeds the framework of Adorno’s conception of *Verfransung* of arts. Consisting of electronic music, acting on stage, and graphic notation, *Antithese* synthesizes these components from different art genres without losing their individual identities, and the synthesis forms a unity of the work. Kagel’s brief explanation of the structural characteristic that “anarchy is omnipresent” is a striking, pregnant description that allows us to examine the relevancy of his “artistic anarchy” in relation to Adorno’s perception of *Verfransung* tendency of the arts. Taking into account innovative aspects of *Antithese* as a harbinger of new musical structure and form with interdisciplinary compositional approach, this study attempts to identify omnipresent anarchic characters both in the material and aesthetic domains. I will also demonstrate how different the aesthetic direction of the composer is from that of Adorno, with regard to the chaotic phenomenon of frontier crossing of art genres.

Composition

Anna Pidgorna (University of Calgary): *The Great Escape: Exploring the Microscopic Life in the Spectrum of a Chord*

I would like to discuss the basic principles of spectral music and my own application of the movement’s ideas in my forthcoming chamber work, *The Great Escape*. This compositional approach emerged in France in the late 1960s and was pioneered by Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail. It is unique in that it relies heavily on the study of acoustics and derives the structure and building blocks for a piece of music from the physical composition of sound itself, from the behaviour of its harmonic spectrum. The movement has been largely confined to continental

Europe and did not start to seriously enter into North American consciousness until the late 1990s. Even now, I find that most of my fellow graduate students know little or nothing about this compositional approach.

The Great Escape is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet, bassoon, two violins, viola, cello, piano and percussion. Harmonically, the building materials for this work are shaped by the interaction of spectralist ideas with elements of common-practice tonality. The basic idea for *The Great Escape* was inspired by observing the interaction of competing and complementary partials in five-note tertian chords played on the piano. When a rich chord of this kind is allowed to decay naturally, one can observe the subtle timbral shifts in the piano's resonance as different combinations of partials come in and out of focus. I have been recording these chords and analyzing the patterns of decay in order to mimic and highlight them with other instruments. The combination of the complex tertian chords and their highlighted spectrums forms the harmonic building blocks for this work. The connections between these blocks are guided by functional tonality. Rhythmically, *The Great Escape* explores my interest in various rhythms of the body, and especially breathing, and the breaking up and restoration of the synchronicity between these rhythms with changing levels of physical exertion. I am exploring cut-away notation and the layering of different and changing tempi to achieve the required synchronistic effects.

Music and Aesthetics in the Early Twentieth Century

Carissa Pitkin (University of Cincinnati-CCM):

The Creative Process Examined: Ravel's Aesthetics Made Manifest in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*

A composer's creative process shows a great deal about his personal aesthetics. A look at the conception and creation of a particular work often aids in uncovering the details of that composer's unique aesthetics. Such is the case with Maurice Ravel and his hybrid work *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. *L'Enfant* is an ideal work for such consideration, because it shows how outside influences on Ravel's own aesthetics manifest themselves in this composition. Through a combination of musical analysis, aesthetic analysis, and primary sources, this presentation will discuss the inception of *L'Enfant* and how Ravel's artistic choices were influenced by his own aesthetical views. This discussion of abstract aesthetic values will then be coupled with a look at the execution of these aesthetics, which are woven into the fabric of this work, and are articulated in specific examples in the score and staging of *L'Enfant*. This work holds a unique place within Ravel's oeuvre, although it has received little consideration in comparison to the composer's more mainstream works. However, its significance is laudable since at its inception it represented a new type of aesthetics for the stage. In this way, Ravel's *L'Enfant* is truly innovative within Ravel's oeuvre and the French tradition; it is unique both in its inception and execution through its synthesis of American musical comedy and French opera-ballet traditions. I believe that by examining both the creative process and the composer's personal aesthetics – using this work as a medium – the innovative nature of *L'Enfant* can be brought into focus. Finally, by considering this work within a larger history I hope to illuminate the causal relationship between the composer's aesthetics and the innovative trends present in *L'Enfant*. These innovative aesthetics also have ramifications in the way

L'Enfant has been qualified and received. Thus, this presentation will explore the implications of the innovative elements of this work in a larger historical context and aim to provide a better place for this work within the history of stage music.

Katharina Clausius (University of Western Ontario):

Ideology and Methodology in Arnold Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*

Theodor Adorno recognizes the tautology in the concept of political music, indeed political art, when he recalls that even “apoliticism...is in fact deeply political.” Attempting to clarify this tautology, Jean-Paul Sartre's dedication to ‘committed art’ carefully discriminates between radical politics and propaganda - a dialectic circumventing the redundant distinction between political and autonomous art. Rather than defining commitment as political dedication, which he sees as passive, Sartre recognizes it in terms of “negativité,” that is, active resistance. In response to Sartre's insistence that music's inability to denote unambiguously restricts the composer's specific political commitment, conductor René Leibowitz refutes his correspondent's assertion with reference to Arnold Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, composed in 1942; Leibowitz argues Schönberg's work reflects a radical approach to the dynamic between music and text through a modification of *Sprechstimme* that successfully navigates Sartre's stipulation for a radical, yet understandable modernist approach.

However, both the critical reception of the work and the composer's own discussions of its political meaning reveal that although the piece does successfully operate within the aesthetic-political dichotomy in which political commitment and compositional innovation are simultaneously co-dependent and mutually incompatible, Schönberg's dedication to his political message ultimately self-defeats.

I rely on analysis of Schönberg's score (which sets Byron's widely-lauded poem of the same title), contemporaneous reviews of the work, the dialogue among Sartre, Leibowitz, and Adorno, and the composer's own written accounts of his composition in order to suggest that Schönberg misapplies Sartre's fundamental tension inherent in his definition of the methodology of commitment; rather than insisting on the *opposition* of abstract and concrete, radical and stable, artistic and political, Schönberg *resolves* these dichotomies musically. Ultimately, his concern for universal comprehensibility compromises his radical musical techniques and precludes reactionary politics, thereby realizing Adorno's succinctly-articulated criticism that “the notion of a ‘message’ in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world.”

Benjamin McBrayer (University of Cincinnati-CCM):

The Desire for a Universal English Opera: Background to the Reception of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*

For centuries, the institution of music criticism in England had wanted a full-scale opera, both truly English and universal in its appeal, which would achieve the highest success on both the national and international stage. Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (1945) presented music critics with an opportunity to realize their aspirations for English grand opera. In selling *Peter Grimes* to themselves, to the English public, and to the rest of the music world, English critics positioned Britten and his opera within a distinct historical framework: a grand narrative of great, albeit largely foreign, opera composers. Critics derived many of their aesthetic principles from the

masterworks of these foreign composers, such as those of Bizet, Mozart, Puccini, Strauss, Verdi, and Wagner. Perhaps most consciously, the musical press associated Britten with Mozart and Verdi. *Grimes* evoked many general qualities of Mozart's operas, including an eclectic use of international elements, depth of ideational content, vividness of orchestration, keenness of social themes, insightfulness of character development, clarity of text setting, consistency of music and drama, balance of musical complexity and intelligibility, skillful suggestion of emotional experience, eloquence of musical ornamentation, and lucidity and flexibility of structure. Much of *Grimes*'s praise also reflected the aesthetic values of Verdi's operas, namely, the masterful combination of dramatic poetry and music, highly developed sense of refinement, seamless continuity between formal sections, exceptional theatricality, and incorporation of diverse musical and dramatic elements within a tightly unified work. *Grimes* did not merely ape the successful operas of the past, however. Rather, several qualities typified its unique Englishness. In the music and the story of the opera, critics noted, for instance, the significance of location, the prominence of the sea, the liberal and effective use of the chorus, and the resonance of the thematic content with postwar England. In its nonpareil ability to realize universal ideals in the form of a national opera, *Peter Grimes* became the panacea for England's operatic ailments.

Historical Performance Practice

Zachary Ebin (York University):
Cadenzas for Mozart's Violin Concertos

In recent times, there has been an explosion of interest in classical period performance practice. The number of recordings using period instruments as well as the number of writings on proper performance practice of Mozart's music has grown considerably. Among these writings and recordings are those that deal with string playing. Many topics such as proper classical technique, equipment, articulation, and sound have been discussed extensively. However, one aspect of Mozart's music for strings has not been given its due attention, namely the cadenza. Interestingly, for pianists, there exists a large body of literature devoted to the topic of cadenzas. Perhaps this is a result of having samples of cadenzas from Mozart himself. Violinists do not have any cadenzas from Mozart. Furthermore, Violinists lack any popular cadenzas which imitate the classical style. Rather they seem satisfied to use those cadenzas composed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This study seeks to remedy the current situation and provide an understanding of what a cadenza for Mozart's Violin Concertos would have been like. It will then give suggestions to play cadenzas true to the style of the period. The study will focus on first movement cadenzas for the sake of brevity, as second and third movement cadenzas are quite different in style.

To accomplish these goals, this study will be divided into four sections. The first will summarize the extant sources dealing with the topic of cadenzas from the eighteenth century. The second part of this study will analyze Mozart's own cadenzas to his "Salzburg" piano concertos. It will determine in what ways Mozart follows the guidance of the sources mentioned above, and in what ways he departs from it. Thirdly, two popular cadenzas for Mozart's violin concerto in D-major K. 218, composed by nineteenth and twentieth century composers, will be evaluated for their adherence to or difference from the cadenzas of the classical era. Lastly, several suggestions will be made for performing cadenzas for Mozart's Violin Concertos, including the construction

of a cadenza for Mozart's D-major Violin Concerto K. 218. Through the aforementioned four sections hopefully we will arrive at a clearer idea of what a cadenza for Mozart's Violin Concertos should be like.

Evan Cortens (Cornell University):

Voices and Invoices: The Hamburg Vocal Ensemble of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

While the composition of vocal ensembles in eighteenth-century Leipzig has been heatedly debated, much of the evidence used has often been circumstantial. In Hamburg however, better documentation and the excellent condition of the sources allow for more substantive discussion. As cantor and director of music from 1768 to 1788, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach produced roughly 200 performances per year. With the recent rediscovery of the Berlin Singakademie archive, the majority of his original performance materials are now accessible. It is the detailed pay receipts, now bound together as the Hamburg *Rechnungsbuch*, that prove most revealing. The amount of information in these receipts varies: they may contain as little as a total performance cost, a breakdown by function or even as much as the names of the individual performers and their payments. By correlating the data obtained from an examination of the performing materials with the pay receipt for the appropriate occasion, one can ascertain key details of the size and composition of Bach's vocal ensemble. Depending on the occasion, it appears that Bach's ensemble varied in size and also that the manner in which the manuscript vocal parts were prepared and used varied. At times, the evidence suggests, vocal parts were shared, at other times, only one singer used a part at a time. The picture that emerges broadens our perception of Bach as an ever-practical musical 'impresario' skilled at adapting to the changing demands of diverse occasions.

Topics in Contemporary Canadian Music

Maria Noriega (University of Calgary):

Equity in Canadian Symphony Orchestras: Forty Years of Orchestral Playing By Canadian Women"

Over the last seventy years women musicians have made great strides. Although orchestral playing was not a field in which women were always welcomed, the single most staggering change in Canadian orchestras over time has been the change in the female/male participation ratio of orchestra members. However, apart from several studies in the 1970s and 80s, no new substantial studies have been made on the status of female musicians today. Therefore, the purpose of this study is examine what the status of women in the Canadian symphony orchestra sector is today by using the example of orchestral flutists in Canada. This study seeks to ascertain whether or not women are still underrepresented in the medium/major Canadian symphony orchestras and if gender continues to play an important role in the Canadian symphony orchestra sector today. Is there still a glass ceiling in Canadian symphony orchestras?

Seana Haley (York University):

Identity in Canadian Music as seen through Leonard Cohen's "Joan of Arc"

Canadian music is facing a crisis of identity. Due to similarities in the popular cultures of Canada and the United States, Canadian music has frequently been overshadowed by American music over the past two centuries. Canadians must question how this has been allowed to happen, and why musicologists have not done more to counter this view. Canadian music is facing a crisis indeed, and Canadians themselves are responsible for allowing this to happen.

Using Leonard Cohen's 1971 song "Joan of Arc" as a case study, I identify this crisis as a seeming lack of identity in Canadian music, or rather, a lack of acknowledgement of our differences from American music. Looking at "Joan of Arc" from both an analytical and historical perspective, I show how it is an early and clear example of musical blending and multiculturalism in Canadian music. The song is closely tied to the music of the Quebec *chansonniers*, characterized by clear European folk influences, similar accompanying instrumentation, a subject based in folklore, and poetic lyrics symbolic of Quebec politics in the 1960s. It depicts a unity in Canadian music which transcends cultural origins, and clearly emphasizes one example of a distinctly Canadian musical identity.