**American Musicological Society Capital Chapter**

**Fall Meeting**

**Saturday, October 13, 2012**

**James Madison University**

**Program**

10 am Coffee and Tea

**Session I: Gender and Sexuality in Music**

10:30 am Kate Doyle (University of Maryland): “Vergeltung”: The Depiction of Women in Alban Berg’s *Lulu* and the Legacy of the Operatic Female Character.

11:00 am Laurie McManus (Shenandoah Conservatory): Wagnerian “Progress” and Sexual Rhetoric in Aesthetics of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch

Break

**Session II: Music History and Pedagogy**

11:45 am R. Todd Rober (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania): Creating an

Online Music History Sequence: Can Course Integrity be Maintained?

12:15 pm Therese Ellsworth (Independent Scholar): Jan Ladislav Dussek: “A

Musical Jane Austen”?

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm Lunch

**Session III: American Music Topics**

2:30 pm Lars Helgert (Georgetown University): Lukas Foss’s *American Cantata:* A “Lover’s Quarrel” with America

3:00 pm Lisa Lombardo (Brooklyn College/ CUNY): The Lady and the Tramp:

Blackface Minstrelsy’s Identity Crisis in Victorian America

**Business Meeting**

**Abstracts**

**(in program order)**

Kate Doyle (University of Maryland): “Vergeltung”: The Depiction of Women in Alban Berg’s *Lulu* and the Legacy of the Operatic Female Character.

A close study of Berg’s musical and textual decisions in the composition of his second opera, *Lulu*, begs the question as to whether or not Berg challenges the conventions of opera to present a progressive portrayal of women within the repertoire.  *Lulu* offers a twentieth-century example of two distinctive operatic women: a “femme fatale” and a tragic lesbian heroine in nineteenth-century Europe.  These characters, Lulu and the Countess Geschwitz, are two in a long ancestry of operatic women persecuted for their sexual aura and independence. The environment in which Berg’s women characters exist mimics the sexual stereotypes of Vienna, where an anxiety over sexual independence was overwhelming and fear of the sensual power of women over the male psyche led to the portrayal of female sexual prowess as a fixture in visual art, literature, and music. The plays upon which Berg’s libretto for *Lulu*is based were written between 1892 and 1894 by the German playwright, Frank Wedekind. Berg wrote his own libretto for *Lulu* by personally adapting Wedekind’s *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora’s Box*.  In doing so, he made significant changes to the original plays.  While the need to reduce the text of the plays for the libretto is certainly justified, Berg’s choice of which text to cut had significant implications for the depiction of the female characters in the work.  Geschwitz, in particular, is significantly altered.  In addition, Berg’s use of musical retrograde and his instructions for the recasting of Lulu’s dead lovers as her ultimate destroyers creates an association between Lulu’s actions in the first act with her demise in the third.  Berg’s feelings towards the two characters are not entirely clear.  While his sumptuous music and beautifully constructed scoring of the deaths of Lulu and Geschwitz contain a definite sympathetic quality, the material cut from the original plays and the structure of the opera create a kind of moral pronunciation about the two women’s actions.  In this paper, I will speculate upon Berg’s mindset towards women as reflected in his opera, as well as Hélène Berg’s motivations for her notorious reluctance to have the opera completed after her husband’s death. Also, I will draw a conclusion about the placement of *Lulu* as a fixture within the rather destitute history of operatic women (as explained in Catherine Clément’s book, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*), or as a forward-thinking example of women within the opera repertoire.

Laurie McManus (Shenandoah Conservatory): Wagnerian “Progress” and Sexual Rhetoric in Aesthetics of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch

One point of entry into the aesthetic debates that rocked German musical life in the 1870s is the often overlooked contribution of Austrian author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–95). Famous today because Richard von Krafft-Ebing named the psycho-sexual condition “masochism” after him, Sacher-Masoch played an active role in the late nineteenth-century arts world. Like many educated burghers of his time, Sacher-Masoch took an interest in music, aligning himself with the “progressive,” Wagnerian side of the spectrum, but in 1868 he went so far as to co-found the *Monatshefte für Theater und Musik,* a journal dedicated to the fight for “progress” in the arts. Franz Brendel hailed the new journal as “a remarkable undertaking,” and republished some of its bold pro-Wagnerian sentiments in his own *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. The journal lasted for one year, after which Sacher-Masoch dedicated himself to his literary works, the most popular being *Venus im Pelz* (Venus in Furs), published in 1870. Forced to defend his radical work, he penned *Über den Werth der Kritik* (On the Merits of Criticism) in 1873, in which he outlined an aesthetic closely bound with moral and specifically sexual progress. His writings from this period are of interest because they provide a wider frame of reference for the sexual rhetoric developing concurrently in music criticism.

In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, other sympathetic Wagnerian publications, and the writings of Wagner and Nietzsche around the time of unification, a strand of rhetoric emerges casting virtue, purity, and restraint in a negative light, most likely in response to emerging historicist trends and the work of Eduard Hanslick. The aesthetic platform reflected in Sacher-Masoch’s *Monatshefte* offers a case study in how this “Wagnerian” conception of progress and sexuality worked itself out in the interconnected spheres of literature, stage, and music criticism. With contributions from music theorists, women’s rights activists, and others, the journal gave voice to some of the more radical aesthetic and social views of the educated middle class. The following year in his inflammatory novel, Sacher-Masoch would go on to captivate a wide readership with his Wagner-supporting “female Dionysus” in furs. In aligning himself with a host of literary forbears and contemporaries such as Richard Wagner and the artist Hans Makart, Sacher-Masoch helped assemble a cohort of artists whose work “laid bare” all aspects of human relations in the continuing fight for social progress. Moreover, his defense of such art provided other progessive music critics with an aesthetic-theoretical justification of the more salacious moments in Wagner’s works. While some of Sacher-Masoch’s writings certainly reflected older elements of a long-standing aesthetic battle, they also offered newer, more radical rhetorical strategies that would continue through the remainder of the century.

R. Todd Rober (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania): Creating an Online Music History Sequence: Can Course Integrity be Maintained?

With advances in technology, a desire to find new ways to offer material to students, and increasing pressures from administrators to offer more distance learning, online, and blended courses, the question arises whether the music history sequence is a candidate for some type of online presentation. This could be a sensitive topic for some who feel that there can be no substitute for the close interaction between instructor and student in a classroom setting, and for student interaction with one another, especially in the core courses of our music history offerings. However, circumstances may arise that make online presentation of material necessary or even a preferable option, and so being aware of methods that can preserve the integrity and vigor of our course content online is an important issue for musicologists to consider.

My presentation will address my recent work to offer an online version of a two-semester music history sequence. I will show how I employed an Adobe product called Presenter to create concise audio versions of my lectures over PowerPoint slides that were published as Flash videos for students to view. Links to these videos were placed among reading, listening, and score study assignments, as well as links to quizzes, discussion boards, a drop box for essays and worksheets, and other material including YouTube videos to create a rich array of learning content that attempted to duplicate and in some cases, perhaps even enhance what I do in the classroom setting. For example, in the pre-recorded Flash video lectures with PowerPoint, I was able to insert short segments of music to illustrate immediately what I was lecturing about, which in the classroom setting would take cueing up CD tracks, and forwarding to a specific segment on that track. While most of us do this as a matter of course, it becomes much more efficient when there is less “dead air” time in the online content. Also, there may be more opportunities for students to interact with each other in an online discussion board than in sometimes limited class time, especially for larger classes.

Another benefit to preparing online course content is that even while teaching in a traditional face-to-face setting, the online course materials may be used to supplement what is presented in the classroom. Whether to prepare students for an upcoming class, for student review, assessing understanding, or to assist students who have been absent, the online content can enhance the classroom experience, and even free up valuable class time for discussion and more intense music listening and score study rather than on lecture. While these ideas and methods may not appeal to everyone, they could at least help up reconsider our pedagogical approaches to the music history sequence.

Therese Ellsworth (Independent Scholar): Jan Ladislav Dussek: “A Musical Jane Austen”?

Jan Dussek (1760-1812) lived in some of Europe’s most important cities—Prague, Amsterdam, Hamburg, St Petersburg, London, and Paris—during the course of his career as a leading concert pianist and composer. His employers included such prominent figures as Prince Karl Radziwell in Lithuania, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord in Paris. But his most extended stay occurred in London (1788/89—1799), a period of particular significance for him both personally and professionally. The 200th anniversary year of his death has stimulated new investigations into his biography, music and influence. This paper presents the results of a study of Dussek’s legacy in London during the 19th and early 20th centuries with the aim of furthering our understanding of the influence of Dussek’s music on succeeding generations and, in turn, broadening our knowledge of the musical life in what was then the commercial capital of the world.

In the decades immediately following Dussek’s departure from London, his concertos continued to be popular, especially with his relatives who remained in that city: his wife Sophia and sister Veronika Cianchettini. Chamber pieces appeared on early programmes of the Philharmonic Society (founded 1813) featuring resident pianists Charles Neate, [John] Beale and Cipriani Potter. Dussek’s compositions were well-known to students at the Royal Academy of Music in the first decades after its opening in 1823. The *Harmonicon* (1825) praised the composer for having ‘given to the world so many things that are both good and popular at the same time’.

Performances of his compositions declined, however, until mid-century when there occurred a renewal of interest in his music. This revival came at the hands of a circle of performers for whom Dussek’s output contained enough modern harmonic and stylistic features to appeal to contemporary audiences yet preserved classical forms and eschewed excessive virtuosic bravado that these musicians disdained. Alexandre Billet included Dussek sonatas in his Classical Concerts series as early as 1850. Arabella Goddard took up the cause beginning with her soirees in 1858. The Monday Popular Concerts made several of his works known to a large number of London concertgoers during the 1860s and ‘70s. Other proponents of Dussek included native artists William Sterndale Bennett and Lindsay Sloper as well as émigrés Ernst Pauer and Charles Hallé.

By century’s end, Dussek’s music rarely appeared in a public concert. A few pieces were contained in newly instituted curricula for piano students. But his compositions continued to be included in piano anthologies, suggesting his enduring appeal for pedagogy and for domestic music-making. Shortly after Dussek’s centenary in 1912, music critic Eric Blom maintained that Dussek was generally regarded “as a sort of musical Jane Austen” –misjudged and underestimated until one became well acquainted the creator’s output.

Lars Helgert (Georgetown University): Lukas Foss’s *American Cantata:* A “Lover’s Quarrel” with America

Lukas Foss's *American Cantata* (1976), a choral/orchestral work composed for the Bicentennial, is an expression of the composer's complex and ambiguous relationship with his adopted country. The composer's statements surrounding this work make clear that his intent is to both praise and criticize the United States, to which he immigrated in 1937 from his native Germany. Foss uses a variety of means to express what he calls his "lover's quarrel" with America in *American Cantata*. The United States is represented textually through the use of words associated with America in various patriotic, economic, and egalitarian contexts, but these texts are set and combined in ways that strongly imply political, social, and environmental critiques. American music is explicitly referenced through the use of folk, rock, and African-American spirituals, but the music is often used to comment on the American texts in ways that express irony and sarcasm, all to support what Foss intends to be a "sharp look at American society." In addition to the explicit American symbolism, Foss supports the idea of a protest piece by including the perspective of an outsider, encoding his German and Jewish identities into the work through the use of melodies and texts with those associative meanings. This little-studied work, which has never even been commercially recorded, offers numerous insights into Foss's musical personality, aesthetics, and expressive intent. With this new perspective, Foss's compositional career can be understood as a negotiation of multiple identities (German, American, and Jewish) through his music rather than the more narrow characterizations of his legacy in terms of specific compositional techniques, various "isms," or the progressive-conservative dialectic.

Lisa Lombardo (Brooklyn College/ CUNY): The Lady and the Tramp: Blackface Minstrelsy’s Identity Crisis in Victorian America

Blackface minstrelsy performances provided white men with a false sense of stability and escape in an ever-changing world. In the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, women’s suffrage and anti-slavery movements were challenging societal norms. Clinging to aging stereotypes, minstrels portrayed women and African Americans as their social inferiors onstage. While minstrel performers objectified and oppressed women, they ridiculed African Americans as a lesser race that belonged on the plantation. The resounding popularity of blackface minstrelsy exposes a crisis of gender and racial identity due to men’s aggressive subjugation of women and African Americans onstage.

This study examines several stereotypical women during the heyday of the blackface minstrelsy show, such as the sexually fertile African American woman and the misguided suffragette. Through a comparison of song lyrics, iconography, and musical content of the minstrel song “Miss Lucy Long” with the virtuous Victorian maiden in Stephen Foster’s parlor song “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” the disparity between men, women, and African Americans in the hierarchical society of the 1850s is evident. A statistical presentation of the prevalence of “wench” roles that feature men who have dressed as women further illustrates the complicated gender roles of a sexually repressed Victorian society.

The recent publication of *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy* edited by Stephen Johnson demonstrates that blackface minstrelsy is an emerging field of study to history scholars with an interest in American Studies; however the musicological canon lacks sufficient in-depth studies of the music. This essay provides analysis of blackface minstrelsy music through the context of the racial and social inequities of an evolving society.