**American Musicological Society Capital Chapter**

**Spring Meeting**

**Saturday, April 14, 2012**

**George Mason University**

**Program**

9:30 Coffee and Tea

**Session I:** Lowens Award for Student Research (10:00-12:00)

10:00 am Sara Pecknold (The Catholic University of America): “‘On Lightest Leaves I Do Fly’: Natality and the Renewal of Identity in Barbara Strozzi’s Sacri musicali affetti (1655).”

10:40 am Eric Hermann (University of Maryland): “Songs of Dixie: Buell Kazee and The Reinvention of the Mountain Ballad.”

11:20 am Josh Barnett (University of Maryland): “The Tunebook of Maria Brandstetter: Shape-Note Dissemination and the Germans of Western Maryland.”

12:00 pm – 1:15 pm Lunch

**Session II:** 20th-Century Topics

1:30 pm Rebecca Cweibel (University of Delaware): “The [Indistinct, yet

Ubiquitous] Sound of Silence”

2:10 pm Karen Uslin (The Catholic University of America): “We Shall Sing:

Rafael Schachter’s Defiant Requiem in Terezin”

2:50 pm Paul Michael Covey (University of Maryland): “The Ford Foundation-

MENC Contemporary Music Project and ‘Serial Tyranny’”

3:30 pm Paul S. Kim (Shenandoah University): “Nonmodernism in Carl Roskott’s

*Concerto for Violin Solo and Orchestra*”

**Business Meeting**

**Abstracts**

**(in program order)**

**Rebecca Cweibel (University of Delaware): “The [Indistinct, yet Ubiquitous] Sound of Silence”**

When “The Sound of Silence” first appeared on Simon & Garfunkel’s 1964 debut record, *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*, it was sung simply by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, accompanied by Simon playing acoustic guitar. A year later, a more commercial version of “The Sound of Silence” became a hit song. Tom Wilson, a producer at the record company with whom Simon & Garfunkel dealt, overdubbed the song with a drum set, an electric guitar, and an electric bass without the artists’ knowledge or permission. After the song became a hit single, Simon & Garfunkel recorded their 1966 second album, *Sounds of Silence*, featuring the overdubbed “The Sound of Silence” as the first track on Side A. In 1967, “The Sound of Silence” appeared three times in the breakout hit film *The Graduate*.

This paper explores how American culture has interacted with “The Sound of Silence,” and the extent to which the song is connected to its author. While Simon is the clear original author of “The Sound of Silence,” the song was unnoticed until its overdubbing with percussive and electric instruments. Engaging with Roland Barthes’ and Michel Foucault’s theories of authorship contemporaneous with “The Sound of Silence”’s rise to ubiquity, I argue that Simon lost a significant portion of his authorship claim following Wilson’s overdubbing of the song. Simon became a real-life—albeit contentious—example of the “death of the author” phenomenon theorized by Barthes. The success gained from Wilson’s overdubbing caused “The Sound of Silence” to enter public consciousness and become a faceless anthem of late-1960s pseudo-intellectualism.

The case of “The Sound of Silence” changes the way we interact with pop songs and authorial intent. The song, ostensibly Simon’s intellectual property, was altered and re-engineered to be a hit. Simon & Garfunkel’s original version of “The Sound of Silence,” as promised by *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*’s subtitle, is “in the folk style,” but Wilson’s overdubbing grounded the song in the commercial pop genre. This calls into question the value of genre authenticity and musical integrity in a Late Capitalistic society. Wilson transformed “The Sound of Silence” into a cultural commodity, which came around to perpetuate Simon’s career both with Garfunkel and later as a solo artist. Even today, “The Sound of Silence” sticks with Simon as his first commercial hit.

**Karen Uslin (The Catholic University of America): “We Shall Sing: Rafael Schacter’s Defiant Requiem in Terezin”**

In September of 1943, the conductor Rafael Schachter and a choir of one hundred and fifty prisoners performed Verdi’s monumental *Requiem* for the first time within the ghetto walls of Terezin. Though deportations would deplete his choir twice, forcing Schachter to recruit new singers, the *Requiem* went on to be performed sixteen times in Terezin, including a performance for the International Red Cross and Nazi officials who visited the camp in June of 1944. Survivors from Schachter’s choir describe how their beloved conductor saw these performances as a chance to sing to their captors what they could not say to them. Through music, Schachter and his choir entered into a battle of good against evil, music against violence and death, a battle for survival. This was a chance for the voices of the prisoners to be heard above the chaos and despair of like in Terezin.

But why the Verdi *Requiem*? What was it about a Catholic Mass for the Dead that resonated so much with Schachter, his choir, and the other Jewish concentration camp prisoners? This paper will examine how Schachter re-interpreted not only Verdi’s original vision but altered the very definition of a Requiem mass to present a musical message that inspired courage, hope, and the will to retain human dignity in the midst of tragedy. Schachter was an up and coming conductor in Prague when he was deported, and yet out of his collection of musical scores, the Verdi *Requiem* was the only piece of music he brought with him to Terezin. Surviving choir member Marianka May has said: “It is very difficult to sing when you are hungry. It is very difficult to concentrate. But not so, not so with the Requiem.” In deplorable conditions, surrounded by fear of transportations, fear of the unknown, disease, and death, Rafael Schachter found a way to inspire the masses and turn Verdi’s *Requiem* into, by his own definition, a *Defiant* Requiem.

**Paul Michael Covey (University of Maryland): “The Ford Foundation-MENC Contemporary Music Project and the “Serial Tyranny”**

It seems widely believed that “serial” or otherwise “atonal” composers dominated the American “musical establishment” of the 1950s and 60s, controlling academic appointments, prizes, and performances. Joseph Straus (1999) dubbed this narrative the “Myth of Serial Tyranny” and mounted arguments against it, but his study was limited, and the narrative persists. Now, I take a more direct and targeted approach toward dispelling the idea, presenting broader data than seen previously. My data comes from an examination of the Ford Foundation-funded Contemporary Music Project, especially its activity from 1959 through 1968, which dealt with young composers, whose styles, according to the standard narrative, were likely to bear the mark of such “tyranny,” and with higher education, supposed promulgators of a serial system. The CMP placed seventy-three young composers, selected by a stylistically diverse committee of their prominent elders, in public school system residencies to write for school ensembles. They were to compose in their own individual styles, compromising only for student playing ability. Because of this, their large number, and the large pool of applicants from which they were drawn, what they wrote—mostly in modern tonal idioms—is indicative of broader tendencies among the young, and therefore of the absence of a tyranny. The CMP also funded a series of educational programs based at a likely representative group of over thirty U.S. universities, meant to acquaint students with contemporary developments. A statistical account of the works and concepts presented in these programs will show there was no evidence of a “serial tyranny” here either.

**Paul S. Kim (Shenandoah Conservatory): “Nonmodernism in Carl Roskott’s *Concerto for Violin Solo and Orchestra*”**

Completed in 1984, Carl Roskott’s *Concerto for Violin Solo and Orchestra* shares many characteristics commonly associated with Neo-Romanticism: a return to the use of tonality; a plentitude of lush, lyrical melodies; a reemphasis on form; and a variety of expressive markings to evoke specific emotions. Roskott had experimented with avant-garde compositions during his college years, but the majority of his mature works follow the style exhibited in his *Concerto for Violin.* However, Neo-Romanticism is a problematic term for contextualizing Roskott’s music. Whereas Neo-Romanticism implies the rebirth of a lost era, Romanticism was never lost to Roskott; his personality as well as his career as an orchestral conductor ensured that. Moreover, the very term “Neo-Romanticism” connotes the idea of novelty—a fundamentally modernist aesthetic. For the vast majority of his compositional life, Roskott had no intention of being novel; he simply wanted to write music. A more appropriate contextualization has been found in a view of history Bruno Latour describes as *nonmodern.* A nonmodern view eliminates the need to trace history along a linear continuum of progress—a notion fundamental to modernism that an idea, philosophy, or aesthetic must either build upon or displace its predecessor. Ideas that were once prevalent in a bygone period are thus not necessarily confined to that period; instead, they may legitimately be revisited and recycled. While Romanticism as a time period may have ended decades before Roskott’s time, Romanticism as an aesthetic was always central to Roskott’s life as a composer and as a person. From a nonmodern perspective, Roskott’s use of Romantic and other traditional elements need not be considered an anachronism.