American Musicological Society-Capital Chapter

Spring Meeting, 9 April 2016

American University

Abramson Recital Hall

Program

9:00 Registration and refreshments

9:30-10:30 Session 1 (Laurie McManus, Shenandoah Conservatory, Chair)

9:30 Visnja Krzic (New York, NY): “Music Video Influence on Audiovisual Relationships in Darren

 Aronofsky’s Early Films”

10:00 Gretchen Carlson (University of Virginia): “Jazz Goes to the Movies: Improvised Film

 Scores in Contemporary Cinema”

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-12:15 Session 2: Lowens award presentations (Bonny Miller, Independent Scholar, Chair)

10:45 Anna Brashears (The Catholic University of America): “Focalization in Two Songs from

Schumann’s Kerner Liederreihe: Agony and Healing through the Act of Storytelling”

11:15 Justin T. Gregg (Georgetown University): “The Evolution of  the Flute Family as the

 “Outsider” in Gustav Mahler’s Wunderhorn Symphonies”

11:45 Thomas Rohde (The Catholic University of America): “Brazilian Nationalist Representation

in the Text and Musical Setting of Heitor Villa-Lobos’s Choros No. 10: “Rasga o coração”

 (Tear Open my Heart)”

12:15-1:45 Lunch break

1:45-2:15 Business meeting

Session 3 (Andrew Weaver, The Catholic University of America, Chair)

2:15 Laura Youens (The George Washington University): “The Sad Case of “Si par souffrir””

2:45 Matthew Franke (Howard University): “Beyond Pastiche: The Descending Tetrachord in

Massenet’s Manon”

3:15 Aaron Ziegel (Towson University): “Arthur Nevin and the Singing Soldiers of Camp Grant:

 World War I, Vocal Camaraderie and A Choir of 40,000”

3:45 Closing

Paper Session I

Visnja Krzic:

“Music Video Influence on Audiovisual Relationships in Darren Aronofsky’s Early Films”

Today, the soundtrack has become “musicalized.” All of the intensified techniques in today’s cinema, to borrow David Bordwell’s term, have long been foregrounded in music video, because they help clarify musical form Free-ranging camera movement reflects music’s flowing, processual nature. Locks of image highlight a song’s structure. Intense colorization illuminates a  song’s harmony, sectional divisions, and timbre. Visual motifs correspond with musical ones. Editing and editing-like effects not only show off the music’s rhythmic aspects, and form aesthetic sequences on their own, but also function as a switch among narrative, dance, lyrics, or a musical hook, letting none of the elements take over.

In the eighties, music video was the laboratory, while in the nineties, the often called “MTV style” entered into movies and helped drive the new, audiovisually intensified, postclassial cinema. This new audiovisual form favors blocks and segments, multiple temporalities, loops, musical and quasi-musical numbers, sound effects and bits of music as fragments, tears in the film’s surface, and motivic work. It also relies on excessive repetition, unpredictable teleology, and ambiguous endings. Film director Darren Aronofsky is one of the early and most successful exponents of such cinema. This paper traces audiovisual relationships in his first three films (Clint Mansell’s original score is an essential component of all three), which the director himself calls his “mind, body, and spirit trilogy” -- his “guerrilla” debut film Pi (1998), critically acclaimed indie film Requiem for a Dream (2000), and multimillion-dollar budget studio film The Fountain (2006).

Gretchen Carlson:

“Jazz Goes to the Movies: Improvised Film Scores in Contemporary Cinema”

In 1957, Miles Davis made cinema soundtrack history. While watching a film clip of actress Jeanne Moreau wandering forlornly through Paris in Louis Malle’s Ascenseur pour l’echafaud (1958), Davis translated his reactions into trumpet improvisations, ultimately creating the film’s soundtrack. Improvised soundtrack production has been extremely rare, I argue that the primary reason for this marginalization is the film industry’s ideological and economic risk-averseness. Improvised scores are non-traditional; they are not carefully composed, but rather spontaneously performed in reaction to the film itself. They can be unpredictable, and thus risky for filmmakers who seek to maintain strict control over soundtrack production. That said, recent cinema boasts a few examples of jazz artists performing improvised scores. These include drummer Antonio Sanchez’ soundtrack for Alejandro González Iñárritu’s Birdman (2014), and trumpeter Mark Isham’s soundtrack for Alan Rudolph’s Afterglow (1997). I examine the production of these unique scores, read against the concept of risk aversion within the commercial film industry. I illustrate how these examples challenge traditional film-scoring conventions, connecting these subversions with the directors’ own distinctive industry statuses. These “maverick” directors operate outside film industry conventions in service of their own innovative aesthetic interests, resulting in their increased willingness to take risks. Such risk-taking includes offering creative (improvisational) liberties to jazz performers that extend beyond those typically afforded to the majority of film scorers. In highlighting these unique jazz imrovisation/film intersections, I seek to generate further critical dialogue regarding innovative musical freedom within labor expectation in cultural industry work.

Paper Session II - Lowens Award Paperes

Anna Brashears:

“Focalization in Two Songs from Schumann’s Kerner Liederreihe: Agony and Healing through the Act of Storytelling”

This paper provides an analysis of two songs from Robert Schumann’s Zwölf Gedichte von Justinus Kerner using focalization, a narratological concept closely related to perspective or point of view. For this project, I use the definition by prominent narratologist Mieke Bal, who describes focalization as “the relationship between the ‘vision,’ the agent that sees, and that which is seen.” Bal differentiates between the subject of focalization (that which perceives), and the object (that which is perceived). This distinction allows readers and listeners to explore a complex relationship that can unlock meaning in a text. When music enters the mix, it can reinforce and heighten the focalizations already present in the text or it can add new levels of focalization potentially changing the telos of the narrative. This paper examines focalization through musical elements such as motive, texture, and un-texted piano interludes in “Stirb, Lieb’ und Freud’!” And “Stille Liebe” from Schumann’s Kerner Liederreihe. Both songs are focalized externally, ultimately focusing on the speaker of the text and the struggles and rewards of the act of storytelling rather than on the content of the speaker’s words. Although the process of storytelling has a devastating effect on the narrator of “Stirb, Lieb’ und Freud’!”, the narrator of “Stille Liebe” finds solace in expressing himself through song.

Justin T. Gregg

“The Evolution of the Flute Family as the ‘Outsider’ in Gustav Mahler’s Wunderhorn Symphonies”

This paper presents the argument that Gustav Mahler’s Wunderhorn symphonies portray the flute family as an “outsider” to the orchestra. The idea of the outsider was familiar to Mahler, and was a topic that he regularly discusses in conversations with others. In the paper, I use musical analysis to show that Mahler did not conform to the Romantic-era standards when orchestrating the flute family in his first four symphonies. Absent are the “soft and relatively neutral” instruments “almost devoid of expression” characterized by Berlioz and Strauss in the Treatise on Instrumentation. Instead, the flute and piccolo become characters with their own personalities, differentiating themselves from the other orchestral instruments through timbral and thematic elements.

As I demonstrate through close analysis of the various appearances of the flute family in Mahler’s Wunderhorn symphonies, the role of these instruments shifted over time. As Mahler progressed through these four symphonies, his treatment of the flute family became increasingly distinct and separate from that of the other instruments. I propose that this is not coincidence; rather that Mahler intentionally scores these four symphonies to portray the flute family as an outsider, an effect that began in his first symphony, developed through his second, and reached its full maturity in his third and fourth.

Thomas Rohde:

“Brazilian Nationalist Representation in the Text and Musical Setting of Heitor Villa-Lobos’s Choros No. 10: “Rasga o coração” (Tear Open my Heart)”

When Heitor Villa-Lobos left Brazil in 1926 for his second trip to Paris, among the new works he broght was the Choros No. 10, subtitled “Rasga o coração” (Tear Open my Heart). This modernist composition for orchestra and mixed chorus is considered one of the composer’s most nationalist works. In the final section of the piece Villa-Lobos adapted the melody and text from Catullo da Paixão Cearense’s famous modinha “Rasga o coração” and layered it between Indigenous-sounding onomatopoeic vocal lines and Afro-samba percussion rhythms creating an expression of Brazilian tri-racial identity as a central part of the work’s culmination. Although the avian and Indigenous themes in Choros No. 10 have been aptly highlighted by Gerard Béhague, the song setting has not been analyzed resulting in an incomplete understanding of the work.

After WWI French-modernist aesthetics encouraged the elaboration of national culture by Brazilian modernist artists, which is reflected by Villa-Lobos’s increased use of primitive, exotic, and popular elements of Brazilian culture in his Choros compositions. Using a poetic analysis, I demonstrate how the musical elements in Villa-Lobos’s setting cause Cearense’s text to function as a narrative voice representing Brazil through poetic and musical visualizations while eludicating samba as the heart of Brazilian culture. I view the setting of “Rasga o coração” in Choros No. 10 as part of a broad representation of distinct phases of Brazilian national identity merging into a unified expression of mestiçagem (racial mixing) mediated by samba and projected through modernist compositional devices throughout the work.

Paper Session III

Laura Youens:

The Sad Case of “Si par souffrir””

Probably even Renaissance music scholars would not recognize the name Jean Courtois were it not for his chanson “Si par souffrir l’on peult vaincre Fortune” [If by suffering one could vanquish Fortune]. Courtois worked in Lille and Cambrai in northern France in the second through the fourth decades of the sixteenth century, disappearing from the historical record in 1540. One psalm motet and this miniature chanson survive in multiple copies spread throughout Europe.

Although “Si par souffrir” harks back to medieval topoi of the suffering lover and of the intervention of the goddess Fortune in human lives, musically it fits neatly within the charactertistics of the post-Josquin era chanson. Who wrote its quatrain text? Its only known source is supposedly the large poetry collection S’Ensuyvent plusieurs belle Chansons nouvelles, Avec plusiurs aultres retirees des anciennes…, printed in 1535. There it is anonymous, but is S’Ensuyvent 1535 really the only source and do we actually not know the poet’s name? In recent years, scholars have assigned the poem to Clément Marot, valet de chambre for François I of France and author of L’Adolescence clementine, and to François himself. Did one of these famous figures actually write these four lines?

Matthew Franke:

“Beyond Pastiche: The Descending Tetrachord in Massenet’s Manon”

Historical pastiche in opera has rarely been the subject of sustained research; at best, scholars dismiss it as a surface-level compositional strategy best used for establishing a setting. Jules Massenet’s Manon (1884), set in the 1720s, seems to justify this line of thought: the minuets and gavottes do not directly advance the plot. Perhaps for this reason, Hervé Lacombe has described Massenet’s practice here as “period color”-- an equivalent to the kind of local color found in many operas. Yet there is one previously unnoticed moment in Act II that employs a musical strategy from the French Baroque in a dramatically significant context: the well-known air “Adieu, notre petite table” repeats a descending tetrachord bass in minor as the titular character makes a difficult decision.

Based on a close analysis of this air, I argue that Massenet clearly had a deeper knowledge of French Baroque music than has previously supposed. (The context fits: Massenet composed Manon during a revival of scholarly interest in early French opera, and he must have known of the reprinted volumes of Rameau and Lully). Two aspects of his musical practice are striking: the level to which he integrates the Baroque norm into his own musical language,and the way that his Baroque norm is meaningfully deformed throughout the air. Massenet takes Baroque music seriously as a means of expression, and not simply as a decorative element. His idiomatic manipulation of the descending tetrachord thus transcends pastiche and anticipates the rise of neoclassicism.

Aaron Ziegel:

“Arthur Nevin and the Singing Soldiers of Camp Grant: World War I, Vocal Camaraderie, and a Choir of 40,000”

In October 1917, Arthur Nevin arrived at Camp Grant to take up the duties of camp song leader. Army leadership, motivated by the successes of the community singing movement, decided that “a singing army is a fighting army,” and thus a new element was added to the training regimen of all soldiers-to-be. Although little-known today, Nevin was at the time internationally recognized as an opera composer for Poia (Berlin, 1910) and the forthcoming A Daughter of the Forest (Chicago, 1918), making him one of the Army’s highest profile song leaders. At Camp Grant, Nevin found himself charged with the task of transforming upwards of 40,000 soldiers into an effective mass choir.

While singing training is a well-known facet of life in the cantonments, scholars have yet to document the specifics of both the pedagogical logistics and the repertory used by song leaders. Drawing upon archival sources at the Library of Congress, period sheet music collections, and an extensive array of contemporaneous reports in newspapers and magazines, this paper will offer an in-depth exploration into army camp singing culture. Nevin explained his methods in essays and interviews, while the local press eagerly followed both his progress and the difficulties faced. Nevin’s carefully selected repertory of popular songs, including one original composition, advance an optimistically patriotic agenda that inspired unit cohesion but was far removed from the horrific realities of warfare awaiting overseas. Attendees will have the opportunity to join their voices in song, as did Nevin’s soldiers a century ago.