**Winter 2002 Program and Abstracts**

**Abstracts:**

**Wagnerism and the American Music, Elise Kirk**

Of all the forces that have shaped the creative process of the American opera composer as the century turned, none was quite as powerful as the art of Richard Wagner. This paper discusses how the forces of Wagnerian aesthetics, dramaturgy, visual aspects and musical ideology have shaped the creative process of the American opera composer from the early 20th century to modern times. At first composers wrote "Wagnerian" operas, but gave them American settings, such as Walter Damrosch's A Scarlet Letter (1896) and Arthur Nevin's "Indianist" opera, Poia (1910). As the century progressed, composers became more involved with the vital associative powers of the orchestra and the rich dramatic potential of the leitmotif. Drawing from the author's recent book, American Opera, the paper features works of Deems Taylor, Bernard Herrmann and Samuel Barber with short musical examples.

**Burlesque in Lynchburg, Virginia: JRC Sarah Jane, HMS Pinafore and Minstrelsy
Homer Rudolf, University of Richmond**

Part of the "Pinafore Mania" in the U.S., the burlesque "JRC Freight Boat Sarah Jane" was set on a canal freight boat on the James River and Kanawha Canal in Virginia. Performed by an amateur, all-male cast in blackface makeup, "Sarah Jane" opened in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1880, and was subsequently revived three times. This paper will compare "Sarah Jane" with "Pinafore," explore its local references and interpolations of popular songs, explore the influences of the minstrel tradition upon Sarah Jane, and present information on the librettist and members of the cast.

**Zero to the Bone: Thelonious Monk, Emily Dickinson, and the Rhythms of Modernism
Joshua Weiner, The University of Maryland**
What does a twentieth century African American male jazz pianist and a nineteenth century white female poet have in common? Both artists invented their unique aesthetic forms by rhythmically disrupting the conventional song forms of their day; both worked with sacred music (Monk with spirituals and gospels, Dickinson with hymn meters); both infused their adoption of folk forms with various strains of Europeanism (Monk through the sophisticated classical structures interweaving with stride, as inherited from James P.Johnson, Fats Waller, and Willie "The Lion" Smith; Dickinson with a tradition of symbolist abstraction); both were misunderstood early on as eccentric, aesthetically naive primitivists who didn't really understand the traditions in which they worked (i.e. prosodically illiterate); and both emerged as the cornerstone figures in a definitively American art form: in fact, it is impossible to imagine either the development of jazz or the development of American poetry without either one of them. More importantly, I argue that it's the rhythmic disruptions of Dickinson that so fundamentally characterize her as proto-modern, and that open the way for later modernists; and that the character of that disruption is a kind of jazz invention that she shares with Monk--specifically, a rhythmic dislocation that renders, within the song form, the experience of vertigo, a quality of irony that, as in Monk's tunes, traces out the razor edge between articulation and silence. By juxtaposing such unlikely artistic cousins, I think we gain some formal understanding of how Dickinson has persisted in her claim as one of the real foundations for American poetry; likewise, I think the comparison also sheds light on Monk's durable position as jazz' great ironist and wry existentialist.

**Jewish-Israeli Art Music Americanized Identity, Ideology and Idioms
Ronit Seter, Cornell University**
Folklorism and Orientalism, paramount signifiers of national identity in Israeli music, are both manifested in an unconventional way. Israeli music's folklorist is local, as composers use melos of Israeli Jewish communities; but it is also non-local, since these communities had shaped their musical heritage ? over centuries ? thousands of miles away, from Morocco through Russia to Iraq. Its Orientalism, even more so than Russian orientalism (Taruskin), is a signifier for the "us"?not the Other, as European-trained, Jewish emigré composers such as Paul Ben-Haim and Mordecai Seter incorporated Mizrahi [Near-Eastern] melos in their works. In addition to folklorism and orientalism, various other markers such as biblical and modern Hebrew; references to Israeli history, arts, and letters; titles referring to views, vistas, and even climate are regularly incorporated into core repertoire works by Israeli composers, and by audiences striving for cultural distinction.

Similar markers, and no less significantly, deviations from those markers, are present in works of successful composers who spent formative years in Israel and emigrated to the United States, like Shulamit Ran (Pulitzer Prize 1991), Jan Radzynski, and Chaya Czernowin. These markers and their respective deviations provide a powerful magnifying mirror, reflecting Israeli identity in music that recrossed borders. In this paper I will focus on three Israeli-American works, all written between 1990-2000: Ran's chamber piece Mirage, Radzynski's vocal-orchestral work Shirat Maayan, and Czernowin's chamber opera Pnima. These pieces, by composers who left Israel two to four decades years ago, not only reflect diametrically opposed facets of Israeli identity originated already in the 1930s (composers Josef Tal vs. Alexander Boskovich); they redefine this identity in an (inter)national context.

**Music in Fredericksburg 1786-89: A Case Study of Cultural Life in early
Federal period America
Patricia Norwood, Mary Washington College**

This paper focuses on the period 1786-89 when residents in Fredericksburg, Virginia were experiencing the revival of cultural life after the Revolution. The end of fighting and importance of the town fostered the activities of several musicians. A singing schoolmaster and two itinerant music teachers were identified by the new town paper, the Virginia Herald. These three men established themselves as contributing members of the community. Notices in the paper indicated that John Victor, a keyboard teacher and repairer of such instruments, and John Callender, a singing schoolmaster, reached a level of particular prominence in the life of the town. Historical documents allow also a glimpse into the lives of these men before their residency in Fredericksburg. Johann Stadler and John Callender had served in the military prior to their arrival in town. Stadler was also a well-known itinerant musician known by the Carter and Washington families. Stadler, also, as well as John Victor, had experienced an earlier professional performance life--Stadler in Philadelphia and Victor in Alexandria. The intersections of their careers in the family hometown of the Washingtons and young lawyer and future fifth president, James Monroe, provide a glimpse of the cultural life in early Federal period America.

**The X-Files: Sound Boundaries, Sound Identity
Robynn Stilwell, Georgetown University**

Composer Mark Snow and the sound design team created a unique soundscape for the ground-breaking television series The X-Files, a soundscape shaped as much by the technological and financial restraints of the show\_s low-budget and low-expectation inception as by any aesthetic. The boundary between sound effect and music is blurred, and in the process the function and affect of each is deepened. Not only is the sound world of the series itself distinctive, but the individual fantasy worlds of stand-alone episodes are given their own character through techniques ranging from standard exoticism to intricate sound puzzles.

With such a rich identity established for the show, it was startling that when the television series made the transition to the big screen, Snow apparently jettisoned the characteristic synthesizer score without qualm in order to write for a big orchestra. In doing so, the very identity of The X-Files was threatened. An unexpected by-product was the further transformation of the scoring when the series returned to television.