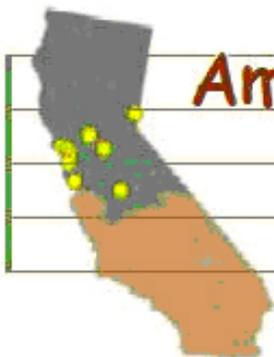


# WINTER MEETING

*Northern California Chapter  
of the  
American Musicological Society*

Saturday, February 16, 2013  
Music Department  
University of California, Davis



**American Musicological Society**

**Northern California Chapter**



**Northern California Chapter of the  
American Musicological Society**

University of California, Davis  
Music Building, Room 115

February 16, 2013

**Registration**, 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

**Session I**, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Christopher Reynolds (University of California, Davis), Chair

Matthew Linder (National University), Ratio Theologica contra Ratio  
Humana in J.S. Bach's Cantata 178

Robert Pearson (University of North Texas), The Critical Reception of  
Beethoven's *Fidelio* and his 1806 Revisions to "O namenlose  
Freude"

**Lunch**, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

**Business Meeting**, 1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Session II**, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Beth Levy (University of California, Davis), Chair

Philip Nauman (Somerville, MA), Dramatic Vocalization in the  
Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams

Jay Arms (UC Santa Cruz), "Sound as a Physical Reality": Malcom  
Goldstein with the Judson Dance Theater

**Coffee Break**, 3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Session III**, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

D. Kern Holoman (University of California, Davis), Chair

Daniela Levy (Stanford University), High Culture on the Lower East  
Side: Opera in Yiddish in New York *circa* 1900

Giacomo Fiore (UC Santa Cruz), "Still Now and Hear My Singing":  
Songs and Texts in the Music of Larry Polansky

## ABSTRACTS

### **Matthew Linder (National University) Ratio Theologica contra Ratio Humana in J.S. Bach's Cantata 178**

The obscure J.S. Bach cantata *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält* (BWV 178) has been interpreted by some commentators as an example of an anti-intellectual sentiment in Bach's music. The statement in the final chorale, "If reason fights against faith in future we will not trust it," seemingly bolsters this perspective as do many others similar phrases in the libretto. However, when read within the context of Lutheran orthodoxy, the narrative which unfolds is of two divergent approaches to reason, not an aggressive polemic against intellectualism.

The main text on the Lutheran conception of reason is Luther's "Disputation Concerning Man," where he expounds on the distinctions between reason rooted in faith in Christ (*ratio theologica*) and reason built upon human faculty (*ratio humana*). While the argument for *ratio theologica* was of continuing importance in German Lutheranism, a burgeoning new philosophy in the early eighteenth century – the Enlightenment – brought about a heightened awareness of the differences. The effects of this new movement were far-reaching, even planting the seeds of a reliance on human-inspired reason within the Lutheran church.

Therefore, Bach's cantata sets these two perceptions of reason against each other, protecting and exalting *ratio theologica* while violently attacking the encroaching influence of the Enlightenment on the church. One such moment in the cantata disturbingly captures Bach's aggression towards *ratio humana*. In the second tenor aria the stabbing thrusts of the basso continuo underscore a pointillistic tenor melody which shouts, "Schweig, schweig nur, taumelnde Vernunft!" [Shut up, Shut up, tottering reason]. An analysis of this cantata through the hermeneutic of two avenues to reason will provide us an insight into Bach's theological conception of reason and hopefully frame a more nuanced understanding of his musical intellectualism.

### **Robert Pearson (University of North Texas) The Critical Reception of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and his 1806 revisions to "O namenlose Freude"**

Modern scholarship typically characterizes Beethoven as either ignorant of published music criticism, or bitterly indifferent toward it. However, the reviews published in response to the first performances of *Fidelio* in 1805 contain very specific criticisms of which Beethoven appears to have been anything but ignorant. The first performance of the opera was generally considered a musical and dramatic failure in part because of a negative response from critics: they took issue with both the dramatic layout of the opera, as well as with Beethoven's musical setting. The duet "O namenlose Freude," for example, was specifically criticized for failing to achieve an appropriate musical portrayal of the text. Motivated to improve his standing with the Viennese public, Beethoven revised the opera for a production in early 1806 that was much more successful.

Beethoven's revisions to his opera *Fidelio* between 1805 and 1806 offer a unique opportunity to challenge the mythology because they exhibit a willingness to incorporate the ideas of critics, censors and friends in interesting ways. Scholars have typically regarded Beethoven's first set of revisions as hasty solutions to the 1805 version's most glaring dramatic problems, but I propose that we can read Beethoven's revisions as the composer engaging in a dialogue with the critics, with a keen eye on the stakes involved for his career and reputation. Through a close reading of the published criticisms of the first performances of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, as well as a careful examination of Beethoven's revisions to the opera in 1805, this paper will encourage a view of Beethoven as constructing his own reputation on a compositional level at a time when the stakes for his career were particularly high.

**Philip Nauman (Somerville, MA)**  
**Dramatic Vocalization in the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams**

Several factors, such as performances of Claude Debussy's music, appearances by the *Ballets Russes* in London, and the engagement of Sir Henry Wood as conductor of the first series of Promenade Concerts at the recently opened Queen's Hall, came together during the first two decades of the twentieth century to have a tremendous impact on the next generation of British composers, including Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). One of the most notable outcomes from this period was the British adoption of dramatic vocalization—wordless singing to express extra-musical elements, and also to signify emotive sentiments within dramatic situations.

No other English composer used this technique as much, and in as many varied genres, as Vaughan Williams. Beginning with the early *Willow-Wood* for solo baritone, female chorus, and orchestra (1903), he continued to turn to dramatic vocalization throughout the rest of his career. Two of his nine symphonies—the *Pastoral Symphony* (1921) and *Sinfonia Antartica* (1952)—include the technique in both their first and last movements, and the suite for solo viola, chorus, and orchestra, *Flos Campi* (1926), includes dramatic vocalization throughout. In addition, the influence of Irish keening—wordless lamentation sung by women—shows itself most notably in the opera *Riders to the Sea* (1936).

In this paper I detail the specific, formative influences on Vaughan Williams and examine the development and individualistic use of dramatic vocalization in the aforementioned works.

**Jay Arms (University of California, Santa Cruz)**  
**"Sound as a Physical Reality:" Malcolm Goldstein with the Judson Dance Theater**

Malcolm Goldstein (b. 1936) is a composer, improviser, and violinist known for his solo improvisations and pioneering use of graphic scores, which integrate improvisational ideas. This paper explores the early evolution of these ideas in Goldstein's work through his early and formative association with the Judson Dance Theater. In 1962 Goldstein joined this group of choreographers and performers experimenting with ideas such as *pedestrian movement*. According to Goldstein, his collaborations with various Judson artists radically transformed his compositional ideas. In particular, Goldstein became interested in another Judson innovation, *contact improvisation*, a now well-known technique that begins with a physical connection and then develops through space. As he moved through the space while playing the violin at Judson Memorial Church, Goldstein developed a new sense of his body in relation to the instrument, similar to that of the dancers in relation to the space in which they moved. As his performance ideas and techniques developed in these early years, he began to use graphic notations in his scores that focus on the physical gestures of instrumental playing. These ideas have permeated and evolved in Goldstein's work in succeeding decades, becoming the primary focus of his important body of work as a composer and performer.

Using my own interviews with Goldstein, materials from his personal collection, and analyses of representative compositions, this paper explores Goldstein's transformation during his time at the Judson Dance Theater by showing some of their specific artistic ideas and how they became fundamental to his musical evolution.

**Daniela Levy (Stanford University)**

**High Culture on the Lower East Side: Opera in Yiddish in New York circa 1900**

The turn of the twentieth century was a period of burgeoning efforts in America to democratize high culture. Among these efforts were popular-price performances of operas in Yiddish translation on New York's Lower East Side, home to a dense population of mostly very poor Italian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants. The Progressive Era ideology of cultural "uplift" informed not only these productions but also the activities of a wide range of political, social, and cultural reformers, many of whom believed that educating the public to appreciate what were thought of as the finer things in life would alleviate the societal problems stemming from rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The zeal of uplift activists and the perception that the Jewish demographic would be receptive to these uplifting enterprises thus inspired some impresarios to try their hand at Yiddish-language adaptations of European operas. These endeavors, hitherto unexamined by musicologists, included performances of works ranging from *Carmen* and *Il Trovatore* to *La Juive* and even *Parsifal*. I argue that the presentation of these operas in a popular context reflected the era's widespread belief in the uplifting potential of exposure to high culture. Drawing on the work of several scholars of the Yiddish theater, including Nahma Sandrow, Judith Thissen, and Joel Berkowitz, I contextualize these Yiddish opera offerings within the broader operatic and cultural scene of the day. I focus on Boris Thomashefsky's May 1904 production of *Parsifal* and "Professor" Hurwitz's August to October 1904 season of French and Italian opera, showing how these productions stemmed from both the broader uplift efforts in American society and from the specifically Jewish movement of the era to reform the popular Yiddish theater into a more refined type of entertainment.

**Giacomo Fiore (University of California, Santa Cruz)**

**"Still Now and Hear My Singing": Songs and Texts in the Music of Larry Polansky**

Like other notable U.S. composer, Larry Polansky (b. 1954) has employed folk, religious, and other traditional songs as the basis for several of his works. Although his sources, which include William Billings and Shaker hymns, Yiddish songs, and Ruth Crawford's folk song transcriptions, may at first appear eclectic, Polansky's consistency of treatment ensures stylistic and affective continuity. Furthermore, the simple melodies and lyrics of many of these songs offer a striking contrast to Polansky's often angular and complex musical language—a duality that the composer harnesses to produce poignant and touching moments.

After identifying and categorizing the derivation of song materials utilized by Polansky, this paper analyzes and highlights the musical and aesthetic results of his settings, especially as they relate to recurring themes in the composer's work, such as difficulty, virtuosity, perception, and cognition. In particular, Polansky's predilection for self-accompanied settings is interpreted as another facet of his interest in textural, harmonic, and perceptual heterophonies. Based on archival research and extensive interviews and collaboration with the composer, as well as from the author's experience studying and performing some of the works in consideration, this study explores a unique portion of the repertoire of one of today's most active, prolific, and yet often overlooked American composers.

## NOTES

<http://www.ams-net.org/chapters/norcal>

