PACIFIC SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

• OF THE •

AMERICAN MUSICOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Fall Meeting

October 15, 2011
University of Redlands

Program

8:30 – 9:00 AM Coffee and Registration

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Morning Session

Chief Nitsuga Mangoré: Agustín Barrios and New World Identities
Robert Wahl (California State University, Long Beach)

The European Concerts of the Pan-American Association of Composers
Noél Stallings (Los Angeles)

"'Pourquoi ajouter à qui n'a besoin de rien?': Debating Tradition and Innovation through Massenet and Saint-Saëns's Music for Racine"
Erin Brooks (Los Angeles)

Toward A Working Analytical Definition of Postmodernism for Popular Music: Postmodern Architecture, Double-Coding, and Nirvana's "Come As You Are"
Brian Wright (University of Nevada, Reno)

12:00 – 1:40 PM Lunch

1:40 Pacific Southwest Chapter Business Meeting

2:00 – 5:00 PM Afternoon Session

Numerical Structure and Rhetorical Gambits in Ars Antiqua Motets
Alejandro Planchart (University of California, Santa Barbara, Emeritus)

"The Most Powerful Human Sound Ever Created": Noise, Embodiment, and the Timbre of the Saxophonic Scream in Free Jazz
Zachary Wallmark (University of California, Los Angeles)

From *Swan Lake* to *Black Swan*: A Reinvention of Tchaikovsky's Music
Meghan Joyce (University of California, Santa Barbara)

The Battle of the *Parsifal*s
Daniela Smolov Levy (Stanford University)

ABSTRACTS

Morning Session

Chief Nitsuga Mangoré: Agustín Barrios and New World Identities

Robert Wahl (California State University, Long Beach)

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending well into the twentieth, the population of South American urban centers increased at a near exponential rate augmented in large part by the influx of immigrants who were predominantly European. Decades of war, population growth, and urban expansion in South America left many indigenous communities displaced not only physically but also culturally. The resulting identity struggle in South American cultures is apparent in the concerted efforts of the various communities to retain distinct languages, tribal borders, and folklore, as well as regional music and dance genres.
However, despite comprising a land mass nearly double that of the United States, the rich cultural diversity of South America remains largely generalized into the category of "Latin American."

At the turn of the twentieth century, during the height of the immigration and identity struggle in South America, the Paraguayan guitarist Agustín Barrios arose to embody both the spirit of "his own" Guaraní people and possibly the entirety of South American indigenous culture. Born May 5th, 1885, Barrios was a contemporary of the renowned Heitor Villa-Lobos of Brazil and Andrés Segovia of Spain. Although he found success in South and Central America, Barrios struggled and failed to achieve the level of fame equal to his European and Brazilian counterparts. With technical capabilities argued to have surpassed those of even the great Segovia, Barrios was unable to secure international fame outside of South America in his lifetime. Eventually Barrios began to dress and label himself as the Guaraní Chief "Nitsuga Mangoré" in what has been largely accepted as an attempt to garner publicity for his concert series.

Traveling throughout South America on several multi-national tours in his lifetime, Barrios developed an eclectic style of composition that has been aptly described as Pan- American. His music, written during the tours, reflects the musical cultures of the regions through which he traveled and is most clearly exemplified through his numerous indigenous South American dances. Not only did he compose these dances but he also recorded them, which given the recording dates, arguably makes him the first guitarist to ever be recorded. In his compositions, Barrios demonstrated that he was more than capable of arrangements and compositions modeled upon the European masters, composing dances such as the gavota, jota, vals, and mazurka. However, it was his own creations on "Latin" themes, considered true to Pan-American fashion that earned him the approval of both critics and audiences alike. By freeing himself from the limits of music of a single Paraguayan culture, the gateway to personal identity and international success was opened for the "Chief" of the Pan-American composition style. In this paper, parallels will be drawn between Barrios's struggle for identity, as exemplified through the creation of his alternate stage persona and the success of his indigenous dance catalogue both in South America and abroad, with the sociological changes reshaping South American society.

The European Concerts of the Pan-American Association of Composers

Noél Stallings (Los Angeles)

In an interview with Rita Mead in 1974, conductor Nicolas Slonimsky recalled that the Pan-American Association of Composers was "just a tag . . . there was a group of people who didn't have any money, didn't have any resources, and they just floundered around there in New York . . . Pan-American was just a word." Slonimsky's recollections of a performance society that had ceased to exist forty years earlier are echoed in his autobiography *Perfect Pitch*. By virtue of having been the PAAC's official conductor and surviving most of the association's members by thirty or more years, Slonimsky's memories have shaped the historiography of the PAAC; they have reinforced perceptions that it was not a real organization but rather a loose collection of free agents who presented a few concerts with limited significance in the early 1930s. Even Deane Root's 1972 study of PAAC activities identified only nineteen performances. This paper, which collates scattered archival evidence including correspondence, interviews, critical reviews, and extant programs, yields a fresh count of at least thirty-eight concerts and 170 distinct works by thirty-nine composers.

The PAAC's programming, which often presented distinct musical styles on the same concerts, differed from other organizations' presentations of American music in Europe. The Copland-Sessions concerts, begun in the same year, included music that, in Carol Oja's words, "emanated from similar, compatible forces . . . and assumed a definable shape." PAAC members, however, did not share a common set of musical values. Some experimented with new musical resources; others used their European training as a point of departure. Their collaboration evoked a utopian sense of unity by smoothing over difference, and their European programs were a bricolage of musical styles that reinforced the trailblazing, pioneer attitude on which the U.S. had fashioned its national spirit.

Their approach provoked mixed reactions in Europe. The 1931 Paris concerts were an undeniable success. Parisian reviewers reminisced about the sensational concerts of the 1910s and early '20s and related the diverse musical styles with ease. Conservative German critics in 1932, however, failed to find a spirit of *Kultur* among the works presented, which provoked strong negative reactions. The concerts there, however, left an indelible mark. As vehemently as Berlin's critics had railed against Slonimsky's concerts, for the next few seasons every concert of American music in Berlin was publicly compared to those events. Concerts in Madrid, Dessau, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and Hamburg showed varied degrees of success. This paper offers an overview of the reception of twelve European PAAC concerts between 6 June 1931 and 8 December 1932. In doing so, it contributes to a more complete narrative of the PAAC's history and an overdue reevaluation of the association's position in the fabric of modern musical life in the 1930s.

"'Pourquoi ajouter à qui n'a besoin de rien?': Debating Tradition and Innovation through Massenet and Saint-Saëns's Music for Racine"

Erin Brooks (Los Angeles)

In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, French artists and institutions attempted to reinvigorate national prestige through what Annegret Fauser has called "an explosion of the rhetoric of heritage." Many scholars have analyzed efforts to forge a French musical museum to compete with German and Italian traditions. Yet, as Katharine Ellis has noted, it was the Comédie-Française—and its uninterrupted repertoire of Racine, Corneille, and Molière—that epitomized the French cultural museum. Indeed, by the late nineteenth-century, classic French theatrical works had attained the crystallized perfection of cultural icons. As composer Alfred Bruneau wrote, "it is

precisely because *Phèdre* is fixed in our memory in a form that seems definitive that we are uneasy when things are changed."

This paper focuses on two early twentieth-century musical additions to the established performance tradition of *grand siècle* plays. Using previously undiscussed archival materials, I reveal how these scores aroused anxiety about cultural preservation, precisely because such innovations challenged the stability of the theatrical *patrimoine*. In 1899, Massenet composed an incidental music score to accompany Racine's *Phèdre*. This score attracted the attention of actress/manager Sarah Bernhardt, who incorporated Massenet's music into some of her repertoire performances of *Phèdre*. Bernhardt then commissioned Saint-Saëns to write incidental music for her 1903 production of Racine's *Andromaque*. Neither *Phèdre* nor *Andromaque* required diegetic musical insertions or had any history of musical accompaniment, so Massenet and Saint-Saëns's scores were completely new interpretative additions to these *tragédies*. Critical reaction to the music was decidedly mixed. Many critics felt Racine's verses were intrinsically musical—the lyrical voice of Bernhardt was the only necessary accompaniment. Critics were also disturbed by musical numbers which seemed to contaminate classical theater with boulevard aesthetics. Ultimately, most critics repudiated changes to Racine. As one reviewer concluded: "It is never a good idea to introduce music into a work which has not been conceived to include it, and this is even more true when this work is a masterpiece." Through these controversial scores, we gain a new perspective on French debates about national identity.

Toward A Working Analytical Definition of Postmodernism for Popular Music: Postmodern Architecture, Double-Coding, and Nirvana's "Come As You Are"

Brian Wright (University of Nevada, Reno)

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the release of Nirvana's album *Nevermind*. While originally projected to sell only a quarter of a million records *Nevermind* became an international phenomenon, going on to sell over 30 million records worldwide. Almost overnight, Nirvana was catapulted to the forefront of popular music, and this success came as a shock to both the band and their label. But just what accounted for this unexpected mainstream embrace remains unclear. I believe that an exploration of the reasoning behind the album's crossover appeal necessitates a discussion of postmodernism in popular music, and that Nirvana's musical aesthetic, with its intra- and extra-referentiality, exhibits a particularly postmodern sensibility. However, the definition of "postmodern music" has yet to be standardized in a practical way. The point of this paper, then, is twofold: First, I will work toward a more functional understanding of postmodernism in popular music by proposing an analytical framework that would define postmodernism as a style in specific, concise terms. Second, I will use this new framework to explain *Nevermind*'s unexpected commercial success. The framework I propose stems from the writings of postmodern architectural theorist Charles Jencks and builds upon work by music theorist Jane Clendinning. By favoring Jencks over literary theory, I have forgone an epistemological discussion of irony, parody, and pastiche in favor of Jencks' principles of pluralism, dissonant beauty, multivalence, anamnesis, reinterpreted tradition, and double-coding. I will then apply these six principles to the 1991 song "Come As You Are" in order to demonstrate how Nirvana's musical aesthetic appeals to a mass audience by operating on multiple semiotic levels. By examining the riff, tuning, technique, and timbral effects of the song, I will show how, like many examples of postmodern architecture, its double-coded nature provides it the ability to break into the mainstream while still appealing directly to a specific audience of insiders. Through this analysis I hope not only to explain Nirvana's crossover success, but also to show the usefulness of looking at popular music through the lens of postmodern architecture.

Afternoon Session

Numerical Structure and Rhetorical Gambits in Ars Antiqua Motets

Alejandro Planchart (University of California, Santa Barbara, Emeritus)

For some time scholars have recognized numerical and rhetorical structures in the fourteenth and fifteenth century motet repertory that some times have symbolic significance but in other cases may be a matter of what composers regarded the way a well made piece was supposed to be structured.

Traces of these procedures can be found in Ars Antiqua motets as well. They include proportional relationships between different statements of the color, manners of segmenting the cantus firmus, the overlapping phrase structures of the upper voices, and the relationship between some of these elements and the texts of the motet. As in fourteenth and fifteenth century motets, some of these procedures appear to have a symbolic or even affective meaning, and others appear to be part of their creators" concept of what a well made piece was. For obvious reasons, these traits can be found most often in motets composed "from scratch," rather than in those derived from preexisting clausulae, but even in this later repertory, particularly in cases where voices were added to a preexisting motet, these are intended to convey a symbolic message in their musical and metric structure complementing the text of the added voice in some cases, and in others (the "well made piece" approach) to add musical rhetoric subtlety to a preexisting work. All these cases present, essentially, a prehistory of the traits observable in the fourteenth and fifteenth century motet repertory.

This paper examines a number of Ars Antiqua motets from this point of view, ranging from some derived from clausulae, to full-blown Franconian and Petronian works, including one or two examples from Fauvel.

"The Most Powerful Human Sound Ever Created": Noise, Embodiment, and the Timbre of the Saxophonic Scream in Free Jazz

Zachary Wallmark (University of California, Los Angeles)

In 1965, the year of John Coltrane's unequivocal embrace of the free jazz movement, *Downbeat* magazine critics were intensely polarized over how to interpret the wild, chaotic, and noisy new sounds of the avant-garde. It was either "the most powerful human sound ever created," or it was the "most astounding piece of ugliness" ever foisted upon jazz fans (Mathieu 1965; Larken 1965). Furthermore, polarization of free jazz reception was fiercely *visceral*: listeners wrote of being either physically transported in ecstasy, or brutally assaulted, an extreme, binarized response that remains active today, fifty years on. In this paper, I examine the starkly divided reception of free jazz by focusing on its most characteristic, commented-upon, and instantly recognizable sound, the timbre of the *saxophonic scream* (as exemplified in the music of late Coltrane). Approaching this extreme timbre from the perspective of embodiment—both in its humanistic and empirical aspects—I argue that the breakdown of aural distinctions between "music" and "noise," a contestation that is centered at the loci of the body, operates to structure listener's physical, aesthetic, and moral responses to the "shrieks," "howls," and "screams" native to the genre, either compelling empathy in listeners or triggering its collapse.

Timbre remains "the least successfully theorized and analyzed of musical parameters" (Walser 1991). While notoriously elusive in general, this is especially the case when normative definitions of "musical" timbre are disrupted by "noise," a psychoacoustic category of sound that

strains against identification as musical code. The dichotomy of music/noise is operative not only in the reception literature of free jazz saxophone playing, moreover, but also in the structure of our neurophysiological reactions to sound. Drawing upon neuroimaging research into timbre perception, as well as theories relating human audition to the mirror neuron system, I argue that the timbre of the saxophonic scream is heard in distinctly embodied terms: indeed, it is perceived *as if* it were an actual screaming voice. Our aesthetic vulnerability to this particular timbre—whether interpreted positively (as music) or negatively (as unredeemable noise)—is bound up in a complex nexus of both innate biological responses and culturally inscribed modes of hearing.

The fact that timbre so often elides our conscious intellection makes it a particularly potent, highly visceral force in the formation of aesthetic judgments and, by extension, in the ways we empathize with the sounding presence of others. Timbre, as a sonorous reflection of vibrating, resonating corporeality, calls forth the bodies that produce it, bodies that are indelibly marked by gender, race, and a variety of other cultural categories. I close by briefly examining the ethical stakes involved in how we parse the music/noise binarism in the perception of particular polarizing timbres, both in free jazz and beyond. Timbre is not a neutral, unmarked category of sound; rather, it is deeply invested with both biologically- and culturally-situated meanings, and these values seep unconsciously to the surface when we form critical evaluations of music.

From *Swan Lake* to *Black Swan*: A Reinvention of Tchaikovsky's Music

Meghan Joyce (University of California, Santa Barbara)

The cultural context in which a piece of music was composed can be used to identify aspects in the musical text that would otherwise be meaningless. For music historians, the details of cultural contexts are critical. But for non-music scholars living in the 21st-century United States, these contexts are not only generally unknown, they are in many cases irrelevant. Signifiers that carried obvious rhetorical meanings for audiences in one historical context can be completely devoid of that meaning for today's audiences. Specifically, in the medium of film, the audience often encounters music without obvious references to its original contextual meanings. In this paper, I argue that one way for music from the past to have meaning for today's audiences is through the process of recontextualization in film music. This possibility is not limited to one tradition of music or, for that matter, to any particular new context, but this paper focuses on the use of Western art music in film, specifically composer Clint Mansell's use of Tchaikovsky's score for *Swan Lake* in the 2010 film *Black Swan.*

I begin by assessing the idea of recontextualization through the re-coding of associations with regard to the work of the French film theorist Christian Metz. One of Metz's main translators and commenters, Alfred Guzzetti, suggests that film – and by extension, art in general – is not just a signifier of the cultural context in which it was created; once viewed, it *acts* on its context. A film does not just reflect, it invents.

I offer *Black Swan* as an example of successful reinvention of music. Composer Clint Mansell and orchestrator/conductor Matt Dunkley use the score of *Swan Lake* to create that of *Black Swan*, blurring the boundaries between the diegetic music that accompanies the dancers during rehearsals and performances and the non-diegetic music that accompanies the world of the main character, Nina, outside of the production. The loss of the music's boundaries of diegesis accompanies the loss of Nina's boundaries of identity. But this loss of identity operates on another level: that of Tchaikovsky's score. *Black Swan* is more than one type of artwork (film) representing another (ballet). The musical score creates a cohesion between the world of *Swan Lake* the ballet and that of

Black Swan the film, and Tchaikovsky's score is reinvented. His music takes on the new associations of the film.

The implications of this reinvention of existing music might be a source of stress for some musicologists (and, of course, it might be dismissed as impossible by others). But I see it as one solution to an anxiety – namely, the impending death of the literate tradition of Western art music – that has been the preoccupation of music scholars for decades. The re-coding of music in the new context of a film is one way of reinventing music to make it relevant in new cultural contexts.

The Battle of the *Parsifal*s

Daniela Smolov Levy (Stanford University)

The controversy surrounding Metropolitan Opera manager Heinrich Conried's decision to stage Wagner's *Parsifal* in New York City in 1903, a decade prior to the expiration of the Bayreuth performance monopoly, spawned a variety of spin-offs of the music drama, both operatic and non-operatic, ranging from comedic to serious. One of the latter, an English version of the opera presented by Henry Savage's Boston-based touring English Grand Opera Company in 1904-05, quickly achieved national prominence and competed with Conried's Met production, which also toured many of the same cities.

Given the Savage company's reputation for presenting popular and affordable yet high-quality operas and operettas in English, both those originally in English (such as Gilbert & Sullivan) and translations of foreign works, it might seem surprising that the troupe would attempt as weighty a work as *Parsifal*. Even if *Parsifal*'s notoriety was sufficient inducement for Savage to present the opera in English, why didn't he take a more obviously populist stance, cutting down the unusually long work and maintaining his usual "popular prices"? How can we explain Savage's embrace of cultural elitism?

I argue that the reason Savage undertook and was so successful with *Parsifal* was that in America during this time, cultural elitism, ironically, also functioned as a form of populism. Even though Conried could claim cultural authenticity and promote his democratically-minded achievement of bringing the work to America as selling points for *Parsifal*, Savage had an advantage in providing an allegedly artistically comparable production but in the language of the majority of the American public – and at lower prices. As a result, the English production not only held its own, but in some places even was preferred to the Met's, since Savage was offering the non-elite public inexpensive and intellectually accessible opera free of socially elite features but chock-full of culturally elite ones. This blending and blurring of elite and mass elements in opera is also characteristic of broader social changes of the period at a time when non-elites aspired to emulate the genteel activities of elites, but on their own terms.

This paper begins by comparing the main features of the Conried and Savage *Parsifal* productions as related by the contemporary press and in memoirs of those involved in or otherwise close to the productions, focusing on both managers' efforts to recreate the Bayreuth experience. I then examine the reception of both *Parsifals* in several U.S. cities, demonstrating how the rhetoric and emphases of newspaper reports (and the Met's box office receipts) show the appeal of the cultural sophistication represented by *Parsifal* to diverse audiences.

Savage's *Parsifal* complicates the common assertion that opera was becoming increasingly exclusive in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Although highbrow in the sense of culturally elite, high-quality opera was also becoming increasingly inclusive as managers sought to make it more accessible to a broader public.