Duality in Igor Stravinsky’s Compositional Process as Seen in *The Nightingale* (1908-1914)

Igor Stravinsky’s opera *The Nightingale* (1908-1914), based on a fairy tale by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), provides a unique example of the composer’s evolving compositional process. Stravinsky finished the opera’s first act in 1908, but the commission of *The Firebird* (1910) delayed *The Nightingale’s* completion. Not until 1914, after the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* (1913), did Stravinsky complete his opera. The Nightingale holds significance because in the opera Stravinsky attempted to find his own voice while striving to abandon the influences of Romanticism. With the exception of Richard Taruskin’s analysis of selected musical sketches, the work has received limited in-depth scholarly attention. This may be due to the juxtaposition of Romantic and Modernist styles within the opera, resulting from the period of time separating the completion of the last two acts (1913-1914) from the first (1908). However, that abeyance in Stravinsky’s compositional process provides an opportunity to observe, in a single work, Stravinsky’s transition from Romanticism to Modernism. This paper provides an analysis of *The Nightingale* that examines passages which illustrate the duality between Stravinsky’s compositional styles, such as the contrast between the real and mechanical nightingales and the interactions between the characters of Death, the Emperor, and the real Nightingale. Set theory and Pieter van den Toorn’s observations about Stravinsky’s use of octatonicism and bitonality provide the framework for my analysis. An overview of elements in the work such as the exotic and magical, nature and art, and artifice and reality demonstrates further dualities.

Sounds Familiar: Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* as Janus

Premiered in Weimar and conducted by Richard Strauss on December 23, 1893, Engelbert Humperdinck’s fairy tale opera *Hänsel und Gretel* soon became a favorite the world over, especially at Christmas time, even though the opera is plainly set in the warm months of the year. Journalistic commentators and even musicologists who deign to do so have long noted that Humperdinck had been a disciple of Wagner, and that there are Wagnerian influences in *Hänsel und Gretel*: his use of the Leitmotiv, his setting of the orchestra, the witch’s broom-ride as a counterpart to the Ride of the Valkyries, and so forth.

There are, however, dozens of allusions to earlier works in the opera: the horns in the overture reflect the opening of Act 3 of *Die Meistersinger*; the mother’s lament over the family’s poverty comes from Sieglinde’s “Wehwald heisst du fürwahr” in *Die Walküre*; the father’s jovial arrival home has its precedent in Siegfried’s forging scene; a reference to the witch in the forest recalls
the giants in Das Rheingold. Out in the forest, the cuckoo call has its counterpart in the woodbird in Siegfried, but Gretel’s “Wo bin ich?” (Where am I) upon awaking is a direct quote from Agathe in the contest scene of Weber’s Der Freischütz. Indeed, the final two bars of Hänsel und Gretel, with their abrupt ending on a motive from the joyous finale, are modeled on the final two bars of Mozart’s Symphony No. 39.

But Janus-like, Hänsel und Gretel also looks forward to other works, notably Richard Strauss’s Der Rosenkavalier (1910-11). In an orchestral passage before the Hexenritt (witch’s ride), Humperdinck used a chord that Strauss borrowed for his presentation of the rose, and the famous waltz in Rosenkavalier is modeled on the peasant waltz (even Ländler) that Humperdinck provides after the witch’s death. And the final ensemble of predominantly high voices in Hänsel und Gretel is surely reflected in the final trio and duet for Sophie, Octavian, and the Marschallin in Der Rosenkavalier.

Humperdinck obviously delighted in integrating his allusions to earlier works by Wagner, Weber, and Mozart within the fabric of Hänsel und Gretel (indeed, finding one is like opening one of the many doors on an Advent calendar), and Strauss obviously enjoyed conducting it to the extent that he integrated his own allusions to it in Der Rosenkavalier seventeen years later. No wonder it all sounds familiar!

Michael Boyd Chatham University
Formal Discomfort: The Afghan Whigs’ “My Curse”

The Afghan Whigs were a critically acclaimed, influential American rock band active primarily during the 1990s. This group was loosely associated with grunge rock as the first non-Seattle band signed by Sub-Pop, and drew significant influence from classic R&B, 1980s underground/indie rock, and punk. The Whigs are best known for two albums from the middle of the decade, Gentlemen (1994) and Black Love (1996), which are noted for their extremely dark, intense character. This quality was rife throughout popular culture from that time, though arguably heightened in this band’s music. On the surface, gloom is clearly projected through biting lyrics, singer Greg Dulli’s raspy screams, bombastic drums, and distorted guitars. However, two songs from Gentlemen, “My Curse” and “Now You Know,” articulate this character through unusual formal structures that problematize one’s ability to predict musical events. I assert that in popular genres where standard song forms are common, such structures can potentially engender a feeling of discomfort that echoes the larger thematic trajectory of these albums. This paper explores this phenomenon as it is realized in “My Curse,” a song that largely avoids lyrical and melodic repetition. In this song, verse-like sections proceed normally, repeating melodic material and varying text, while the sections that sound like choruses due to higher vocal tessitura and thicker instrumental texture never repeat melody or text. In fact, text is not repeated at all until the song’s final section where the lyrics and melodic contour of the first verse are heard again, though paired with the vocal register and instrumental texture of the chorus-like sections. The idiosyncratic use of repetition in this final section both synthesizes many of the song’s previously disparate elements and calls into question notions of verse and chorus within “My Curse,” ultimately leaving the listener with a feeling of uncertainty.

Christopher Wilkinson West Virginia University
Conditions and Consequences: Why Big Bands Went to Black West Virginia in the 1930s

Between September, 1934, and April, 1942, ten black dance bands played a total of seventy-nine engagements in the coal fields of West Virginia, playing for African-American audiences made up
of miners and railroad workers and their spouses as well as members of the black middle class: mainly teachers, business people, and medical and legal professionals. In addition to bands led by Jimmie Lunceford, Andy Kirk, Chick Webb, Erskine Hawkins, Don Redman, “Fats” Waller, Cab Calloway, Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, and Duke Ellington, all based in New York or Kansas City, bands from Chicago and other midwest cities as well as from further south performed for the same audiences as well.

Beyond the fact that big-band jazz and dance music was all the rage in the course of the 1930's, Depression, a unique set of political and economic conditions have proven to have been the principal reasons for the successful establishment of this national musical culture within the company towns and county seats of West Virginia. This paper will present a summary of the evidence supporting the contention that the reasons why what might seem a musical style alien to the central Appalachians would be welcome in the Mountain State.

12:00 noon  LUNCH AND BUSINESS MEETING

2:00 p.m.  AFTERNOON PRESENTATIONS: Composers, Poetry, and Painting

Laura Youens  The George Washington University
Ezra Pound, Walter Morse Rummel, and the Troubadours

As an undergraduate student at Hamilton College in New York, Ezra Pound studied Provençal. His first publications in 1905 were astonishingly bold translations of troubadour poems. That same year, it is speculated that he might have met a young American pianist. Walter Morse Rummel, whose father Franz was also a pianist. Rummel would be sent to Paris to study, money no object, and he would spend the rest of his life in Europe. In 1910, Pound stayed with him in Paris, and, in 1911, began collaborative projects with him on troubadour songs. According to Humphrey Carpenter, author of the standard biography of Pound, their first such project, Three Songs of Ezra Pound, consisted of poems in “Provençal metre” set to melodies Pound “dictated out of his own head” with accompaniments provided by Rummel. Their next publication, the subject of this paper, was Hesternae Rosae: Neuf Chansons de Troubadours des XIIème et XIIIème Siècles pour une voix avec accompagnement de piano. Between Three Songs and Hesternae Rosae, the two had decided to set actual troubadour melodies.

Rummel wrote a lengthy preface to the collection. He and Pound had distinguished help. Michel Dimitri Calvocoressi, whom most musicologists know for his association with Ravel and his books on Russian composers, provided modern French translations of the nine poems, and the linguist Alfred Jeanroy steered them to musical sources. The cycle was not performed until 1918, and it has not been professionally recorded.

What I propose to do is to retrace Pound’s and Rummel’s steps from concept to the finished set and beyond. Some of the questions to be considered are: What sources did they use? What was their understanding of medieval rhythm? How did Rummel solve the problem of accompaniment? Was this an experiment that Pound tried again?

Jack Crotty  West Virginia University
The Poetic Narrative of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in A major, Op.101

For Beethoven’s friend, Karl Holz, what differentiated Beethoven’s instrumental music from Mozart’s was that each piece had a specific poetic basis. Writing in a conversation book of 1826, he says that “for one of your works a poet could only write one poem; while to a Mozart work he
could write three or four analogous ones.”1 Since Holz’s observation comes almost thirty years before the musical hermeneutics became fashionable in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and given that Beethoven often thought of himself not as a mere Komposit but a Tondichter, we must ask of ourselves what this poetic element might be within a textless musical composition. My presentation will demonstrate how a dramatic narrative can be uncovered in Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in A major, Op. 101, by drawing exclusively on evidence generated not through a literary, cultural, or musico-analytic theories of interpretation but from an artistic understanding of this work as a historically situated product of its time. An initial description of the material and formal causes of this composition elucidates cues that point directly to musical metaphors, conflicts, and resolutions which can be translated into the piece-specific poetic narrative Holz might have had in mind. Op. 101 turns on the subject-object dualism so common to scientific and philosophical thinking during the Goethezeit. The underlying driving force of the poetic aspect of this composition is the opposition between the inner world of cognition and the soul vs. the outer world of perception and empirical reality. The exposition and subsequent resolution of this conflict is discovered to have both general application to all artists at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and especially for a deaf musician who is of the world but not in it.

Elizabeth Hoover
University of Pittsburgh
Music in Terms of Painting, Painting in Terms of Music: A Comparative Analysis
Using the Aesthetic of Morton Feldman and Philip Guston

During the 1950s, New York City was the center of a unique merger between aural and visual approaches to artistic creation in America. This merger formed a tightly knit community of abstract expressionist painters such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Mark Rothko—often regarded as the “New York School” of painters—and the composers, John Cage, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff and Morton Feldman: they performed for each other, painted for one another, and explored the correlations between their visual and aural methods of composition. The similitude between music and painting became so intense that by 1964, the esteemed art critic and historian, Dore Ashton, commented: “It used to be a gaucherie to discuss music in terms of painting, but within the past ten years a whole generation of composers has led the way, comparing their new effects and methods to those of Jackson Pollock, Alexander Calder, and other contemporary artists.”

Although Cage, Brown and Wolff interacted frequently with the New York School of painters, it was Feldman who formed the most symbiotic relationship with the group in the 1950s, and especially with the abstract expressionist painter, Philip Guston. For a decade, the composer and artist exchanged ideas about process, form, compositional materials, and the perception of surface; however, the artistic creations that resulted during their exchange have never been compared analytically due to fundamental differences in media. This paper conducts an historical investigation of interviews, lectures, concert remarks and written essays by Feldman and Guston, and posits a terminology for the comparative analysis of works representative of the composer’s and artist’s aesthetic at the time: in this case, Feldman’s Intermission 6 (1953) and Guston’s To B.W.T. (1952).

Norris L. Stephens
University of Pittsburgh
The Remarkable Charles Avison (1709-1770): The Life and Venues of a Novacastrian Musician and Entrepreneur Part II: A Biographical Sketch of Charles Avison

This presentation will be emphasizing the life and works of Avison, who rose from a family of waits to become very wealthy and attain the status of gentleman. After receiving his musical training at home, and later in London under Francesco Geminiani, he returned to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1735 to begin a musical career as “Organist of Newcastle.”
Within a short time he became involved in directing a musical society, teaching various musical instruments, composing and arranging, and making frequent contributions to the weekly newspapers. Most notable of the literary works is the “Essay on Musical Expression,” which is the first publication in English on musical aesthetics. His writings continued to be popular throughout the nineteenth century. His published musical compositions can be divided into concertos and sonatas. He was the most important English composer of the concerto grosso, with more than 80 works. His sonatas for harpsichord and strings were the earliest of that genre. Many of these works became very popular and were still performed along with the works of Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart. He was a master tunesmith, filling the musical needs of the rising middle class in England.

5:00 p.m.       ADJOURNMENT