

MU 111

MUSIC IN OUR LIVES – Spring 2021

Seminar Leader: Robert Martin

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Office Hours: by appointment (martin@bard.edu)

Course Description

Taking advantage of the rich musical life of Berlin, we will make field trips to attend concerts, masterclasses, and open rehearsals throughout the city. We will also explore digital access to musical performances, something that has developed rapidly since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Choice of events to attend, in person or virtually, will depend on the interests of the class and the availability of free or low-cost tickets. Venues may include the Hans Eisler School of Music, the University of the Arts, the Barenboim-Said Akademie, the Berlin Philharmonie, Berlin Konzerthaus, jazz clubs, and other venues. We will read and discuss works in the philosophy and history of music, and fiction about music. Two pieces of writing are required, one a review of a concert, the other an essay linking a musical event we attended to one of the course readings.

Enrollment is not restricted to students who play a musical instrument. However, for those who do, a special additional weekly session may be arranged in which we play for each other, either alone or in small chamber music ensembles, with the goal of presenting an informal public concert at the end of the semester.

Requirements

1. Responses to reading questions (Google Classroom)
2. A presentation (approx. 45 min): a piece of music with background, listening and discussion
3. Two papers, one a review/reflection/report of a concert (approx. 3 pages), the other a piece that links a concert with one of our readings (approx. 5 pages).

Paper due dates:

Paper 1: Friday, 26 March

Paper 2: Friday, 21 May

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the

equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021: Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Grade Breakdown (approx.)

1. On-time responses to reading questions: 20%
2. Class participation: 20%
3. Presentation: 30%
4. Two papers: 30%

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Schedule

Spring classes start on Monday, February 1 and run until Friday, May 14 with spring break planned from March 29 – April 5. Completion week is from May 17 through May 21. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Wk 1 3 Feb.

Introductions. Each student should come to class with a proposal (perhaps several alternatives) for a piece of music that she or he will present to the class later in the

semester. We will set up dates for these presentations. The presentations will include historical and cultural background information. They may involve fieldtrips to hear a performance if the student takes the lead in arranging the fieldtrip. Without a fieldtrip, the presentation should be about 45 minutes, including the introduction, the music, and discussion,

Wk 2 10 Feb.

Reading: Beethoven Heiligenstadt Testament
<https://www.beethoven.ws/heiligenstadt-testament/>
The Beethoven Quartet Handbook, sections by Michael Steinberg on the late quartets and on Op. 132

Music Beethoven Quartet in A minor, Op. 132

Wk 3 17 Feb.

Guest: Benjamin Hochman

Reading: tbd

Music: Mozart Symphony No. 41 in C major, K 551 (“Jupiter”)

Wk 4 24 Feb.

Guest: Elizabeth Richter

Reading: Plato, Symposium <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>
Leonard Bernstein biographical sketch <https://leonardbernstein.com/about>

Music: Bernstein, Serenade, after Plato’s Symposium
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpROC4gsZhQ>

Wk 5 3 March

Reading: Charles Rosen *Piano Notes*, Ch. 4: “Conservatories and Contests”

Music: tbd

Wk 6 9 March

Reading: Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (Penguin Classics Edition, trans. by David McDuff from the Russian, originally published in 1889)

Music: Beethoven, Sonata in A Major, Op. 47, for violin and piano (“Kreutzer Sonata”) We will have a live performance of the Beethoven sonata performed by Yezu Woo and Tomoki Park.
Janacek, String Quartet No. 1 (“The Kreutzer Sonata”)

Wk 7 17 March

Guest: Amadeus Wiesensee

Reading: Kant, excerpts from *The Critique of Pure Reason*
Schiller, excerpts from *Letters on the Aesthetic Education*
William Kinderman, “Overture” in *Beethoven*, 2nd edition (Oxford Press, 2009), pp. 3-15;

Music: Beethoven Piano Sonata Op. 111 (perf. By Amadeus Wiesensee)

Symphony 9

Wk 8 24 March

Guest: Paul Festa, Paradoxes for violin: contrapuntalism for a single-voiced instrument and the secular "sonata da chiesa"

Reading: "Anatomy of a Fugue," Timothy A. Smith

<http://www.kunsterfuge.com/theory/smith/anatomy.htm>

Music:

- Johann Paul von Westhoff, Six Suites for Solo Violin (c. 1696, excerpts)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKBeXONozEA>
- JSB, Sonata #3 in C major for violin alone (1720)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oNBktYlGgQ&vl=en>
- Béla Bartok, Sonata, Violin solo (1944, Fugue)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhO7n7PgHgY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A07jFdU0cO>

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[Wk 9 SPRING BREAK]

Wk 10 7 April

Guest: Paul Festa, Pre-bird Messiaen

Reading:

- Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, 483 – 490
- Hill & Simeone, *Messiaen* (excerpts)

Music:

- Claude Debussy, selected preludes (1910/12)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcnYbpJhpN4>
- OM, "The Celestial Banquet" (1928)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w6k4DQeb9s>
- OM, selected preludes (1929)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2pwTP7g7xE>
- OM, "L'Ascension" for organ (1932-33)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icCQu1FCtfQ>

Wk 11 14 April

Guest: Paul Festa, Avian Messiaen

Reading: Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, 490 – 514

Hill & Simeone, *Messiaen* (excerpts)

Music:

- "Quartet for the End of Time" (1941, excerpts)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FvEWsIVRRM>
- "Colors of the Celestial City" (1963)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5tyYj-v2AM>

- Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà (1991)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EA53UMx7dHY>

Wk 12 21 April

Reading: Haruki Murakami, *Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa* (2016)
Music: tbd

Wk 13 28 April

Reading: Leon Botstein, “The Aesthetics of Assimilation and Affirmation: Reconstructing the Career of Felix Mendelssohn” in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (1991)
Music: Mendelssohn, Trio in c minor, Op. 66 for piano, violin and cello (1845). It is possible that we will have a live performance of the Mendelssohn Trio performed by Benjamin Hochman, Viviane Hagner, and Robert Martin.

Wk 14 5 May

Reading:, “The Quartets in Performance” by Robert Martin in *The Beethoven Quartet Handbook*
Music: selected Sequoia Quartet recordings

Wk 15 12 May

Student paper presentations

Books to purchase:

Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (Penguin Classics Edition, trans. by David McDuff from the Russian, originally published in 1889)
Haruki Murakami, *Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa*, English Edition (2016)

Books on reserve in the Library

R. Winter and R. Martin, eds. *The Beethoven Quartet Companion* (Univ. of California Press, 1990)
C. Rosen, *Piano Notes: The Hidden World of the Pianist* (Penguin Books, 2004)
H. Murakami, *Absolutely Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa*, trans. Jay Rubin (Vintage Books, 2016)

A. Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the 20th Century* (Harper Collins, 2007)
A. Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories* (Penguin Classics, 2008)