

Course: Experimental Forms in Literature, Music and Film

1st semester, 2013- 2014
Seminar, 4 semester hours

Prof. Judit Frigyesi
Tel: 054-7595107
Email: FrigyesiJudit@gmail.com

The course will be held in English

Reception time
By appointment only

The aim of the seminar

The aim of the seminar is to teach us understand more deeply how we experience music and in what manner we can interpret the meaning of a musical composition. Pieces which present us with something outside the tradition have often been called “experimental.” The usual manners of analyses often fail when discussing such compositions which challenge one to devise new techniques of analysis and interpretation. Such “exercise”, in turn, will prepare one to deal with the “traditional” pieces of the past eras in a deeper manner. I believe that in a sense every new art work is experimental. For the topic of this seminar, however, I have chosen works that had been considered “experimental”, and within this vast pool of pieces, those which address a central experience of the modern era (from the 18th century till the end of the 20th), namely, a feeling of being lost: that one can no longer make sense out of the surrounding world – of reality. Although the course will cover a variety of works, not all of them will be analyzed and discussed at depth. The readings are generally suggestive providing background material; some of them, however, will be assigned for the discussion in class.

Overview of the course

- I. Introduction – Search for the meaning of “experimental” (Classes 1-2):
Joseph Haydn and the 20th century (with extension to the visual arts)
- II. The home and the abyss (Classes 3-4):

Franz Schubert and Arnold Schoenberg

III. The drama of simple objects (Classes 5-7):
Morton Feldman and Frank O'Hara

→ Discussion and conclusions concerning the issues raised so far (Class 8)

IV. The world as a labyrinth (Classes 9-11):
Béla Bartók and Bruno Schultz

→ Independent meetings and project discussion (Class 12)

V. Cinema as experimental musical form with concluding discussion (Class 13-14)
Dziga Vertov and Elizaveta Svilova

Tentative syllabus

I. Introduction – Search for the meaning of “experimental”: Joseph Haydn and the 20th century (with extension to the visual arts)

Class 1:

“Experimental” and the concepts of “listening,” “drama” and “message” in the musical process

1. The Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
The “experimental”/“workshop” sonatas (Sonatas No. 20-34, 1765-1772)
2. Eric Satie (1886-1925):
Parade, large orchestra (1917/1917) and *Socrate*, voice and small orchestra (1918/1919)

Class 2:

“Experimental”: technique/structure or message?

1. Edgard Varèse (1883-1965):
Poème électronique, for tracks of organized sound on magnetic tape, 1958.
with discussion of Ferrara’s article
2. “Breaking the norm” in the visual arts and stage/costume design: concepts, trends,
parody, dyslexia, etc.
Art nouveau and secession
Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008)
Boris Aronson (1898-1980)

Readings:

Somfai, László. *The Keyboard Sonatas of Joseph Haydn*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, ²2010. Chapter 10/1-4: The Mature Solo Piano Sonatas: A Survey with Historical Hypothesis, pages 159-170.

Ferrara, Lawrence. 1970. “Phenomenology as a Tool for Musical Analysis,” *Musical Quarterly*, 1970/3, 355-373.

Satie, Eric. *A Mammal's Notebook – Collected Writings of Erik Satie*, ed. Ornella Volta, transl. Anthony Melville.

Kovalenko Georgui, Hillel Kazovsky. *Boris Aronson – Der Yidish Teater*. Galerie Minotaure, Tel Aviv-Paris, 2010.

II. The home and the abyss:
Franz Schubert and Arnold Schoenberg

Class 3: Conventional surface versus “experimental” drama

1. Franz Schubert (1797-1828): *Four Impromptus, Opus posth. 142 (D 935, 1827)/I.*
2. *Four Impromptus, Opus posth. 142 (D 935, 1827)*
Overall plan of the “movements” with discussion of Daverio’s and Fisk’s essays

Class 4/1: Eliminating the surface: composing “the drama from within”

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
Erwartung, monodrama for soprano and orchestra, Op. 17 (1909)

Class 4/2: Searching for *our home* or the drama of the concert/CD

– superposing Schubert on Schoenberg
Thomas Larcher’s recording of Schoenberg’s *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11 (1909) with
Schubert’s *Drei Klavierstücke* D. 946 (1828)

Readings:

John Daverio, “The gestus of remembering: Schumann’s critique of Schubert’s Impromptus, D. 935,” Chapter 2 in *Crossing Path: Schubert, Schumann and Brahms* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 47-62.

Charles Fisk, *Returning Cycles: Contexts for the Interpretation of Schubert's Impromptus and Last Sonatas* (California Studies in Nineteenth Century Music, California University Press, 2001): Chapter 6: “Displacing the Sonata: The Opus 142 Impromptus,” pages 141-178,

Arnold Schoenberg, “Style and Idea” in *Style and Idea – Selected Writings* by Arnold Schoenberg, ed. Leonard Stein.

III. The drama of simple objects:
Morton Feldman and Frank O’Hara

Class 5: When nothing else, only “the notes happen”

1. Morton Feldman, John Cage, the painters, and new ideals of seeing/listening/drama
2. Morton Feldman (1926-87)
The Viola in My Life [I], fl, vn, va, vc, perc, 1970.
The Viola in My Life [II], fl, cl, pf, perc, vn, va, vc, 1970; 3 Cl, Vc and Pf, 1971.
The Viola in My Life [III], va, pf, 1970.
The Viola in my Life [IV], va, orch, 1971.
(with focus on the first movement)

Class 6: The drama of silence – what is minimalism?

1. In-depth analysis of the drama in Feldman's *The Viola in My Life/I*.
2. Readings from the writings of Feldman and introduction to Frank O'Hara (1926-66)

Class 7: the kaleidoscope of everyday objects as drama

1. Analysis of selected poems from *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*. ed. Donald Allen (New York, 1971; Berkeley, 1995)
2. Student projects: Frank O'Hara

Readings:

Feldman, Morton. *Give my regards to Eighth Street: collected writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. B. H. Friedman, afterword by Frank O'Hara. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000. (ML 410 F45 A25)

Feldman, Morton. *Morton Feldman says: selected interviews and lectures 1964-1987*, ed. Chris Villars. London: Hyphen Press, 2006. (ML 410 F45 A5)

O'Hara, Frank. *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. Donald Allen. New York, 1971; Berkeley, 1995.

Perloff, Marjorie. *Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

See also analysis by Perloff on the internet:

http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/ohara/ohara.htm

→ Discussion and independent meetings (Class 8)

IV. The world as a labyrinth Béla Bartók and Bruno Schultz

Class 9:

1. The problem of the ending of a drama in 19th and 20th-century instrumental music
2. Béla Bartók (1881-1945): String Quartet no.3, 1927

Class 10:

1. Student projects: Bartók's *String Quartet no.3/III*
2. Class discussion of Bartók's *String Quartet no.3, 1927/III*
Introduction to the art of Bruno Schultz

Class 11:

1. Bruno Schultz (1892 - 1942): "July Night"
2. Bruno Schultz: sections from the "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" together with the interpretation of the 1937 Polish film by Wojciech Jerzy Has (1973)

Readings:

Frigyesi, Judit. Béla Bartók and turn-of-the-century Budapest. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998/2000.

About Bartók's concept for the drama in instrumental music: chapter 5.

About the symbols of Bartók's "night/music" slow movements: chapters 6-7-(8).

Bruno Schultz's writings:

(a) *The Complete Fiction of Bruno Schulz*. New York, 1989.

(b) Polish text with English translation by Celina Wieniewska:

http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/web/arts_culture/literature/fiction/schulz/B.htm

(c) English translation by John Curran Davis:

<http://www.schulzian.net/translation/shops.htm>

Bruno Schultz's drawings:

<http://www.brunoschulzart.org/>

Ficowski, Jerzy. *Regions of the Great Heresy: Bruno Schulz, a Biographical Portrait*. Transl. Theodosia Robertson. New York-London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003.

Banks, Brian R. *Muse and Messiah: The Life, Imagination and Legacy of Bruno Schulz*. Inkermen Press, UK: 2006.

→ Independent meetings and project discussion (Class 12)

V. Cinema as experimental musical form and concluding discussion Dziga Vertov and Elizaveta Svilova

Class 13/1-2:

Viewing and discussion of

Dziga Vertov (edited by Elizaveta Svilova): Man with a movie camera (Человек с киноаппаратом), 1929: <http://www.zappinternet.com/video/VaScQukFag/Dziga-Vertov->

Class 14: Concluding discussion and if time permits:

Viewing and discussion of

(1) Bruce Baillie (1931-): Castro Street, 1966

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2dbtk_castro-street-bruce-baillie_shortfilms

(2) D. A. Pennebaker (1925-) Daybreak Express, 1953

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6174287280331738768#>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2oHTYkYm8s>

(3) Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe 1989 – 2009:

<http://transitland.eu/>

Requirements:

- (1) preparation for the classes
 - a. bringing to class the musical score and/or the text assigned
 - b. reading, listening to, and analyzing the work assigned for the class according to directions
- (2) participation in class discussion
- (3) preparation for the independent meetings/exams
- (4) independent research
- (5) written project = final work.

All students are required to have their own personal copy of the works studied in this class and must and other texts assigned and have to come to the class with the section of the assigned pieces prepared according to schedule!

Missing a class: the student is responsible to record the class and prepare its material for the exam.

No late arrival!

Grading:

Preparation and participation (see below: 40%), independent research (60 %)

Grades:

Above 92: present in every class, no late arrival for any class, prepared the scores/materials for all classes, prepared for independent meetings/exam/project discussions, demonstration of the knowledge of the material, originality and depth in independent research.

80-91: missing 1 class, 1 late arrival, prepared the scores/materials for all classes, prepared for independent meetings/exam/project discussions, minor lacunae in the knowledge and comprehension of the material, less originality and depth in research.

70-79: missing 2 classes, 1 late arrival, prepared the scores/materials for all classes, prepared for independent meetings/exam/project discussions, considerable problems with the knowledge and comprehension of the material, little originality/depth in research.

60-69: missing 3 classes, 1 late arrival, prepared the scores/materials for all classes, less than 2 independent meetings/exam each semester, insufficient knowledge of the material, no originality/depth in research.

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY:

WORKS DISCUSSING THE CONCEPT OF EXPERIMENTAL

1. Music

Ballantine, Christopher. 1977. "Towards an Aesthetic of Experimental Music". *The Musical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (April): 224–46.

Benitez, Joaquim M. 1978. "Avant-Garde or Experimental? Classifying Contemporary Music". *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 9, no. 1 (June): 53–77.

Ferrara, Lawrence. 1970. "Phenomenology as a Tool for Musical Analysis," *Musical Quarterly*, 1970/3, 355-373.

Holmes, Thomas B. 2008. *Electronic and Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology and Composition*. Third edition. London and New York: Routledge.

Saunders, James. 2009. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*. Aldershot, Hants, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Shultis, Christopher. 1998. *Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the American Experimental Tradition*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Smith Brindle, Reginald. 1987. *The New Music: The Avant-Garde Since 1945*, second edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Sutherland, Roger, 1994. *New Perspectives in Music*. London: Sun Tavern Fields.

2. Literature:

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana, 1977. 142-48.

---. "Theory of the Text." *Untying The Text*. Ed. Robert Young. London: Routledge, 1981. 31-47.

Bohn, W., *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).

Bolter, Jay David. *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991.

Coover, Robert. "The End of Books." *The New York Times Book Review* (21 June 1992): 1+.
Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1976.

---. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1978.

Jackson, D., Vos, E., and Drucker, J., eds., *Experimental - Visual - Concrete: avant-garde poetry since the 1960s* (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

Kostelanetz, R., ed., *The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1982).

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *In the Labyrinth*. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

Solt, M.E., ed., *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968).

Spencer, H., ed., *The Liberated Page* (San Francisco: Bedford Press, 1987).

3. Film

Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond* (MIT, 1977).

Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema*, Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Berkeley, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2005 and 2006).

Scott MacDonald, *Avant-Garde Film: Motion Studies* (Cambridge, 1993).

James Peterson, *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema* (Detroit, 1994).

Michael O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions* (London, 2003).

Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Exploding Eye: A Re-Visionary History of 1960s American Experimental Cinema*. (Albany, NY. State University of New York Press, 1997)