MUS 10b — What to Listen for in Music: an Ears-on Approach Without Notation

Spring, 2017

Class Schedule: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-320pm

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Professor Joshua Gordon   gordon@brandeis.edu
Office: Slosberg 126b   Office hours: BY APPOINTMENT, drop in office hours TBA pending
cello lesson scheduling for spring 2017 semester.

Your TA: Richard Chowenhill   richardchowenhill@brandeis.edu
Office hours: BY APPOINTMENT, drop in times TBA

Required Textbook/Resources:
• Required Textbooks (Mass market paperback):
    Amazon: http://a.co/7UJda3A
    Website: http://daniellevitin.com/publicpage/books/this-is-your-brain-on-music/, at
    Amazon: http://a.co/bsSd9pE
    Website: http://us.macmillan.com/therestisnoise/alexross, at
    Amazon: http://a.co/5bqrsIg

You can purchase them from the Brandeis University Bookstore if they have arrived, or order any
of these titles from online sources such as Amazon or Barnes and Noble. All three titles are also
digitally available using the Barnes and Noble Nook or the Amazon Kindle, or the Nook / Kindle
apps on the OS of your choice.

If you go the digital route, I do recommend a decent size screen as there will be some diagrams
that will not look good squeezed into smartphone dimensions.
• All other required listening and/or viewing (video) will be assigned and posted on
  LATTE.

CLASS DESCRIPTION

We all have different reasons for wanting to experience music. Those of us who have made music
our profession have had different paths leading us there, and different degrees of training. To be a
professional instrumentalist or composer requires a detailed knowledge of music notation, as that
is how we performers translate the intention of the composer who notates every aspect of the score
into a sound that hopefully will convince you the listener of the composer’s intent and expression,
and the work’s intrinsic musical character. For many of us, the training to understand notation
goes back to our childhood years; in my case, I grew up with three other performers (mother,
father, brother) with one being a composer (father) in the house, so I absorbed music first by ear,
then by being exposed to notation. But is it necessary for every listener to understand music
notation in order to appreciate the combined efforts of composer and performer? Certainly as
musicians, we are all for musical literacy, and encourage it. But music can also be an oral and
aural tradition, and many types of folk and vernacular music have been passed down without the
benefit of notation, while attracting a wide audience.
When we attend a play or musical, we don’t follow the script while sitting in the theater. We react to the acting, the words of the script, the scenery and lighting, the atmosphere which sets the scene for the action on stage, or the choreography of the actors. We might find ourselves startled by our reaction to what happened on stage, and perhaps a repeated viewing of the play might give us insight as to what we were reacting to the first time – an actress’ particular turn of a phrase, an actor’s relishing the bite of a particular word, a sharp change of tone, a devilish moment of double entendre in the writing, the introduction of a conflict, or a flamboyant entrance. We can listen to music just as intently without having to follow the score. As the audience for art music composed for classical instruments has declined, it is easy to blame the lack of music education in the public schools and the dominance of popular culture. But the same elements and expression that draw listeners into popular music exist just as readily in composed art music, varied perhaps by the work’s stylistic period, or the scale of its musical narrative, or the timbre of a particular set of instruments.

So this course is a kind of hybrid, and one for which I found no existing textbooks that covered the approach I’d like to take. I assume that most of you in this class are not music students and haven’t had much study of music notation. My goal in this course is to help you train year ear to recognize various fundamental elements that make up music from the Western tradition to help you better understand and experience the musical character and expression that comes across in each work. While I’m not asking you to use written notation, there will be plenty of ear training exercises and several quizzes to monitor your progress. Some of you will find ear training easy, others will have to practice hard at it. It is similar to developing your ear to understand any kind of foreign language. I will incorporate musical examples throughout the course, but the ear training and learning of fundamental elements by ear will be front loaded in the schedule, while the more in depth listening of longer works will be in the later part of the semester.

Goals of the course:

- To listen deeply
- To appreciate the invention and emotional depth of the composer’s creation
- To not be intimidated by a lack of prior musical training when approaching complex composed music

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, assignments, ear training exercises, preparation for quizzes, etc.).

ASSESSMENTS, ETC.

OF THE POSSIBLE TOTAL POINTS:

- Each written assignment will be worth 5 points
- Each quiz will be worth 10 points
- Grade will be based on the total of the above
- Poor attendance will affect your grade
- Participation will boost your grade (and make a better class for everyone)

- Ancillary Materials (Required at each class meeting): Paper for notes, exercises, and assignments, and a pencil. For ear training exercises done in the classroom I will use classroom A/V equipment or instruments (piano or cello). Access to a computer for homework and ear training exercises is essential.
- From the Office of Academic Affairs:
  - “Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person--be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner--without proper acknowledgement of
that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student.

- “Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask.

- **Attendance Policy:**
  - **It is your responsibility to make up what you have missed when you do not attend class.** There will be sign in sheets. **It is YOUR responsibility, not mine or the TA’s, to make sure you sign in every class.** We need every minute. You may accumulate three unexcused absences without penalty; after three, your final grade for the course will be docked 5 points for each class missed. (A 90 becomes an 85.) Please arrive to class on time. Three instances of lateness will amount to one unexcused absence. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor and make arrangements to make up any missed assignments or quizzes.

**Quizzes**

*Yes, there are quizzes to check your progress with ear training.* These happen regularly, so practice your ear training homework, and don’t miss class as it will be difficult to find time to make up any missed quizzes.

**Participation**

A strong level of participation matters as it makes the entire class more engaging for all. It can have an effect on your grade, especially if it is thoughtful. I know that there are varying comfort levels, especially with large class discussion, so there are a number of ways that you can participate and have it impact your grade in a positive way:

- Class discussions
- Engagement in class
- Attending concerts that are relevant to the class.

See LATTE site for

- Updated class schedule, with access to supplementary reading/listening/viewing
- Computer in the classroom policy
- Other course expectations

If you are a student with a **documented disability** on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the professor immediately. **Retroactive accommodations cannot be provided.**

**Class Schedule: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-320pm.** Schedule is estimated. All scheduled items subject to change. All assigned reading and assignments should be finished in advance of the scheduled class meeting.

---

1. **Wednesday, January 18 (add-drop): Intro, live solo cello playing, Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony first movement and discussion**
   - i. About the course
   - ii. What’s your music? Ideas collected for presenting to class later in semester
   - iii. A mystery cello piece to be played live
   - iv. Initial reactions, discussion of musical elements and character (we will return to other examples in depth later in the semester)
   - v. Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony first movement played
vi. Initial reactions, discussion of musical elements and character (we will return to it more in depth later in the semester)

vii. Assignment for next class: Reading (Levitin, pp. 1-53) and listening/watching associated performances (audio examples: Miles Davis “So What” from “Kind of Blue”, others, youtube, etc., to be posted on Latte)

   i. Discussion of reading
   ii. Summarizing the basic elements: tone, pitch, rhythm, tempo, contour, timbre, loudness, spatial origin, reverberation
   iii. Summarizing relationships: meter, key, melody, harmony
   iv. Ear training 1: recognizing and counting simple rhythm, clapping exercises

   v. Assignment for next class: Reading (Copland – pp. 3-48) and listening/writing assignment for rhythm and rhythmic character (5 pts)

3. Wednesday, January 25 (add-drop): Rhythmic perception: hearing the difference between simple and compound meter
   i. Discussion of reading
   ii. Defining compound meter
   iii. Ear training 2: exercises in recognizing meters with listening examples
      1. Playlist:
         a. Mendelssohn Scottish symphony

   iv. Assignment for next class: Reading (Levitan – pp. 55-80) and listening/writing assignment for rhythm and rhythmic character (5 pts)

4. Monday, January 30 (last day for add-drop): Ear training quiz 1 (on rhythmic perception); more ear training for direction of pitch; learning the keyboard; half steps and whole steps
   i. Ear training quiz 1 - recognizing simple meter vs. compound meter (10 pts)
   ii. Hands on demonstration of piano keyboard layout and note identification
   iii. Explanation of half steps and whole steps using piano keyboard
   iv. Ear training 3: pitch direction, half steps and whole steps

   v. Assignment for next class: Ear training practice at http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training (exercises to be specified)

5. Wednesday, February 1: learning scales using the piano keyboard (acoustic, digital, or paper diagram); beginning solfege with movable do
   i. Hearing the difference between minor and major scales
   ii. Learning the solfege syllables for movable do
   iii. Transposing scales to other keys on piano
   iv. Ear training 4: major and minor scale recognition
   v. Listening to musical examples differentiating between major and minor keys

   vi. Assignment for next class: Ear training practice at http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training (exercises to be specified)

6. Monday, February 6: Ear training quiz 2 (on pitch direction, half and whole steps, major and minor scales); Building intervals on piano
   i. Ear training quiz 2 - recognizing pitch direction, differentiating between half and whole steps, differentiating between major and minor scales, major and minor keys in recorded examples (10 pts)
   ii. Hearing minor and major thirds; fourths (perfect, augmented)
iii. Assignment for next class: Ear training practice at
http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training (exercises to be specified)

7. Wednesday, February 8: More intervals; using melodies for interval recognition; Kodaly method hand positions
   i. Hearing fifths (perfect, diminished); minor and major sixths; minor and major sevenths; octaves
   ii. Using well known songs and melodies to recall intervals
   iii. Using Kodaly method hand positions to reinforce interval recognition and tonal relationships in scales

   iv. Assignment: Reading (Copland – pp. 49-60) and ear training practice at
       http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training (exercises to be specified)

8. Monday, February 13: Ear training quiz 3 (on intervals from thirds to octaves); Folk song melodies
   i. Ear training quiz 3 - intervals from thirds to octaves (10 pts)
   ii. American folk song melody examples deconstructed with intervals
   iii. Class singing of American folk songs slowly using Kodaly hand positions
   iv. Discussion on phrasing

   v. Assignment: listening / writing assignment on interval profile of folk songs (5 pts)

9. Wednesday, February 15: More song melodies deconstructed by intervals
   i. A cross-section of song melodies deconstructed by intervals and rhythm (Mozart opera arias, Schubert lieder, Irving Berlin, the Beatles, Michael Jackson)

   ii. Assignment: listening / writing assignment for intervals corresponding with text of song lyrics (5 pts)

FEBRUARY BREAK

10. Monday, February 27: Hearing Harmony: Triads
    i. Explanation of major, minor, augmented and diminished triads using piano keyboard
    ii. Explanation of open and closed position triads using piano keyboard
    iii. Ear training exercises for recognition of triads

    iv. Assignment: Reading (Copland, pp. 61-78) and ear training practice at
        http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training or musictheory.net (exercises to be specified)

11. Wednesday, March 1: More on triads: hearing inversions
    i. Inversions of triads explained using piano keyboard
    ii. Musical examples played (recording excerpts) showing use of triads in all positions
    iii. Ear training exercises for recognition of triads in inversions

    iv. Assignment: ear training practice at http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training or musictheory.net (exercises to be specified)

12. Monday, March 6: Ear training quiz 4 (on triads); Hearing Harmony: Seventh chords
    i. Ear training quiz 4 - major, minor, augmented, and diminished triads (10 pts)
    ii. Explanation of minor, major, dominant, diminished, and half-diminished seventh chords using piano keyboard
iii. Ear training exercises for recognition of seventh chords

iv. Assignment: ear training practice at http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training or musictheory.net (exercises to be specified)

13. Wednesday, March 8: More on seventh chords: hearing inversions
i. Inversions of seventh chords explained using piano keyboard
ii. Musical examples played (recording excerpts) showing use of seventh chords in all positions
iii. Ear training exercises for recognition of seventh chords in inversions

iv. Assignment: ear training practice at http://www.earbeater.com/online-ear-training or musictheory.net (exercises to be specified)

14. Monday, March 13: Ear training quiz 5 (on seventh chords); hearing chord progressions
i. Chord progressions explained using piano keyboard
ii. Concept – harmonic motion (Beethoven: Hammerklavier piano sonata first movement)
iii. Musical examples played (recording excerpts) showing use of chord progressions

iv. Assignment: reading (Copland, pp. 78-112)

15. Wednesday, March 15: More on hearing chord progressions; hearing timbre / tone color;
   i. Ear training exercises: identifying basic chord progressions by ear
   ii. Other keyboards before the synthesizer: harpsichord, the pipe organ, and the theater organ (recorded examples from Bach, Messiaen, silent movie scores)
   iii. Orchestral instruments introduced (recorded excerpts)

iv. Assignment: ear training practice on chord progressions, audio to be posted on LATTE

16. Monday, March 20: Ear training quiz 6 (on hearing basic chord progressions); more on timbre
   i. Ear training quiz 6 - identifying basic chord progressions by ear (10 pts)
   ii. Orchestration examples (Haydn, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Strauss, Stravinsky)

   iii. Assignment: reading (Copland, pp. 113-159) and listening assignment to be posted on LATTE

17. Wednesday, March 22: Hearing Form – from two part to theme and variations
i. Sectional form listening examples (two part; three part; rondo; free sectional form
ii. Live performance of more Bach cello suite movements!
iii. Variation form listening examples (basso ostinato; passacaglia; chaconne; theme and variations)

iv. Assignment: reading (Copland, pp. 160-175; Ross, pp. 22-54) and listening assignment to be posted on LATTE

18. Monday, March 27: Ear training quiz 7 (identifying forms); Hearing Form – Fugues part 1
i. Ear training quiz 7 - identifying forms from two part to theme and variations (10 pts)
ii. Fugues defined
iii. Fugue listening examples from Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mahler, Messiaen
iv. Assignment: reading (Copland, pp. 176-198); listening / writing assignment on Bartók - Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, first movement (5 pts)

19. Wednesday, March 29: Hearing Form – Sonata form  
i. Sonata form defined  
ii. Sonata form listening examples from Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert,

iii. Assignment: listening and viewing, Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony, first movement, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony; http://www.keepingscore.org/sites/default/files/swf/beethoven/beethoven-full ; writing assignment on Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony, first movement (5 pts)

20. Monday, April 3: More on sonata form: Beethoven’s Eroica symphony in focus  
i. Discussion of Eroica Symphony  
ii. Sonata form listening examples from Brahms, Mahler, Shostakovich, Copland

iii. Assignment: reading (Copland, pp. 199-215; Ross, pp. 3-35); listening / writing assignment on Tchaikovsky Symphony no. 6, first movement (5 pts)

21. Wednesday, April 5: Free forms / tone poems  
i. Tone poems explained  
ii. Tone poem listening examples from Liszt, Smetana, Mussorgsky, Strauss

iii. Assignment: reading (Ross, pp. 36-79); listening / writing assignment on Schoenberg “Transfigured Night” (5 pts)

PASSOVER BREAK

22. Monday, April 19: Free forms / hearing atonality  
i. Atonality defined  
ii. Listening examples: Debussy  
iii. Listening examples: Schoenberg

iv. Assignment: reading (Ross, pp. 80-129); listening and viewing, Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring, excerpts, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, http://www.keepingscore.org/sites/default/files/swf/stravinsky/full

23. Wednesday, April 24: Bursting into modernism: Stravinsky in focus  
i. Listening focusing on form  
ii. Musical character: the role of rhythm and phrasing  
iii. Musical character: the role of tone color and orchestration  
iv. Musical character: the role of melody and harmony

v. Assignment: listening / writing assignment on Stravinsky’s “Petrouchka” (5 pts)

24. Monday, April 26: jazz artists crossing boundaries / Hazel Scott and Duke Ellington  
i. Bands and individual musicians showcased in own recordings  
ii. Influence of both vernacular tradition and classical composers  
iii. Song characteristics and musical character

iv. Assignment: listening / writing assignment on Ellington’s arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite (5 pts)
25. Wednesday, May 1: Bebop variations / modalism and quartal harmonies in jazz
   i. Modal scales and quartal harmonies explained
   ii. Miles Davis
   iii. Thelonius Monk
   iv. John Coltrane
   v. Assignment: listening / writing assignment of selections by Davis, Monk, Coltrane (5 pts)

   i. Sondheim: selections played from “A Little Night Music”
      1. “Now”
      2. “Later”
      3. “Soon”
      4. “Soon/Later/Now”
      5. discussion
   ii. Miranda: selections played from “Hamilton”, and discussion