

THE GRADUATE MUSIC FORUM AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AT
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESENT

MUSIC AT THE MARGINS,

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE.

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SAMUEL BRANNON/ UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA- CHAPEL HILL
JANE CARTER/ TUFTS UNIVERSITY
BRETTON GROM/ CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY
CHRIS JOHNSON-ROBERSON/ BROWN UNIVERSITY
KRISTINA KNOWLES/ NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
SIV LIE/ NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ELIZABETH NEWTON/ INDIANA UNIVERSITY
KATHRYN STRAKER/ CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23
9:00-6:00
FANNY PEABODY MASON
MUSIC BUILDING, ROOM 9
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**The Harvard University Graduate Music Forum,
The Department of Music at Harvard University, and the
Harvard University Graduate Student Council**

present

“Music at the Margins”

An Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference

February 23rd, 2013

Fanny Peabody Mason Music Building

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Program Chair:

William O'Hara

Conference Coordinator:

Monica Hershberger

Program Committee:

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Hannah Lewis
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Joseph Fort
Krystal Klingenberg
Lucille Mok
Frederick Reece
Caitlin Schmid

Gavin Williams

Schedule

8:30 AM - Breakfast Reception

9:00 AM – Time, Space, and Place

Chair: Christopher Hasty, Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Music,
Harvard University

1. Blood and Brains on my Marmalade: the Musical Idiolect of Throbbing Gristle
Kathryn Straker (The Graduate Center, CUNY)
2. Reclaiming a Voice: Music and the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Post-Taliban Afghanistan
Elizabeth Blaufox (City College of New York)
3. Ebb and Flow: Rhythm and Temporality in Unmetered Music by George Crumb
Kristina Knowles (Northwestern University)

10:45 AM – Reception and Representation

Chair: Kay Kaufman Shelemay, G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music,
Harvard University

4. “The most excruciating harmony I ever heard”: Music, Diplomacy, and the British in 19th-Century Asante
Jane Carter (Tufts University)
5. Swing Politique: Jazz Manouche and Romani Representation in France
Siv B. Lie (New York University)
6. “Living My Life at the Margins”: Hip-Hop and Digital Marginalia
Chris Johnson-Roberson (Brown University)

12:15 – 1:30 PM - Lunch

1:30 – 3:00 PM – Texts and Objects

Chair: Suzannah Clark, Professor of Music, Harvard University

7. Reassessing Originality from the Margins of Renaissance Music Theory
Samuel Brannon (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)
8. Toward a New History of Nineteenth-Century American Psalmody Reform: Buried Strategies of Resistance and Reconciliation
Brenton Grom (Case Western Reserve University)
9. Chaos Made Comprehensible: Music and Representation in Melvin B. Tolson's "Dark Symphony"
Elizabeth Newton (Indiana University)

3:15 – 4:45 PM – Graduate Student Workshop

Sindhumathi Revuluri, Associate Professor of Music, Harvard University

5 PM – Keynote Address - Kevin Korsyn, Professor of Music Theory, University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance

At the Margins of Music History, Theory and Composition:
Completing the Unfinished Fugue from *Die Kunst der Fuge* by J.S. Bach

An informal reception will follow the keynote address.

Abstracts

Time, Space, and Place

Chair: Christopher Hasty, Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Music, Harvard University

Blood and Brains on my Marmalade: the Musical Idiolect of Throbbing Gristle (Kathryn Straker, The Graduate Center, CUNY)

Formed in Hull, England, in 1976, the group Throbbing Gristle single-handedly invented the genre known as "industrial" through their pairing of experimental music with bleak, political imagery. In conjunction with Throbbing Gristle's first generation of peers, such as Cabaret Voltaire, industrial music came to be associated with the ambience of urban manufacturing centers. Subsequent generations of industrial are varied in style, but may be described as a fusion of rock, electronic dance music experimental noise. The genre is so widely varied in musical style that its primary marker is ideological, not strictly musical. Rock and electronica intersect in many genres, often creating a sound similar to industrial, but an artist's work must be a patchwork of key elements—real world horrors, politics, dystopian nightmares, a love/hate relationship with technology, and a foundation in critical theory—to truly be considered industrial. Throbbing Gristle serves as industrial ground zero not through their artistic concepts *per se*, but through their particular marriage of concepts to musical sounds. They asserted themselves at the fringe of society and pop music by engaging social taboos and utterly disregarding musical conventions.

Previous studies in industrial music have exclusively been concerned with its sociological and aesthetic aspects, discussing musical examples only in contextual analyses. Throbbing Gristle challenges listeners to reconsider their definitions of "music" in its abandonment of traditional musical elements, and as such begs a look into its mechanics. How does anti-music assert itself as music? In this paper, I consider music from each of Throbbing Gristle's original studio albums in an effort to establish the features that constitute their musical idiolect. The core of the paper is a close comparative analysis of four recordings of "Maggot Death" in effort to identify how the band marks an individual song, in lieu of consistent lyrics, melody, form, or harmony. By establishing Throbbing Gristle's idiolect, we may better trace their legacy throughout subsequent generations of industrial music and, hopefully, come to grasp the markers of a genre that is stylistically disparate on the surface.

Reclaiming a Voice: Music and the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Post-Taliban Afghanistan (Elizabeth Blaurox, City College of New York)

The nation of Afghanistan has a long history of unrest, repression and subjugation under foreign colonizing powers. A nation's cultural history runs parallel to its political history, and these same forces left their marks on Afghanistan's arts, and specifically on its music.

The roots of Western imperialism in Afghanistan date back to the 1600s with the earliest European colonization of the Indian subcontinent. Since that time, foreign presence of one form or another has been ubiquitous in the region, and has had a range of effects on the occupied nations, Afghanistan among them. The negative effects of foreign presence in Afghanistan have been particularly acute within the last thirty years. During this period alone, Afghanistan has seen three distinct ruling factions: first, the Soviet takeover in 1979, followed by the Taliban occupation which commenced in 1996 and was toppled by the American invasion and advent of the Afghan-American war in 2001. Following the overthrow of the Taliban, Afghanistan entered a new period in its history with the institution of a democratic government.

In this present time of transition, a resurgence of music is taking place within Afghanistan and a nation that has long been silenced is reclaiming its voice. That voice is a unique blend of Afghanistan's native music and its long history of influence from outside nations. Since the fall of the Taliban, the new-found cultural freedom has been marked by a rekindled interest in music education and the traditions of Western classical music. This movement is augmented by several United States-based organizations which engage in an exchange of music, musicians and ideas between the U.S. and Afghanistan. Cultural diplomacy, an off-shoot of public diplomacy, is a key element in aiding nations transitioning out of totalitarian or oppressive rule and into democracy.

This presentation explores the history of occupation of the last thirty years and its profound impact on Afghan music, building upon the seminal scholarship of John Baily. I, then, contextualize the current musico-diplomatic activities within the framework of the cultural imperialism of the past, in addition to problematizing the ethical issues inherent in such work. When examining the work of cultural diplomacy, such questions arise as, how does cultural exchange, and music in particular, foster stability and endow a region with a sense of national identity? Why is Western culture the vehicle by which this exchange takes place? Where is the line between cultural imperialism and cultural diplomacy?

Specifically, two organizations are examined: the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and American Voices. My research includes first-hand interviews with

key leaders of these groups. By observing the work of these organizations, one can see the incredible power of music to initiate change and promote dialogue between disparate cultures. Through the work of these two organizations and others like them, a music that has for so long been marginalized is once again brought to the forefront of cultural consciousness.

Ebb and Flow: Rhythm and Temporality in Unmetered Music by George Crumb (Kristina Knowles, Northwestern University)

Despite the significant progress made in theories of rhythm and meter, little work has been done to develop a conceptual foundation that address problems pertaining to rhythm in twentieth-century music in general (Hasty 1981), and unmetered music in particular. I propose a theoretical framework centered on issues of rhythm and meter in post-tonal unmetered music that focuses on the interactions between rhythm, meter and temporality. Unmetered music is defined as lacking both a consistently notated meter provided by the composer and a consistently present underlying pulse that can be perceived by the listener. I identify a set of mechanisms used by composers to manipulate the listener's perceived passage of time characterized by: (1) a novel definition of rhythm, (2) a proposed reconceptualization of the relationship between rhythm and meter, and (3) an emphasis on phenomenological aspects of time perception.

These mechanisms emerged from Oliver Messiaen's rules of perceived durations and are grounded in psychological studies addressing influences on the perception of time passing. The main psychological concepts involved, event density and directed attention, manifest in music through the repetition of certain rhythmic motives, the presence of competing pulse streams (Roeder 1994;2001) and the occurrence of metrical emergence and dissolution (Horlacher 1995). Concepts are illustrated through a set of analytical vignettes from the music of George Crumb, as his oeuvre presents an interesting study for issues of rhythm, meter and temporality that has largely been ignored by previous scholars in the field. Specific pieces that will be examined include "Morning Music" from *Makrokosmos Vol. II* and "Sea-Nocturne" from *Vox Balaenae*.

Crucial to the proposed theoretical framework is a conceptualization of rhythm and meter that divorces these constructs from pitch structures and examines their degree of interdependence. For the purposes of this study, I define rhythm as the organization of events in time and meter as the periodic or cyclic organization of regularly recurring pulses in time. These definitions recognize the shared importance of time for rhythm and meter while also allowing for the existence of rhythm independent of meter. The relationship between these

two concepts is best illustrated by the following set-subset relationship: all meters are rhythmic, but not all rhythms are metrical.

Important to this study is the distinction between “clock” time and “subjective” or “perceived” time which can be manipulated by external (event density) and internal (directed attention) forces. My proposed methodology highlights a parallel between psychological processes and ways in which composers may change the listener’s *perception* of time passing. The methodology centers around the organization of events in time and the presence or absence of short-lived metrical structures. By developing a theoretical framework that emphasizes the interaction between rhythmic and metrical elements and our perceptual experience of time, I demonstrate how composers can and do systematically manipulate time in unmetered music.

Reception and Representation

Chair: Kay Kaufman Shelemay, G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music, Harvard University

“The most excruciating harmony I ever heard”: Music, Diplomacy, and the British in 19th-Century Asante (Jane Cater, Tufts University)

Before European colonization, the Asante of West Africa practiced an intricate form of cultural diplomacy with their local neighbors and coastal European traders. Thanks to descriptive nineteenth century journals and the enduring quality of Asante oral traditions, modern historians have accurately reconstructed the pre-colonial Asante past. However, a wealth of musical information in European accounts has been ignored by historians and music scholars alike due to the insensitive marginalization of Asante traditions recorded by early travelers. This paper will evaluate the historiography of two English envoys sent to the Asante capitol in 1817 and 1819 with a fresh perspective on the ways that music shaped each diplomatic encounter.

The emerging field of music and diplomacy studies provides an opportunity to revisit documents that have long been used by diplomacy historians who found musical content irrelevant or impenetrable compared to seemingly more important functions of inter-state relations. The artifacts from the British envoys are the perfect specimens for such a project: in spite of their importance to the study of African diplomacy and Asante history, the diplomatic journals’ pervasive musical accounts have been largely ignored. By combining research methods suggested by historians, music scholars, and diplomacy studies, I will show how musical exchanges between the Asante and British envoys greatly influenced diplomatic exchange, strategy, and outcomes.

This paper will examine journals, letters, and drawings from each envoy in tandem with modern Asante accounts in order to reconstruct some of the musical events the British travelers may have encountered. In doing so, I will identify the various roles of music in Asante diplomacy: ceremonial, spectacle, and intimidation. I will also explore the use of musical instruments as diplomatic gifts as well as the importance of musical instruments as objects in Asante society. By focusing on the world of music each British envoy encountered while on their diplomatic missions, I will show how integral, and sometimes disruptive, music was to the diplomatic process.

Europeans have a history of marginalizing the Asante, which is why the study of Asante music has only come into fruition in the past few decades. Pre-colonial and colonial artifacts are perfect examples of early forms of cultural discrimination, and as such they are controversial sources for early Asante music history. However, this paper reconciles the disruptive features of colonialist artifacts by regarding their portrayal of music as a form of diplomatic exchange.

Swing Politique: Jazz Manouche and Romani Representation in France (Siv B. Lie, New York University)

“*Everyone* is proud of Django! But for Manouches, he’s an idol, because he showed to non-Manouches that a Manouche can have a lot of talent.” This is how Tony Gibier, lead organizer of the Festival Swing 41 in Salbris, France, described to me the legacy of Django Reinhardt for both Manouches (a subgroup of Romanies, or “Gypsies”) and for French people generally. Born in 1910, Reinhardt was a Manouche guitarist who, despite a fire that severely disfigured his left hand, rose to fame in the 1930s as Europe’s most celebrated jazz musician. As frontman of the Quintette du Hot Club de France, Reinhardt played an essential role in transforming the interwar Parisian jazz scene from an American import into something uniquely “French.” He is credited as the founder of *jazz manouche*, also known as “Gypsy jazz,” a genre known best for its energetic, guitar-centric swing tunes. In the decades following his sudden death in 1953, Reinhardt and the practice of *jazz manouche* became symbols of cultural identity for many French Manouches, as well as for French national patrimony. Many Manouches and their supporters view the explosive commercial success of the genre as a welcome phenomenon, but considering France’s assimilationist policies and its controversial minority rights record, how do contrasting ethnic and national claims to this music impact the status of Manouches in French society?

This paper examines whether *jazz manouche* is an economically productive, politically empowering, and community-building practice for Manouches in France, many of whom face deeply ingrained discrimination. At the same time,

I explore the contradictions that lie in glorifying an ethnic group's cultural heritage: does the characterization of Manouches as musical virtuosi reify romanticized notions about Romani identity? Is *jazz manouche* a means towards ethnic integration or segregation in republican France? In what ways do the various modes in which *jazz manouche* is represented and performed – on stage, on screen, during rehearsal, in talk, in print – offer possibilities for conceiving of Romani identities? Treating *jazz manouche* as a field of cultural production in which notions of Romani-ness are constructed and challenged, I examine how relations among Romanies and non-Romanies are transformed through *jazz manouche* performance. Musicological attempts to deconstruct *jazz manouche* into its inherently Romani and French components, among other elements, have often been speculative, yet these same arguments are sometimes used to legitimize which groups exemplify the genre. This paper asks how, through both stylistic appraisals and contexts of use, genres are harnessed as emblematic of different collectivities and used to define ethnic and national heritages. Reinhardt's inclusion in both French national patrimony and in Manouche heritage raises the question of who has the right to claim him and the genre of *jazz manouche* as forms of cultural "property." My research builds upon a recent wave of studies on how jazz, as a cosmopolitan practice, is used to define and redefine ethnic, racial, national and transnational consciousnesses (Austerlitz 2005, Feld 2012, Muller and Benjamin 2011).

“Living My Life in the Margin”: Hip-Hop and Digital Marginalia (Chris Johnson-Roberson, Brown University)

Rappers and rap listeners have had relatively few opportunities to convey to a broad audience their thoughts and reflections on the meaning of hip-hop lyrics. Recent efforts such as Jay-Z's *Decoded* have provided insight into the context and authorial intent of certain lines, yet the majority of hip-hop songs past and present have not been explicated in this way. Rap Genius, an online community focused on the exegesis of rap, seeks to remedy this situation by allowing users to annotate transcribed song lyrics line by line and to post essays and comments on related issues. Some well-known artists such as Nas, Big Boi, and Jean Grae have joined the site; however, most of the site's annotations come from fans who vary widely in terms of age, racial identity, and socioeconomic status. The marginal notes of these users constitute a digital archive of hip-hop criticism that can reveal much about the ways that hip-hop listeners co-construct the meanings of this music, as well as the relationship of the genre to its broader social context.

The word "margin" has a particular meaning and metaphorical resonance in hip-hop, as is suggested by the titular quote from Kendrick Lamar. It refers both to the literal margins of rhyme books (the notebooks in which rappers have traditionally written their lines), and to the marginal social positions which

have often influenced their lived experiences. In the first sense, writing past the margin signals effusion, an excess prompted by extreme emotion or the urgency of a message. In the second sense, a confluence of factors — including socioeconomic inequity and institutional racism, as well as pride in regional identity and in distinctive forms of subcultural production — leads to a partly shared experience of marginality that is consolidated in and expressed through the musical and lyrical content of hip-hop.

Living "in the margin" can create a sense of solidarity and a perspective that allows for critical examination of those systems from which one has been excluded. Of course, rappers produce aestheticized representations of marginality, precluding a simplistic equation of rap's content with marginal experience. Furthermore, women and queer people have historically been marginalized within this genre, although the oft-cited misogyny and homophobia of hip-hop (which are equally severe but less acknowledged in mainstream discourse) appear to be breaking down.

Through participant observation in the annotation of songs and computationally assisted techniques such as social network analysis, I explore the Rap Genius community's engagements with hip-hop, finding many of the aforementioned themes in listeners' articulated responses to the music. The quantitative aspects of this approach serve mainly to identify trends and points of interest for deeper ethnographic study. I find that the users on Rap Genius collaborate to gain insight into the genre and to make a case for its richness as art, by taking seriously the site's mandate to "critique rap as poetry" and by collectively fleshing out the conditions of social marginality from which much of hip-hop springs.

Texts and Objects

Chair: Suzannah Clark, Professor of Music (Harvard University)

**Reassessing Originality from the Margins of Renaissance Music Theory
(Samuel Brannon, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)**

Historians of Renaissance music theory routinely devote most of their attention to a few of the most innovative sources. Because of this emphasis on originality, Orazio Tigrini's *Il compendio della musica* (1588) has occupied a marginal position in histories of Renaissance music theory. Two factors have led scholars to determine that Tigrini's treatise is of little value: (1) his self-proclaimed reliance on his teacher Gioseffo Zarlino, an undisputedly central figure in Renaissance music theory; (2) the treatise's printed marginalia that cite numerous other music theorists. This paper demonstrates that Tigrini's citations locate a number of previously unidentified parallel passages and

direct quotations between his sources. I argue on this basis that, despite its unabashed unoriginality, Tigrini's *Il compendio* provides a valuable picture of late sixteenth-century music theory. Furthermore, by exposing unoriginality in a number of highly-valued sources, Tigrini's treatise highlights the problem of originality as a criterion of value for Renaissance music theory. Using Tigrini's *Il compendio* as a case study, this paper calls for a rethinking of historical music theory less in hierarchical terms and more as a relational field that draws connections between sources.

**Toward a New History of Nineteenth-Century American Psalmody Reform:
Buried Strategies of Resistance and Reconciliation (Brenton Grom, Case
Western Reserve University)**

From the turn of the nineteenth century through the 1830s, the music and practice of psalmody in New England undertook a complicated course of reform. Clergy and other community leaders sought an end to an increasingly rousing idiom that threatened to distract from the devotional tone of worship, and whose complexity precluded congregational participation in the singing. Educated urban tunebook compilers such as Nahum Mitchell and later Lowell Mason gladly joined in the cause, eager to champion "scientific" counterpoint and a European repertory. They rejected fugging tunes and revised the frequent parallel intervals and open-fifth sonorities of native tunesmiths.

But as Samuel Gilman recounts in his 1828 *Memoirs of a New England Village Choir*, the initiative prevailed more by attrition than by coup among rural singers, whose resistance was animated by issues of regional identity and anti-elitism. Printed documents, such as tunebook prefaces and published sermons, overwhelmingly thrust these geographically outlying voices to the periphery of dignified culture. In its fifteenth edition, *The Village Harmony* apologizes to its more progressive patrons for introducing reforms too gradually, citing wide circulation throughout New England's less refined extremities. Meanwhile, dissenting views tend to be registered in local newspapers and musical commonplace books, none of which of have figured adequately into past histories of American psalmody.

Fresh evidence has turned up at Oberlin College, where an 1830s tune manuscript and diary compiled by Bernard Ward, a farmer in Vermont's Champlain Valley, offer an exceptional view into the reform movement's rural reception. As a septuagenarian, Ward has long embraced repertorial changes yet remains at home with the sounds of his youth. Extensive annotations show him comparing the most recently printed tune settings with others previously in use, especially with respect to harmonic texture. He reduces four-part settings to three by omitting the alto line—a customary simplification in western regions—but not without care for the resulting sonorities. Since

reform-minded settings often introduce inverted triads to achieve smoother voice-leading, they lose chordal roots more frequently and erratically than older settings when stripped of an upper voice. Under the same conditions, older tunes typically come to exaggerate their New England idiom, with phrases beginning and ending in open fifths or octaves. Yet in one notable exception, where Ward finds his cuts multiplying these forbidden sonorities in a new version of OLD HUNDRED (a tune synonymous with reform), he turns to an older one for the appropriately full triads it preserves.

What Gilman implies under the veil of fiction—namely, a contested process of reception that locates aesthetic struggle and compromise within individual tunes—is borne out in Ward’s manuscript, which in turn finds corroboration in contemporary objections to the altering of bass lines. All of these sources suggest powerful connections among cultural identity, musical memory, and the experience of embodying an individual voice part within a specific sonic context—especially one exploiting the resonance of hollow fifths and octaves. Thus, where Gilman remarks that “everybody remembers WELLS,” the imminent question is *how* they remember it.

Chaos Made Comprehensible: Music and Representation in Melvin B. Tolson’s “Dark Symphony” (Elizabeth Newton, Indiana University)

Modernist art has been characterized by Daniel Albright as a collaboration among art forms, in which music and poetry share a particularly special bond. This bond is exemplified by Melvin B. Tolson’s poem “Dark Symphony” (1941). Musical imagery pervades the poem, appearing in its title, content, and structure. That said, it is not a poem *about* music. The poem, which depicts six periods of United States history from the end of the Revolutionary War through the Great Depression, functions as a revised version of United States history that accounts for the experiences of African Americans. I understand Tolson’s use of musical images to represent black community and artistry to be a typical strategy of black modernism in the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. “Dark Symphony” seems exceptional, however, in that it not only emerges from this milieu of musical-poetic interaction, but simultaneously critiques it through historicization and irony. My treatment of “Dark Symphony” as a poem that participates in music history extends Albright’s conception of modernist art to include not only inter-artistic collaboration, but also inter-artistic analysis and critique. Tolson was clearly aware of conventional modes of musical representation, and his biography indicates a belief that such representations often exploited, rather than benefited, African Americans. Given this anxiety toward race and representation in literature, what are we to make of music’s extensive presence in the poem?

Keeping music at the fore, I perform a close reading of “Dark Symphony” that also draws on historiographical research. I situate the poem’s musical imagery within discourses of racial uplift, the New Negro artist, and the Afro-American symphony that pervaded Tolson’s generation, in addition to more recent conceptions of black modernist art that highlight the use of fragmentation as a political strategy. I briefly consider how Tolson’s account resonates with musical narratives told by contemporary historians, including Waldo Frank, Maud Cuney-Hare, and Alain Locke. I conclude that music in “Dark Symphony” is not just a critical tool, or mere by-product of a modernist poetic aesthetic in which musical references were second nature. Rather, music is purposefully presented, in every layer of the poem, as a complicated and powerful symbol whose conventional use in literary and historical narratives itself becomes an object of critique. The poem’s title marks the symphony as a multivalent symbol worth our examination. The poem’s borrowed high-art musical form comments upon the “progress through higher forms” demanded of black modernist artists. And finally, the exaggerated use of musical imagery in the poem’s content disrupts routine depictions of black musical life. Together, these layers of critique compel the reader to become conscious of musical symbols and their complex reverberations in art and everyday life.

Special Thanks

The Faculty and Staff of the Harvard University Department of
Music

The Harvard University Graduate Student Council