

Innovations in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s

Performance Art

Laurie Anderson, "O Superman" (1981)

performance art: in part reaction against erasure of **people** from art

insists on the artist as a performing body (not a division into composer versus performer)

Anderson: usually filters her voice through Vocoder, or sometimes other machines such as pillow speakers

1981 hit single from the extended work *United States* dedicated to Massenet and refers obliquely to his opera *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*; transfers his aria's opening line into Anderson's opening: "O Superman, O Judge, O Mom and Dad."

musical constant is pedal on middle C on a single syllable "ha."
two alternating chords inflect the pedal harmonically: Ab major triad in first inversion and root-position C minor triad.

Duration and accent count enormously in this piece

Near the end, inexorable bass ostinato enters

fades until we hear only the original track: laughing or whimpering, human or electronic—all or none of the above.

Continued Minimalisms & Post-Minimalisms

NAWM 211: John Adams, "Short Ride in a Fast Machine" (1986), p. 795

orchestral fanfare, includes parts for synthesizer

three sections

rapid, motoric rhythm

minimalist techniques:

constant pulsation, repetition of simple rhythmic & melodic material

new: more harmonic variety, emotional surges

lots of triple feel at different structural levels

D pitch center but not tonal—uses pitch collections instead

several changes in pitch collection—**gates**

single notes changed gradually—**landscape**

NAWM 219: John Adams, *Doctor Atomic*, "Batter My Heart" (2005), p. 963

aria from opera about J. Robert Oppenheimer
(physicist who led efforts to develop atomic bomb)

text based on poem by John Dunne, aria
expresses Oppenheimer's internal struggle about good v. evil, darkness v. light

minimalist orchestral introduction: continuous fast motion, ostinati,
gradual buildup of dissonance, subtle changes of texture

entrance of the voice (m. 802): D harmonic minor
(sometimes orchestral lines suggest tonal progressions, such as V⁶)

emotive vocal style: Adams restructures poem into AAB form
vocal passages seem more like older styles of opera, such as chaconnes of the 1600s
very emotive style in the vocal writing
[conveys Oppenheimer's conflicts about the development of the bomb]

Border Crossings

NAWM 209: Bright Sheng, "Seasons"
from *Seven Tunes Heard in China* (1995), p. 729

solo cello, written for Yo-Yo Ma

synthesizing of:

Western/German: imitations of Bach cello suites
[dance rhythms, double stops, sequences,
suggestions of imitative counterpoint]
certain styles of motivic development

Chinese: imitations of *erhu* and *qin*

performance style: ornamentation, glissandi, free
treatment of meter

quick ornamental turns, slides between pitches,
sustained notes with intense vibrato

NAWM 217: Osvaldo Golijov, Excerpts from
***La Pasión según San Marcos* (2000), p.930**

commissioned to create new settings of the Gospels
from the Bible (Bach's Passions as the influence)
scored for chorus, soloists, drummer, small orchestra
and dancers: very **theatrical**

texts in Spanish, Aramaic, Latin, Galician
blends Bach styles with Brazilian samba, Cuban
salsa, Spanish flamenco, Argentine tango

Except 1: **"Scorn and Denial":**

Bach-style double chorus

Spanish text

samba rhythm

percussion includes cuica, ago-gó, clave, etc.

Orchestral Futures?

NAWM 220: Jennifer Higdon,
***blue cathedral* (2000), p. 976**

program music, especially
through the flute and clarinet
solos

bell-like percussion
parallel strings à la Debussy

arabesque-like solo lines over
pitch collections

firmly grounded in tonality, but
mostly in pitch collections rather
than recognizable progressions

Operatic Renaissance Electronics in the Opera House

NAWM 216: Kaija Saariaho, "Tempête" from
***L'amour de loin* (2000), p. 901**

stage work based on life of 12th century troubadour
—minimal characters,
more about psychology than action

excerpt: "Tempête"

vocal style includes modal elements and evokes
troubadour melodies as well as Baroque laments

very modernist pitch arrays: semitones and tones
creating interlocked 5ths and 4ths

shimmering sonorities and masses of sound in the
orchestra: spectralism
timbre as large-scale structural feature
electronics used to alter timbres and harmonies via
computer analysis of timbres

Osvaldo Golijov, *Ainadamar* (2005)

based on life of martyred Spanish poet Federico
García-Lorca

mixes rumba, flamenco, sounds of the muezzin,
Spanish guitar, Gregorian chant

electronic music and samples

includes actual radio broadcasts from 1930s Spain