

First, a few logistics

or, the unpleasantness of the Spring 2021 calendar and “pop-up” days

Week 6: March 8 - 12

No assigned material on Tuesday, March 9. We will meet for our regular synchronous meeting on Thursday, March 11. I will lead a lecture and discussion, you will have a response to provide afterwards.

Week 7: March 15 - 19

Assigned reading and lecture material on Tuesday, March 16. You will provide a response based on the reading and lecture. **No synchronous meeting on Thursday, March 18.**

Week 8: March 22 - 26

No changes

Week 9: March 29 - April 2

Instead of **assigned material on Tuesday, March 30**, your assigned reading material is given on Monday, March 29.

Week 10: April 5- April 9

No classes meet on Thursdays in this week. Therefore, instead of having our synchronous Zoom meeting on Thursday, April 8, **our synchronous Zoom meeting will take place on Friday, April 9 from 9:45-11:00am**

(please understand this is the University policy, not an arbitrary change on my part).

Note: if you have any concerns at all why I am making these announcements about class schedule changes, please see <https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/academic-calendar> and/or feel free to drop me an email!

"One also ought to see their composer (Liszt) play these studies; for just as the sight of any virtuosity elevates and strengthens, so much more does the immediate sight of the composer himself, struggling with his instrument, taming it, making it obey."

Robert Schumann, on Liszt's playing

Liszt is an amiable fiend who treats his mistress—the piano—now tenderly, now tyrannically, devours her with kisses, lacerates her with lustful bites, embraces her, caresses her, sulks with her, scolds her, rebukes her, grabs her by the hair, clasps her all the more delicately, more affectionately, more passionately, more flamingly, more meltingly...After the concert Liszt stands there like a victor on a battlefield...Daunted pianos lie around him; torn strings wave like flags of truce; frightened instruments flee into distant corners: the listeners look at each other as after a cataclysm of nature that has just passed by....And he stands there leaning melancholically on his chair, smiling strangely, like an exclamation point after the outbreak of general admiration. Thus is Franz Liszt.

--Moritz Gottlich Saphir, 1845



Viewed, then, as a display of pianoforte-playing, and putting music out of the question, it was little short of a miracle...The feeling he incites is what we should call animal excitement. His playing is wonderful and exquisite...but lays snares for the affections of the musically unwary. He is prostituting his great powers to the worst of ends. He is playing the wanton with a noble and beautiful art, and stirring up a passion for error in those who have appetite enough to prove all things, but lack taste to hold fast by that which is good.

The Musical World, 1840

VIRTUOSITY

updated Orphic singer = 19th century instrumental virtuoso

star, marriage of technical wizardry and sexual magnetism

paradox of virtuoso as popular entertainer and music as fine art

virtuoso riddled with ambivalence: transcendental expressiveness and cheap, flashy

cannot choose between modesty and show—instrument is *visible*, unlike the singer

must show all he does, therefore accused that showing *is* all he does

VIRTUOSITY

- bodily appearance in the West since Plato:
 - accused of theatricality, deception, rhetoric
 - remember mind > body in Western history
 - virtuoso's very insistence on the body is dirty but mesmerizing (Mendelssohn said between scandal and apotheosis)
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Kramer:

1. Fraught relationship between visibility and virtuosity
2. Visually oriented "public sphere" emerges, which connects:
3. Mass entertainment, construction of subjectivity, birth of stardom
4. How do we reconcile virtuosity with idea of "autonomous" classical music?



SOME EXPERIMENTS WITH *MUSIQUE ACOUSMATIQUE*

Pierre Schaeffer:

- acousmatic, adjective: referring to a sound that one hears without seeing the causes behind it.
- the moment arrived with the introduction of recording technology, which made it possible to sever the link between a sound and its source
- in playing back the recorded sound, the source did not need to be present or active

SOME EXPERIMENTS WITH *MUSIQUE ACOUSMATIQUE*



VIRTUOSITY

Visuality and virtuosity—
a highly demanding solo instrumental part is always poised on
the edge of visual excess

Liszt: exceedingly visual display

- forced his generation to question relationship between visuality and music
 - possibilities:
 - musical power is consummated in visual performance—triumph of visuality?
 - maybe Liszt's performances triumph over visuality—photographing sounds on the ear
 - visual excess of gestures "sticks" to the music
 - noise-making that supports a triumphant sight
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VIRTUOSITY

Visuality and virtuosity—

a highly demanding solo instrumental part is always poised on the edge of visual excess

twin poles of 19th-century pianism: performative display versus realization of composed work

the rhetoric of facial expression made possible a variety of idealizing constructions of virtuosity possibly allowing the twin poles to coexist

a new kind of listening, where you watch the face translate the music

is face not the body, but the soul?

Why so troubling? Is music often the loser when it comes to images, sight?

VIRTUOSITY

The sight of the performer disturbs the effect of universality by displaying both the material awkwardness of music-making and the more metaphysical awkwardness of being confined (eingeschränkt) to individual existence.

What made him so disconcerting, was constantly seen—literally seen—to discard the ideal of invisibility for its negation, and to do so willfully, with a palpable arrogance of power. The seductions of vision seemed to betray him into sacrificing universality for a narrow individuality...

Nor is the music all that disappears. With it disappears the self-possession of the listener, who becomes uncannily subject to the performer's quasi-hypnotic control.

VIRTUOSITY

At stake here is a contradiction between the means and ends of producing the century's technically difficult and spiritually ambitious art music. The music is supposed to possess independent symbolic value and cultural authority, but it can be transmitted to a wide audience only by means of public spectacles that threaten to subordinate music to the histrionics of performance. With music involving soloists, the danger comes mainly from the charismatic performer who takes control of the audience's emotions and debases music by associating it with the visual, the uncanny, and the bodily.

The idealist position cannot stand the view. It locates musical pleasure in discipline which it associates with the cultural authority and transcendental value of music. What it wants from music is ceremony without carnival, regardless of the cost in strict social and aesthetic regulation.

Liszt

- 1848: abandons the concert stage to become a composer & conductor
- Passionate defender of program music in the mid-1800s: article published in 1855 in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*—“arts need to progress, and program music is one of the various steps forward which art still has to take”
- 1848-1861: court music director at Weimar
- 1861-1870: Rome, takes minor orders in Catholic Church
- as composer: innovations in form and harmony, invented symphonic poem
- as conductor: Bach, Beethoven, other composers from the past
- as teacher: invented the master class

Virtuoso Contradictions

hero/military/stamina

artist/high art

aural (music for ears)

theatrical (good?)

dazzling?

superhuman

sincere

emotion

masculine

a "hysterical" body (out of control)

businessman/commercial

visual (music for eyes)

theatrical (bad?)

showoff?

machine (automaton)

manipulative

calculated

feminine

**In the 20th and 21st centuries, what kinds of music
emphasize virtuosity?**

**What about music that might be “anti-virtuosic”—music
where virtuosity might be seen negatively?**



**Think, for example, about the different guitar styles of
Slash (Guns 'n' Roses) versus the guitar style of the
Ramones.**

**Which group emphasizes virtuosity?
Why would a group want to emphasize virtuosity?
Why might a group want to be anti-virtuosic?**

Week 5:
Continuing with the Piano
Musings on Professionalism and Creativity

Professionalism

What does it mean to be a “professional” composer or musician?

- to be taken seriously in one’s own time, perhaps in the future
- reputation
- authority
- circulation of a name
- having one’s music performed, published, and written about...

Some changes in Western art music

- Roughly 1400s - end of 1700s: patronage system
- 1800s - mid-1900s: entrepreneurial system, publishing, performance, journalism, other commercial activities
- 1900s: sometimes the state acts as a “super-patron” (Soviet Union)
- 1900s: universities + grants + commissions + recordings + private teaching

A “professional” composer or musician?
Not a static or tidy definition with clear-cut characteristics...there are inconsistencies

- Primary occupation?....not always
- Money/remuneration: the degree to which this is true
- Intentions: are you “serious” about composition? How regularly? How long?
- Signs of success: performances, commissions, publications.
- Can a “closet” composer with an independent income who chooses or is forced to keep pieces private be considered a professional?

Professionalism

So: professionalism in the West is complex and often contradictory

- How can we be wary of entrenched dualisms like professional/amateur that privilege one individual over another?
- Complex relationships around the concept of professionalism for many women composers from the 19th century onward
- Expectations and Practicalities: names, family structures, child-bearing etc....
- Public versus Private: problems with a simplistic definition of this, but it IS salient....today professionalism still often aligned with the public sphere
- Publication: Why has it been assumed desirable to publish? Why does a composer publish music? Are there reasons why a composer might not publish? What are the larger implications of such a choice? Are women and others problematized through ideological conflicts arising from publication?

1837:

"I hope I don't need to say that if she decides to publish anything, I will help her all I can and alleviate any difficulties arising from it. But I cannot persuade her to publish anything, because it is against my views and convictions. We have previously spoken a great deal about it, and I still hold the same opinion. I consider publishing something serious (it should at least be that) and believe that one should do it only if one wants to appear as an author one's entire life and stick to it. But that necessitates a series of works, one after the other.....Fanny, as I know her, possesses neither the inclination nor the calling for authorship. She is too much a woman for that, as is proper, and looks after her house and thinks neither about the public nor the musical world, unless that primary occupation is accomplished. Publishing would only disturb her in these duties, and I cannot reconcile myself to it. If she decides on her own to publish, or to please her husband, I am, as I said, ready to be helpful as much as possible, but to encourage her towards something I don't consider right is what I cannot do."

Felix Mendelssohn, writing to his mother

Creativity

Creativity....multivalent

1. sense of making or fashioning (perhaps making something where little or nothing has existed before)
2. characteristic of talent: "one is creative"
3. acts considered highly meaningful or special by society, creation of a painting or composition—here, we often see a quality of transcendence attached to the act of creation (19th century ideas about the artist)
4. authorship: being an author and what it means to be an author

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In the Western art tradition women have fashioned various connections to the creative act.

- What are the foundations and manifestations of those connections?
- From what kinds of positions have women had to negotiate the legitimacy of their creativity?
- How have they dealt with symbolic and rhetorical strictures aimed at creative suppression?
- What kinds of tangible constraints have they faced?
- How have psychological factors affected self-confidence and what has that meant for the larger historical picture?
- And what are the personal and historiographic implications of the notion of a female tradition?

Clara Schumann

1839, diary entry:

- Clara Schumann: "I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not wish to composer—there never was one able to do it. Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. That was something which only my father tempted me in former days. But I soon gave up believing this."

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TRIO.

M. M. ♩ = 152. Clara Schumann. Op. 17.

VIOLINO.

VIOLONCELLO.

PIANO.

Allegro moderato.

G minor Trio, Op. 17 (1846)

- Clara Schumann: "I recognize the work has some good passages, but naturally it is still women's work, which always lacks force and occasionally invention..."
- In comparison to Robert's *Trio*, "it sounded quite effeminate and sentimental."