

## Syllabus

### Music 203F: Graduate Seminar in Contemporary Performance Practice

Polansky  
UCSC, Spring, 2014  
Mondays, 10 – 1, Room 128, Music Center  
Office hours: TBA, and by appointment

5/19/14 (revision)

[Preliminary schedule, to be filled in as the course progresses.]

This class explores ideas in contemporary music performance, in diverse styles, through reading, playing, and writing. We will focus on music and performance practices and techniques that challenge and extend our ideas about what “playing music” consists of. We will study writings, scores, recordings, and filmed and live performance, and examine the musical possibilities implied by new compositional ideas, playing techniques, approaches to sound, notation, performance venues, and new modes of interaction between composers, performers, and audiences. [Thanks to Amy Beal for allowing me to quote some of her description for a 2002 version of this course]

#### Class Schedule (subject to change as the course progresses)

(Note: Readings and listenings are either on reserve, on website, or available on JSTOR)

#### March 31: Introduction

- Performance assignment (for next week): *December 1952*, Earle Brown, or Christian Wolff, *For 1, 2 or 3 People*
- Reading and listening assignment (for next week):  
(reading)
  - David Behrman, “What Indeterminate Notation Determines,” *Perspectives of New Music*, 3:2, 1965
  - Earle Brown, “On December 1952,” *American Music*, 26:1, 2008
  - John Cage, “Indeterminacy” (in *Cage Silence*; on reserve)
  - Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Chapters 6–7, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1999. (on reserve)

(listening)

- Various versions of *December 1952* (find them, one is a solo performance on *Underwater Princess Waltz*, DRAM, and on reserve)
- Cage, *Indeterminacy*

#### April 7: Indeterminacy

- Performance assignment (for next week) (choice): Excerpt from *Burdocks* (on website); Daniel Goode’s *Eine Kleine Gamelan Music* (on website); one of Christian Wolff’s *Exercises 1–10*; Joseph Byrd *Animals* (on website); Rzewski’s *Les Mouton de Panurge*
- Reading and listening assignment (simile):

(listening)

- John Zorn, *Cobra* (two recordings: LCD 2323 and LCD 6570)
- Butch Morris, *Conductions*, New World Records (box set on reserve; read notes as well as listen; notes and CD on DRAM)
- *Underwater Princess Waltz* (other one page pieces), Zwerm Guitar Quartet (on reserve, and on DRAM Digital Archive, with notes)
- Christian Wolff
  - *Burdocks* (on reserve, or any recording you like)
  - *Exercises 1 – 10*
    - New World Records 10 Exercises (DRAM), or
    - [http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/mp3\\_files/otherpeople/wolff\\_exercises\\_kitchen/](http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/mp3_files/otherpeople/wolff_exercises_kitchen/) (probably the first performance, see below for details)
    - [http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/mp3\\_files/lmj\\_7\\_cd/Cocks\\_Crow\\_Dogs\\_Bark/06\\_Christian\\_Wolff\\_Exercise\\_10.mp3](http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/mp3_files/lmj_7_cd/Cocks_Crow_Dogs_Bark/06_Christian_Wolff_Exercise_10.mp3) (live performance, see below for details)
    - (info on these two recordings see):  
<http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/recordings/otherpeoplesworks.html>

(reading)

- John Zorn, “The Game Pieces,” in *Audio Culture*, 2004 (on reserve)
- Christian Wolff, short essays in *Christian Wolff, Cues (Writings and Conversations)*, MusikTexte, 1998 (on reserve)
  - “Changes and Continuities” (p. 310)
  - *Prose Collection* (p. 464)
  - from “Program Notes”: *Duo for Pianists I and II; for One, Two or Three People; Lines; Changing the System; Burdocks*
- Amy Beal, “Single Side Only: Size Matters, But One Page Is All You Need,” Liner notes for *Underwater Princess Waltz* CD (on website, on DRAM)
- Amy Beal, “Christian Wolff in Darmstadt, 1972 and 1974,” in *Changing the System: The Music of Christian Wolff*, edited by Philip Thomas and Stephen Chase (2010) (on website)
- Daniel Goode, *One Page Pieces* (on reserve)
- Frederic Rzewski, *Les Moutons de Panurge* (score, on website)
- Joseph Byrd, *Animals* (score, on website)
- Terry Riley, *In C* (score, on website)

*April 14: Strategy and process music*

- Performance assignment for next week: None. We’ll work with guest Kyle Bruckmann on improvisation
- Work on proposal for final project (due next week)
- (listening)
  - Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz* (1960) (on reserve)
  - *AMMmusic, 1966* (CD on reserve in Media Center)

- Art Ensemble of Chicago, video, 1981 (on reserve in Media Center)
- (reading)
- George Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1:91-122, Spring 1996.
  - Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, (1980). Da Capo Press, 1993 (new edition). [on reserve]. Introduction(s), and choose one other "part" that interests you.
  - Amy Beal, "Musica Electronica Viva and the Art Ensemble of Chicago: Tradition and Improvisation in Self-Exile ca. 1970," in *American and European Music in Interaction, 1900-2000* (Basel: Paul Sacher Foundation, 2014. (on website)
  - Rzewski, *Sound Pool Notes* (score, on website)

#### April 21: Improvisation

- Guest in class, Kyle Bruckmann (part 1)
- Performance assignment (for next week): Small group improvisations (to be devised by me and guest)
- Proposal for final paper due (1–2 pages, with references, clear specific topic).

#### April 28: Improvisation, class guest

- Guest in class, Kyle Bruckmann (part 2)
- Performance assignment (for next week): Arrange and perform a short piece or integral excerpt from some musical tradition that is not your own, in fact, as alien from your own musical background as possible. The style of performance and arrangement, is up to you, but must, in some way, "respect" the original recording and/or transcription (which, if it doesn't already exist, you should make, at least as some kind of sketch to show us).

(reading)

- Chris Brown, "Pidgin Music," in *Arcana* (on reserve), 2000
- Judith Becker "Is Western Art Music Superior?," *The Musical Quarterly*, 72:3, 1986
- Lou Harrison, *Lou. Music Primer*. Peters Edition. (on reserve). 1971
- Diamond, Jody. "[There is No They There.](#)" *MusicWorks* 47 (Summer, 1990), pp. 12-23.

(listening)

- Jody Diamond, *In That Bright World*, New World CD. (on reserve; also available on DRAM; read liner notes by Judith Becker). 2009
- Lou Harrison
  - *Gamelan Music*, MusicMasters CD (on reserve), 1992.
  - *Pacifika Rondo* (on reserve), Desto LP, 1969.

#### May 5: "World" music and genre and geographical synthesis

- Detailed outline of final paper due (expanded reference list, specific citations)
- Presentation (as every week)

- Performance assignment: Start assignment given on May 12 (Our Singing Country songs), so that you have two weeks to do the project. This may involve groups.  
(listening)

- Polansky
  - *Piano Study #5* (on reserve, on CD *Change*, Artifact Recordings, 2002)
  - , בראשית, (*B'rey'sheet*) (on reserve, CD *The Theory of Impossible Melody*, New World Records 2008, reissue of Artifact Recording from 1990) [both of these recordings on DRAM]

reading

- Giacomo Fiore (both on website)
  - “Heterophonic Tunings in the Music of Larry Polansky” *TEMPO* Vol 68, Iss. 267, 2014
  - “Reminiscence, Reflections, Resonance: The Just Intonation Resophonic Guitar and Lou Harrison’s Scenes from Nék Chand” *Journal for the Society of American Music*, Vol. 6, 2012
- Polansky
  - “Harmony Primer” (on website)
  - “Notes on Piano Study #5,” “Confessions of a Lousy Carpenter” (both in *1/1*, *Journal of the Just Intonation Network* (on website))
  - “Paratactical Intonation: An Agenda for the Use of Computers in Just Intonation,” *Computer Music Journal*, 11/1, 1987 (JSTOR, on website)

### May 12: Experimental Intonation

- Performance assignment: Arrange one song from *Our Singing Country* for performance in class, either as one large group, in small groups, duos, or as soli. You don’t have to include singing, but can. The style of performance and arrangement, is up to you, as is what you do with it musically, creatively, etc., but as in the previous assignment must, in some way, “respect” the original recording, and in this case, the transcription.

(listening)

TBA (Lomax recordings)

(reading)

- *The Music of American Folk Song and Selected Other Writings on American Folk Music* by Ruth Crawford Seeger (edited by Larry Polansky) (on reserve)
- Lomax(es), *Our Singing Country* (get the transcriptions here) (on reserve)
- [Lomax website](#) (get the recordings here)

### May 19: “Traditional” American styles

Performance assignment: TBA (for June 2)

(reading) (for June 2)

- Cage, John and Alison Knowles. *Notations* (on reserve)
- Cardew, Cornelius (on reserve)

- *Treatise Handbook*
- ed. *Scratch Music*
- *Treatise* (on reserve in Media Center)
- Cornelius Cardew, “A History of the Scratch Orchestra,” in *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* (1974), (on reserve and available for download here: <http://www.ubu.com/historical/cardew/index.html>)
- Oliveros, Pauline. *Sonic Meditations* (on reserve) (*listening*) (for June 2)
- Christian Wolff, *Burdocks* (Two versions on reserve: LCD 4363 and LCD 6571—also score, on reserve; M 1470 .W7 B9)

May 26: (Memorial Day, no class)

- Complete draft of final paper due, May 27th (expanded reference list, specific citations) (I’ll hand them back by the next class)

June 2: *Graphic Notation and Text Pieces*

June 12: Thursday, 4-7: Final class presentations (and final papers due)

### **Weekly Work**

Weekly work consists of three distinct activities (each will occupy about one hour of the class time):

1. *Performance*. Each week, a piece or selection of pieces will be assigned, to be worked on during the week as a group, sub-group, or even as soli. These will then be performed in class. There is always the possibility of picking a different work on your own, in the general rubric of the given week, but you must clear that with me first. The configuration of these groups can change, but you may only do one solo (that is, it’s important to work with others, and I might assign some of the groups).
2. *reading, listening*: Each student in the class writes, as an email to the whole class, by 6 p.m the day before class (Sunday), a short (1– 2 page) *response to the reading and listening*, including at least 3 questions for the class to discuss the next day.
3. one *short presentation per class by each student*, on a piece (score, recording [not YouTube, but actual physical recording with liner notes, etc.]) article, or book of hisr choice, in the weekly topic area. Each student picks something to present that hse feels is relevant to the subject matter, and of interest to the rest of us. These presentations should be about 10 minutes. Your presentation should focus on your own considered articulation of the ideas and context of your chosen item. Do not rely on the web as part of your presentation, but you may bring in and/or project scores, your own diagrams, etc.

### **Final Paper**

The final paper may be on a topic of your choice, on performance practice more or less from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on. Papers should be professionally written,

original, and have a specific topic. Think of them as papers that might be submitted to a regional conference in musicology or contemporary music (that is, the kind of places graduate students often give papers). You must discuss and clear your specific final paper topic with me.

Papers are due on the last day of finals (June 12), when students will also do a presentation. The final paper develops in three preliminary stages during the course of the class, all must be handed in on time (see course schedule):

1. Proposal (and resource list)
2. Detailed Outline
3. Complete Draft
4. Final, revised version of paper

All of these must be *on paper*, handed in on-time (see the class schedule). I won't read emailed pdfs. Before you hand anything in, you must 1) proof and edit on the computer, and 2) print it out, proof and edit it again, on paper (and read it aloud). I want the results of that editing process. The final paper must have a correct bibliography/discography, footnotes as needed, and conform to publishable conventions of citation, etc. Writing is important, and I reserve the right to not accept something as being on-time if the writing is poor, unedited, and suggests that a disciplined editing process has not been followed.

You will also give a final presentation of your topic in the finals period (see schedule), which will be like a presentation to a professional meeting (no YouTube!).

Suggested, general final paper topics (yours should be more specific):

- Indeterminacy; process music; minimalism
- Strategy techniques in composition and performance
- Complexity, difficulty and performance
- Graphic notation
- New performance practices in world and traditional and other genres
- Text based scores
- Varieties of vocal styles in performance, other than those of the "bel canto" tradition
- Electric guitar in composition from the 1960s to the present
- The evolution of string [brass, vocal, piano, wind, ...] instrument notation and performance
- Experimental instrument building and concomitant performance practices
- New vocal techniques [history, important innovators (composers/performers), technical ideas"]
- New techniques for [substitute instrument]: history, recent innovations, specific techniques or classes of techniques
- Important and influential figures and organizations in the evolution of contemporary performance practice (George Lewis, Carla Bley, Sonny Sharrock, Cornelius Cardew, AACM, MEV, Art Ensemble of Chicago, Scratch Orchestra, AMM, Butch Morris, John Zorn, Albert Ayler, Pauline Oliveros, Christian Wolff, Derek Bailey, Anthony Braxton,

Lois V Vierk, Malcolm Goldstein, Myra Melford, Mary Halvorson, Philip Corner, Skip LaPlante (Music for Homemade Instruments), John Coltrane, Barbara Benary (Gamelan Son of Lion), Tom Nunn (instrument builder), Henry Threadgill, ... suggest your own)

- Live electronic practices: analog, digital, DIY, interactive, “acousmatic”
- The effect of computer and electronic music on live performance
- Orchestral works for multiple conductors: Stockhausen, Ives, Brown, Wolff, ...
- Experimental intonation practices in contemporary music (performance issues)
- Performance and the fusions of musical styles and genres, both inter- and intra-nationally
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*Optionally*, and with the consent and supervision of me, you may choose to do *a significant performance, and document, in writing* (with the same schedule as the paper), the process, the problems presented by the piece, and its relevance to the study of contemporary performance practice.