

Seminar in Music Theory: Twelve-Tone Techniques

Fall 2019

T 2:00–4:45

MEH 3244

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Office hours: M 9–10, F 11:15–12:15

Course Description

The use of rigorous Schoenbergian twelve-tone technique—where every note of a composition can be traced to a P, R, I, or RI form of a single tone row—characterizes only a small percentage of music that can be called twelve-tone. Recent research decenters Schoenbergian dodecaphony and shifts focus to a variety of twelve-tone *techniques*, each of which poses its own challenges for listening, analysis, and conceptualization. We will explore the theoretical scholarship that makes sense of these techniques not from composer-based (poietic) perspectives, but rather from listener-based (esthetic) perspectives.

Course Requirements

10 response essays (2–3 pages): Write a brief essay in which you respond to some aspect of the reading assigned for that week’s class. There is no set format for the essays, although they should draw on *each* of the week’s readings in some manner, and if possible, involve some original analysis of music of your choice. Accompanying examples (graphical and musical) are encouraged, although they do not count toward the page length requirement. Essays are due on **Monday at 11:59 p.m.**, the evening before our class meeting. Upload them to Blackboard, then read your classmates’ essays. I will not provide written feedback on the response essays, but I will use them to help shape our class discussion for the week.

2 short presentations (15 minutes): Share complete analyses of twelve-tone works of your choice. The short presentations are intended to display your work-in-progress toward the final paper. Annotated scores, handouts, bibliography, and recordings may all be used.

Final presentation (30 minutes) and paper (20–30 pages): Write a scholarly paper that presents a new idea, situated with respect to the existing literature, with regard to some twelve-tone repertoire or theory. The paper should draw on extensive original analysis and should contain several musical examples and a robust bibliography. Present your findings in a 30-minute class presentation, which may be formal (conference-style) or informal in orientation.

August 27

Twelve-Toneness

No essay due

Yuri Kholopov, “Who Invented Twelve-Tone Technique?,” translation by Christopher Segall of “Kto izobryol 12-tonovuyu tekhniku?,” in *Problemi istorii avstro-nemetskoy muziki: Pervaya tret’ XX veka* (Moscow: Gosudarstvenniy muzikal’no-pedagogicheskiy institut imeni Gnesinikh, 1983), 34–58.

Zachary Cairns, “Svetlana Kurbatskaya on Serial Music: Twelve Categories of ‘Twelve-Toneness,’” *Gamut* 5 (2012).

September 3

Dodecaphony

Essay #1 due (analytical)

Anton Webern, Symphony, op. 21, II (1928).

Arnold Schoenberg, Piano Piece, op. 33a (1929).

Alfred Schnittke, Violin Sonata No. 1, III (1963).

The Webern and Schoenberg works are strictly dodecaphonic. Determine the tone rows yourself (try to avoid looking them up), and produce a tone-row analysis. The Schnittke movement includes both twelve-tone and non-twelve-tone material. Consult the following essay for a point of entry into your analysis.

Fíona Héarún-Javakhishvili, “The Co-Existence of Tonality and Dodecaphony in Schnittke’s First Violin Sonata: Their Crystallisation within a Cyclic Structure,” in *Seeking the Soul: The Music of Alfred Schnittke*, ed. George Odam (London: Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 2002), 67–77.

September 10

North America

Essay #2 due

Joseph N. Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–173.

Catherine Nolan, “The First Canadian Serialist,” in *Weinzweig: Essays on His Life and Music*, ed. John Beckwith and Brian Cherney (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 131–50.

September 17

Twelve-Tone Chords

Essay #3 due

Martina Homma, “The Twelve-Tone Chord: Towards a New Definition of Twelve-Tone Music? Considering Early 12-Tone-Chords (Since 1911) and Discussing Theoretical Implications of 12-Tone-Chord-Music by Darius Milhaud, Nicolaj Obuchov and Witold Lutosławski,” in *Witold Lutosławski: Człowiek i dzieło w perspektywie kultury muzycznej XX wieku*, ed. Jan Astriab, Maciej Jabłoński, and Jan Stęszewski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 1999), 109–27.

Mark Sallmen, “Listening to the Music Itself: Breaking through the Shell of Elliott Carter’s ‘In Genesis,’” *Music Theory Online* 13/3 (2007).

Christopher Segall, “Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 2, Yuri Kholopov, and the Theory of Twelve-Tone Chords,” *Music Theory Online* 24/2 (2018).

September 24

Schoenberg and His School

Essay #4 due

Jack Boss, *Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–10, 35–121.

Christoph Neidhöfer and Peter Schubert, “Form and Serial Function in Leibowitz’s *Trois poèmes de Pierre Reverdy*,” in *Formal Functions in Perspective: Essays on Musical Form from Haydn to Adorno*, ed. Steven Vande Moortele, Julie Pednault-Deslauriers, and Nathan John Martin (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 373–410.

Laura Emmerly, “Elliott Carter’s and Luigi Nono’s Analyses of Schoenberg’s *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31: Divergent Approaches to Serialism,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 16/2 (2019): 191–229.

October 1

Presentation #1

October 8

Precursors to Twelve-Tone Technique

Essay #5 due

Roy J. Guenther, “Varvara Dernova’s System of Analysis of the Music of Skryabin,” in *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music*, ed. Gordon D. McQuere (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 165–216.

David Carson Berry, “The Meaning(s) of ‘Without’: An Exploration of Liszt’s *Bagatelle ohne Tonart*,” *19th-Century Music* 27/3 (2004): 230–62.

Inessa Bazayev, “Triple Sharps, Q_{nt} Relations, and Symmetries: Orthography in the Music of Nicolai Roslavets,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 35/1 (2013): 111–31.

October 15

Stravinsky and Shostakovich

Essay #6 due

Joseph N. Straus, *Stravinsky’s Late Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64–182.

Peter J. Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions and the Politics and Practice of Soviet Serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 303–54.

Stephen C. Brown, “Twelve-Tone Rows and Aggregate Melodies in the Music of Shostakovich,” *Journal of Music Theory* 59/2 (2015): 191–234.

October 22

Schnittke and Denisov

Essay #7 due

Christopher Segall, “*Klingende Buchstaben*: Principles of Alfred Schnittke’s Monogram Technique,” *Journal of Musicology* 30/2 (2013): 252–86.

Zachary Cairns, “Interval-Class Succession Graphs in Edison Denisov’s Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano,” *Music Theory and Analysis* 5/2 (2018): 117–46.

Amin Honarmand, “Aggregates and Quasi-Aggregates: A Study of Dodecaphony in Schnittke’s Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 41/2 (2019).

October 29
Presentation #2

November 5
Webern
Essay #8 due

Julian Hook and Jack Douthett, "Uniform Triadic Transformations and the Twelve-Tone Music of Webern," *Perspectives of New Music* 46/1 (2008): 91–151.

Sebastiano Bisciglia, "A Quantitative View of Serial Analysis," *Music Theory Spectrum* 39/1 (2017): 109–23.

Brian Moseley, "Transformation Chains, Associative Areas, and a Principle of Form for Anton Webern's Twelve-Tone Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 41/2 (2019).

November 12
Post-War Avant-Garde
Essay #9 due

Jeannie Ma. Guerrero, "Serial Intervention in Nono's *Il canto sospeso*," *Music Theory Online* 12/1 (2006).

C. Catherine Losada, "Complex Multiplication, Structure, and Process: Harmony and Form in Boulez's *Structures II*," *Music Theory Spectrum* 36/1 (2014): 86–120.

Eveline Vernooij, "Twelve-Tone Technique in Varèse's Sketches of *Déserts*," *Perspectives of New Music* 52/3 (2014): 223–41.

November 19
Problems of Serialism
Essay #10 due

M. J. Grant, *Serial Music, Serial Aesthetics: Compositional Theory in Post-War Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 131–64.

Joseph N. Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177–235.

Zachary Bernstein, "The Problem of Completeness in Milton Babbitt's Music and Thought," *Music Theory Spectrum* 38/2 (2016): 241–64.

November 26 & December 3
Final Presentations

December 10
Final Paper due