

Abstracts for AMS/SEM Papers
(alphabetical by author)

**The Desert Blossoms Like a Rose: Musical Depictions of Southern Utah's
Wilderness**

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Landscapes have served as a source of inspiration for composers across time. Throughout the past fifty years, several composers have been particularly affected by the red rocks and deserts of southern Utah; the region is the subject of Olivier Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux étoiles* (1974), John Duffy's *Symphony No. 1: Utah* (1989), Michael S. Horwood's *National Park Suite* (1991), and Nico Muhly's *Control* (2015). As Denise Von Glahn demonstrates in *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (2004), music inspired by specific places cannot be fully understood unless considered in relation to the location's cultural context, and this is especially true of the Western art music based on southern Utah's wilderness spaces. My paper establishes the region as a compelling musical subject because of its embodiment of the accumulated connotations of the idea of wilderness, the problematic associations of which include an emphasis on "pristine" and "sublime" spaces perceived as devoid of human influence, which (in the case of southern Utah) does not take into account the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples by early Mormon settlers that enabled the initial protected land designations in the region. Using Duffy's and Horwood's pieces as case studies, I argue that their compositions inspired by southern Utah (which are centered on specific national parks and recreation areas) reflect and explicate the problematic aspects of the "wilderness" myth and prevailing narratives about the region in ways that reinforce the representations of the place and its history idealized by Western settlers.

Death's Last Laugh: Chopin's Scherzi and the Danse Macabre

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Frédéric Chopin's scherzi—the three from the Op. 35, 58 and 65 sonatas and the four independent pieces of that title, have since they first appeared been described as disturbing, demonic, fantastical, fierce, portentous, ironic, gloomy, scornful, even oneiric...but little more than the descriptors themselves has been adduced in support. Topical analysis supports this view of the scherzo genre, identifying many of the constituent gestures found in these works as elements of the Macabre Style, the constellation of topics that evokes mortality: desperate, futile resistance to one's own death; calm religious determinism; ghastly, grieving obedience to death's dictates; the promise of mercy and bliss.

At four movements, the B \flat minor sonata, Op. 35, is surely Chopin's most substantial essay in the Macabre Style; its scherzo movement is thus a natural starting point for examining his approach to the genre as a whole. Stylistic analysis of the piece reveals a dense concentration of musical gestures common to Ombra, Demonic Style, and (in the B section) lullaby—all subcategories of the Macabre topos. More specifically, the defining language of this work is rooted in the Danse Macabre, the medieval metaphor for confrontation with inexorable death. In this sonata, the scherzo—immediately followed by the most famous funeral march in the repertoire—symbolizes the final struggle in death's grip. The numerous stylistic

parallels with the other scherzi, then, suggest that the scherzo genre itself, for the mortality-obsessed Chopin, was an expression of the bitterest irony of the human condition: dust to dust.

Transgressive Skills: Musical Knowledge in the Self-Portraits of Sofonisba Anguissola

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In the first decade of her artistic output, Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1527-1625/26) was often both creator and subject, as she explored various modes of self-presentation and promotion. As a young woman seeking advancement for herself and her noble family, Sofonisba tread a precarious path in these early self-portraits, many of which were gifted to potential benefactors. While her class gave her access to training, time, and materials, Sofonisba could never be perceived as professional. In order to attract attention, she had to transgress expectations of her gender, enticing her elite viewers with her beauty, skill, and visual wit, while also remaining a decorous and respectable member of the nobility. The popular leisure activities of members of her class were among the limited subjects available to her, and like a few other sixteenth-century female painters, two of her extant self-portraits include musical objects and imply the music-making she was known to have participated in during social gatherings. While musical skill was desirable for all Italian courtiers, the association of musical excellence with courtesans created a potential predicament, especially for aristocratic women. Through its association with the pulse in medical thought, musical time could also represent aging in paintings. Consideration of her class, gender, and age are crucial to understanding Sofonisba's self-presentation, especially in the technical musical elements of her self-portraits. In both her musical self-portraits and her courtly activities, Sofonisba transgressed but did not break social boundaries, successfully asserting the unique qualities of her body, voice, and mind through musical engagement.

Ernesto Lecuona: "The Cuban Gershwin"

Lauren Martinez, The University of Texas at El Paso

George Gershwin and Ernesto Lecuona have been compared in the past by music critics due to Lecuona's response to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in the form of *Rapsodia negra*. The influence of Gershwin on Lecuona, "The Cuban Gershwin," extends far beyond a single homage, however. While in the United States and after having met Gershwin, Lecuona began building upon his Afro-Cuban, nationalistic roots with the incorporation of American jazz elements, reflecting Gershwin's profound influence on his late-style works. Beyond the similarities that exist between these two pieces, this study deepens the Gershwin-Lecuona connection by demonstrating an almost note-to-note similarity between Lecuona's *Palomitas blancas* and Gershwin's *Nobody But You*. There were compositional elements Gershwin used that Lecuona later implemented into his own pieces that he never used prior to meeting Gershwin: walking bass chord progression and what I call the chromatic "linking" scale. I assert that Gershwin had a lasting impact on Lecuona's late period. "The Cuban Gershwin" nickname goes much further than most realize.

The Aesthetic of Primitivism: Queen Caroline and the Taming of the Scots

Paul Moulton, The College of Idaho

English audiences in the early eighteenth century were enthralled with musical spectacle. Due to London's growing wealth as a result of colonialism, it imported Italian musicians, exotic castrati, and phenoms like Handel. While all of this was in motion, seeds of transformation were occurring at the very center of London's social life. Queen Caroline (1683-1737)—"the cleverest queen consort"—helped pioneer a new aesthetic. Her patronage of the "primitive" also cultivated a market for Scottish songbooks.

Reacting to the artificiality and pomp of the court, Caroline was drawn to the natural and "authentic." She uprooted the formal Baroque gardens of Kensington Palace and replaced it with rolling lawns. On another estate, her landscape included a hermitage, complete with a resident hermit. Perhaps the most unusual figure in her court was Peter the "Wild Boy," a nonverbal teen found living in a German forest. He scampered on all four and preferred to go naked—primitive indeed. In adopting these causes, Caroline transformed aesthetic tastes.

An increase in Scottish songbook publication paralleled Caroline's love of primitivism. *Orpheus Caledonius* (1725) was published at Caroline's request by the Scotsman William Thomson. For the English, these songbooks fed a colonial fascination with the "primitive." Thomson's songbook fits neatly alongside Caroline's other curiosities: natural gardens, rustic follies, hermits, and Wild Peter. In this context, the songbooks functioned as an act of taming and othering the Scottish people. Although seemingly "authentic," they were just another spectacle—an opportunity for courtly entertainment.

A Labor of Love

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Workers across the United States are reckoning with unfair labor conditions by unionizing and speaking out. Systemic undervaluing of many workers has created a climate of fear, hidden agendas, and pervasive labor misconduct. The pageantry/marching arts are no exception. As a cultural insider, I conducted interviews, had many informal conversations, and ran a large survey that uncovered how the marching arts exploit instructors extensively despite their experience, education, and efforts. A systematic proclivity toward late payments, abused contracts, egregiously low compensation, and free labor begs the question: how can programs continually mistreat instructors this way? I explore this question through five themes developed from my own ethnography and scholarship in ethnomusicology, labor, sociology, and cultural policy. I hope to uplift the voices of instructors fighting for their worth in an industry that rarely gives as much as it takes and propose solutions for lasting change.

Re-forging the Nation: Expressions of National Identity in Chinese Metal

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In the development of global and regional metal musics, cultural and musical hybridity continue to play a central role, not least through the work of metal bands who perform and participate in the metal scene on a national or regional level. As a means of localizing metal music, these artists often include historical references and cultural metaphors in their lyrics; some also incorporate regional or national traditional instruments into the idiom of metal music. One group who has achieved great commercial success through such compositional decisions is Tang Dynasty, whose self-titled album took China by storm in 1992. More recently, Black Kirin's *National Trauma* double release in 2015 presents an alternative model of how Chinese traditional music and metal can be interwoven. In this study, I argue that Chinese traditional instruments occupy significant textural and timbral roles in the context of Chinese metal. Examining compositions from these albums by Tang Dynasty and Black Kirin, I explore how various interactions between texture, timbre, and form construct different models of cultural syncretism. Integration of this musical analysis with the accompanying lyrical imagery supports a more nuanced understanding of how Chinese metal artists express complex notions of positionality and identity.

Bach's Souvenirs: A Performance Review of C.P.E. Bach's Music

Nicholas Saucedo, The University of Texas at El Paso

In *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, Bach provides interpretational strategies for performing his works, demonstrating his musical values. Using this text as a lens, elements of three interpretations of the second movement of Bach's G major sonata are discussed in this study: instrumentation, tempo, variation of tempo, dynamics, and ornaments. For example, one performer utilized eighth notes to *accelerando* and emphasized increased motion. In the same excerpt, another performer slowed down, creating excitement by *crescendoing*, then subverting expectations by backing away at a critical point.

Each of these interpretations are correct, as Bach gave artists flexibility to choose the interpretation of certain aspects of his music. Performers should feel obligated to add and change effects, such as dynamics, *accelerando*, and *ritardando*, since Bach felt these helpful to emphasize emotion and add personalization. Performers should feel free to use a range of keyboard instruments to perform Bach's music, even those instruments he did not have access to, as he writes how all keyboard instruments are valid with appropriate technique. Despite emphasizing flexibility, Bach required specificity in some select practices. This study identifies and analyzes issues such as ornaments and tempo to suggest more informed performance practices. Through a synthesis of these elements, the musician has the ability to create a genuine performance. This study offers a fresh viewpoint on Bach's treatise as it teaches the performer and the critic to evaluate performances and offer insightful criticism.

The YAP Trap: Neoliberalism, Exclusionism, and the Commodification of Young Artists by American Opera Companies

Anna Valcour, Brandeis University

Masked behind velvet curtains, the feverish silence of expectant opera singers is broken by whispers of “in bocca al lupo” as disembodied voices answer “crepi” from the darkness. But are we safely ‘out’ of the wolf’s mouth? Testimonials from young opera singers would suggest otherwise. Emerging in the late 1950s, Young Artist Programs (YAPs) were originally designed to provide opportunities for developing artists as they honed their skills in preparation for an operatic career. Today, most American YAPs market themselves as educational, training programs that may offer mainstage roles (principal, comprimario, and chorus), coachings, masterclasses, voice lessons, networking opportunities, as well as classes in acting, wellness, movement, and entrepreneurship. However, the steady encroachment of capitalism, neoliberalism, and the myth of meritocracy has further institutionalized exclusionism, elitism, and discrimination by class, gender, and race within American opera houses.

While recent musicological scholarship has focused on misogyny within the operatic canon, very little work has engaged with the problems inherent in the operatic industrial complex. It is paramount to pivot our musicological scholarship to address present-day circumstances and its people, a concept Naomi André has coined as “engaged musicology.” So, how do operatic companies financially exploit their young artists? How is neoliberalism marketed by these training programs to entrap young singers in their quest for entrepreneurial freedom and how is it impeded? For this presentation, I interrogate U.S. YAPs’ application fees, pay-to-sings, and residencies that offer non-livable wages as gatekeeping tactics that perpetuate the commodification and economic exploitation of aspiring young singers.

Toward a Critique of Listening

Charles Wofford, The University of Colorado at Boulder

In *Jacobin* issue 41, Alexander Billet argues that under capitalism, music-as-background-noise is ubiquitous while music-as-experience is becoming the exclusive property of the wealthy. For example, we may all hear Elton John over the speakers in the supermarket, but how many people can afford to hire Elton John to play at their daughter’s wedding, as Rush Limbaugh did? In rebuttal, this paper argues that the discussion of musical experience under capitalism must include a *critique of listening*. Billet conflates musician with celebrity, falling under the spell of the same capitalist culture industry that he criticizes. In reality, profound musical experiences can be obtained from local orchestras, touring bands, jazz ensembles, or even from listening to the music on one’s phone. Moreover, the thrilling live shows of many celebrity musicians are themselves mass-produced simulacra, as these are businesses which seek to minimize risk. They are not the oracles of authentic musical experience Billet takes them to be.

The central question is *how do we listen?* How do the conditions of late capitalism shape, limit, direct, enhance, sabotage, gender, colonize, and so forth, our capacities for listening? Are we taught to listen with more reverence to people (musicians or otherwise) already approved by the market? These questions are not strictly academic or abstractly aesthetic. Any democratic polity relies on citizen’s capacity to listen to each other. The difficulties in public

political communication in the United States since 2015 make the urgency of the critique evident.