

## **GMLI 556: Musicology, Performance, Outreach**

**Professor: Dr. Benjamin Binder**

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**Office Location: Room 215, School of Music**

**Office hours: informal or by appointment**

Location of Class Meetings: Room 107, School of Music

Time and Date of Class Meetings: Tuesdays 5:15-6:55 pm

Credits: Two

Prerequisites: Graduate Status, or MUSC I-IV

### Course Description

In this course, students of performance will use musicology to develop ways of reaching out to their audiences more successfully. We will learn how to write program notes, prepare pre-concert lectures, and design unconventional performance events, all based on sound musicological research and with the goal of making the performance experience as engaging and enlightening as possible for an audience. Students will work on these projects over the course of the semester, with many opportunities for in-class feedback, review, and revision. We will study other examples of outreach materials and activities in order to assess their efficacy and inspire our own creativity. If circumstances permit, we will also put our work into practice by staging performance and outreach events for the Duquesne community and beyond.

### Course Objectives

Classical music, so we are told, is in crisis. On the one hand, its dwindling and aging audiences are less knowledgeable about the music than ever before. For them, classical music is often a high-culture status symbol that one flaunts in conversation with friends and neighbors. It also serves as a form of passive, subconscious relaxation that eases one through the airport or the dentist's chair. Or it can be an unpleasant but presumably edifying obligation, to be endured, like the eating of brussels sprouts, for the minimum time necessary. Beyond this, audiences are supposedly unwilling or unable to engage the music at any deeper level, despite the genuine initial enthusiasm that some listeners feel for it.

On the other hand, professional musicians (including performers, critics, and musicologists) appear to have taken their understanding and mastery of the repertoire to a newly exalted level that audiences could never hope to reach. Musicologists continue to probe the obscure corners of the history of music, preoccupying themselves with esoteric debates without any concern for whether their work is relevant or intelligible beyond the confines of the scholarly community. Meanwhile, performers living in the age of recording must hold

themselves to the most demanding standards of technical perfection, so that after years of training and hours upon hours of assiduous practicing, they have little time or energy left to devote to the insights of musicologists or the needs of their increasingly alienated audience.

All of these depictions, of course, are stereotypes, if not outright falsehoods. True, there is sometimes a disconcerting rift between musicologists, performers, and listeners in today's classical music world. But all three groups are really acting out of the purest of motives: a love of music. As performers, we can learn a lot of very useful stuff from our audiences and from musicologists, even though they may not always have the same level or type of expertise that we do. A basic thesis of this course is that any musical idea of value can be made comprehensible to *anyone*, provided they have the motivation and curiosity to understand it. To test this thesis, we will focus on ways of reaching out to audiences – that is, ways of making musical ideas comprehensible to them – by reaching out to musicologists (and, more broadly, the musicological approach to thinking about music). More concretely, the main objectives of this course are to improve your skills in the traditional forms of audience outreach as well to stimulate your creativity in expanding and enriching those forms. The goal in this will always be to awaken in your listeners the same passion, curiosity, and excitement that *you* feel about the music you are performing, so that those listeners will want to come back to hear you again and again.

### Learning Outcomes

Here are some of the things you will do or should be able to do by the end of the semester:

- Collect and evaluate trustworthy and useful information about a given piece of music; figure out what selections from that body of information will have the most productive impact in an outreach project for a given audience
- Translate the insights of musicology and music analysis into an accessible language that will help an audience appreciate a given piece of music more deeply
- Research, prepare, and deliver a short pre-performance talk
- Research and write program notes
- Design the basic structure of an unconventional performance event – i.e. something other than the traditional concert format – with the goal of illuminating the performed repertoire for a general audience
- Design, construct, and execute an informative and stimulating pre-concert exhibit and/or in-concert audience engagement plan
- Think creatively and insightfully about the role of the professional musician in today's music scene; understand the historical forces that led to our current situation; take a more active, effective position in shaping the future of musical life in your community

### Course Materials

For our second class meeting, we will be reading extensively from the following short book, available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

Cook, Nicholas. *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

All other materials (scores, recordings, readings, videos) will be distributed in class, posted online (on E-Res or Blackboard), and/or held on reserve behind the circulation desk at Gumberg Library. Your assignment sheets will always give precise information about the location of all necessary materials.

### Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. You are responsible for reminding me of your attendance if you are late; if you don't, you may be marked absent. Latecomers will be recorded as such; persistent or egregious lateness will be penalized at my discretion.

Absences from class are either excused or unexcused, and *only verified excuses will be accepted*. Valid excuses for missing class are limited to illness (verified by a note from a professional health-care provider), pre-existing commitments (e.g. performing ensemble tour or paid professional engagement, verified by a printed program), family emergencies (verified by Karen Kriss), mental health emergencies (verified by the Counseling Center or other health professional) and religious holidays not otherwise specified in the Duquesne calendar. You must inform me of pre-existing commitments and religious holidays as soon as possible. If you fail to do so, I may not accept the excuse. While I will hold to these guidelines, I reserve the right to determine whether or not an excuse is valid.

All unexcused absences will result in a deduction of 50 points from your final grade. Excused absences will not be penalized, provided that you make up the work you missed. Depending on the class meeting in question, this may involve peer review of other students' assignments, written commentary about class materials, or other activities. Your performance on the makeup assignment will be reflected in your preparation and participation grade (see below). If your excused absence was foreseeable (e.g. a concert tour), you must turn in the makeup assignment by the beginning of the class meeting you are missing (or, at my discretion, at some other specific time, depending on the nature of the assignment). If your excused absence was not foreseeable (e.g. illness), the makeup assignment is due by the beginning of the following class meeting.

### Graded Assignments

**Please note:** more information about all of these assignments will be distributed later in detailed assignment sheets.

1. In class no. 3, we will conduct an **information gathering exercise**. The entire class will be charged with the task of collecting information from a variety of sources (scholarly, popular, and otherwise) in a variety of media (books, journals, newspapers, internet, etc.) with the aim of generating a store of knowledge from which to draw in the construction of an outreach project. We will evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of the information we've obtained, and at the end of the day, we'll test out what pieces of information would best serve our purposes by improvising some brief pre-performance talks.
2. In class no. 4, we will perform a **musicology translation exercise**. I will assign a musicological article to each of you. In class, you will summarize that article in a brief presentation, using accessible, non-technical language, and highlighting the aspects of the article that you think would be most helpful to an audience.
3. There will be two occasions during the semester when you will research, prepare, and deliver **pre-performance talks** of a few minutes each. The first talk, in classes nos. 5-6, will be on a piece that I choose. Each of you will give a talk, but small groups of students will talk about the same piece, so that we can compare and contrast our approaches to the task. The second talk, in classes nos. 12-14, will be on a piece that you will be performing at some point during the rest of the academic year, with the idea that you will actually give this talk when that concert takes place.
4. In classes nos. 7-8, we will turn our attention to the writing of **program notes**. After reviewing and assessing a variety of program notes by other authors, we will write some of our own, in a series of drafts incorporating in-class feedback. The notes will be approximately 1000 words.
5. On Tuesday 25 April at 7:30 in the Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland, the **Duquesne University Symphony Orchestra** and **Duquesne Choirs** will be performing Brahms's *Schicksalslied*, Carl Nielsen's Flute Concerto, a short orchestral overture, and a longer orchestral piece. Our class will team up over the course of several weeks in advance of this concert to design, construct, and ultimately execute an **audience engagement project** at this concert. This may take the form of a pre-concert exhibit, in the audience will be able to view posterboards with text and images and interact with other materials and activities that you set up for them. You will also be encouraged to think of more adventurous ways to engage the audience for the evening during the concert itself, perhaps relying on multimedia or internet/app-based materials. This assignment will be graded by a small group of School of Music faculty and other music professionals whom I will invite to view the exhibit.
6. At various points during the semester, we will turn our attentions to the design of unconventional concert events. During the final exam meeting for the course on Tuesday 5/9, you will present an **elevator pitch proposal for an alternative concert design** on a musical program of your choosing. This proposal might incorporate audience participation, a variety of outreach activities, the involvement

of arts other than music, a special location, etc. All you will need to do is explain what this concert would consist of in a substantive and well-organized presentation of approximately 10 minutes, with accompanying images and explanatory tables.

7. Throughout the semester, your **general preparation and participation** for class will be a key element in the success of our work. This segment of your grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of your feedback on other students' work and your involvement with our discussions of class material (e.g. readings, recordings, videos). In other words, this part of your grade will be determined by all class activities not covered by the six assignments listed above.

### Other Information About Graded Assignments

I will not accept any late assignments in this course. All late/missed assignments receive a grade of 0. I will allow you *one extension* during the term, provided it is justified. The earlier you request an extension, the more likely I am to authorize it. An extension may be used on any written assignment or oral presentation, *except* for any aspect of the DUSO project and the concert design elevator pitches. If you use an extension, however, please be advised that you may not be able to receive any peer feedback on your work.

Please note that all written assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) to Blackboard, following the instructions given on the assignment sheet.

### Grading Scheme

Information gathering exercise:	50
Musicology translation exercise:	50
Pre-performance talk I:	150
Pre-performance talk II:	150
Program notes:	150
DUSO project:	200
Concert design elevator pitch:	150
General preparation and participation:	100
Total:	1000

### Scale For Final Grades

At the end of the semester, you can add up all the points you've earned to determine your final grade:

A 930-1000	A- 900-929	B+ 870-899	B 830-869	B- 800-829	C+ 770-799
C 700-769	D 600-699	F Below 600			

## Academic Integrity

All violations of the Duquesne University Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.duq.edu/academics/university-catalogs/2016-2017-undergraduate/academic-policies/academic-integrity>) will be handled with the utmost severity, according to the procedures explained in the policy. Please review the policy in detail. If you witness an integrity violation, you must inform me about it immediately. If you are an accomplice to an integrity violation, you will be prosecuted along with the principal perpetrators. I will be on the lookout at all times for integrity offenses, and I encourage you to do the same. Our learning environment is not a police state, of course, but it should be a place of the highest ethical standards, where respect and concern for the academic process and for one's colleagues is paramount.

Please understand that, in general, you can help one another outside of class in getting a better handle on course material and assignments. However, when it comes to the actual specific execution of any graded assignment – the pre-performance talks, the program notes, the concert proposal, and other weekly assignments – you must do all your own work. (The DUSO project, of course, will be a collaborative effort.) I strongly encourage you to contact me at once if you have any questions or concerns about a possible academic integrity issue, so that we can maximize your ability to help one another and minimize the chances of an unintended violation.

## Students With Documented Disabilities

All students who have documented disabilities (physical, psychological, or otherwise) must meet with me during the first two weeks of class to arrange for appropriate accommodations. This must be handled through the Office of Disability Services. For more information, please see the office website at <http://www.duq.edu/life-at-duquesne/student-services/disability-services>.

## Office Hours and Extra Help

Please knock on my door at any time if you would like my help with anything whatsoever relating to the course. If I'm free, I'll be happy to meet with you. I can also make a specific appointment with you to meet at a particular time; just send me an e-mail or ask me in class.

## Course Schedule:

**Please note:** This schedule is a general guide to the semester; topics and activities may change slightly depending on our progress and preferences. Look to the schedule for planning purposes, but refer to the assignment sheets for all specific assignments. If any changes are made to assignments after the sheet has been distributed, I will let you know via e-mail and the Blackboard announcements page.

(NB: All Blackboard announcements are duplicated as e-mails, so if you lose track of your e-mail for some reason, you can always check Blackboard for any updates you may have missed.)

Class No. 1: Introduction

Tuesday 1/17

Class No. 2: Issues in audience engagement, via a historical reality check on the state of classical music

Tuesday 1/24

- Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*
- Alex Ross, "Listen to This: Crossing the Border from Classical to Pop"

Class No. 3: Building an information base

Tuesday 1/31

- Information gathering exercise on Handel's *Messiah*
- Brainstorming possibilities for outreach – what should we talk about?

Class No. 4: Making musicology accessible and useful

Tuesday 2/7

- Musicology translation exercise

Class No. 5: Pre-performance talk I

Tuesday 2/14

- First half of class presents talks

Class No. 6: Pre-performance talk I again

Tuesday 2/21

- Second half of class presents talks

Class No. 7: Writing program notes, part 1

Tuesday 2/28

- Review and assessment of classic and unconventional program notes
- In-class writing exercises

**NO CLASS Tuesday 3/7: Spring Break**

Class No. 8: Writing program notes, part 2; DUSO project

Tuesday 3/14

- Group review and peer assessment of first draft of program notes
- DUSO project: explanation of assignment, initial brainstorming and thoughts

Class No. 9: Alternatives to traditional concert design; DUSO project

Tuesday 3/21

- Review and evaluation of unconventional concert events, performing organizations and initiatives, etc.

- DUSO project: time for discussion, layout, planning

**Wednesday 3/22: FUSE@PSO - Tchaikovsky and Drake mashup with Steve Hackman – Heinz Hall, 5:00 pm happy hour, 6:30 pm concert**

**Saturday 3/25: Bang on a Can, *Field Recordings* concert – Carnegie Music Hall (Oakland), 8 pm**

Class No. 10: More alternative concert designs; multimedia forms of outreach; preparation for film screening discussion; DUSO project

Tuesday 3/28

- Discussion of FUSE and Bang on a Can concerts
- Exploration of internet-based, app-based, and other technologically-informed approaches to audience engagement
- Preparation for film screening discussion, *What Would Beethoven Do?*
- More time for DUSO project work

**Monday 4/3: Film screening, *What Would Beethoven Do?*, followed by audience discussion led by Dr. Binder and class members – PNC Recital Hall, 7:30 pm**

Class No. 11: Pre-performance talk II; DUSO project

Tuesday 4/4

- First third of class gives talks
- Film screening post-mortem
- More time for DUSO project work

Class No. 12: Pre-performance talk II; DUSO project

Tuesday 4/11

- Second third of class gives talks
- DUSO project presentation and trial run

**NO CLASS Tuesday 4/18: Class meets according to Monday schedule**

Class No. 13: DUSO concert day

Tuesday 4/25

- Class meets in Carnegie Music Hall in advance of DUSO concert
- Use time to set up DUSO project

Class No. 14: Pre-performance talk II

Tuesday 5/2

- Last third of class presents talks
- DUSO project post-mortem
- Wrap-up discussion and reflection

**Tuesday 5/9, 5:15-6:55 (regular class time, location TBD): presentation of alternative concert design elevator pitches**