

GMLI 558: Studying Music as Performance

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Office Location: Room 215, School of Music

Office hours: informal or by appointment

Location of Class Meetings: Room 307, School of Music

Time and Date of Class Meetings: Mondays 10:00-11:40 AM

Credits: Two

Prerequisites: Graduate Status, or MUSC I-IV

Course Description

We commonly acknowledge that music is one of the performing arts. Yet when we talk about music, we usually refer to it as a thing rather than an activity, as something that *is* rather than something one *does*. In this course, we will discover what we can learn about music (and ourselves as musicians) when we put performance at the center of our musicological inquiry. While our focus will be on the Western classical tradition, we will also have ample opportunity to consider popular music, non-Western music, and other musical performance situations that take place outside of the concert hall and opera house.

Course Objectives

In the tradition of Western art music as we customarily conceive of it, the composer reigns supreme. It is the composer's ideas, inscribed into score notation, that are of principal importance, and the performer's job is to communicate those ideas faithfully to the listener. In this transaction between composer and listener, the performer is simply an empty vessel through which the composer's message should be transmitted without distortion or falsification.

But if this is really what happens at a typical classical music concert, then we should expect audiences at these concerts to be interested primarily in what the composer has to say in his or her music. Instead, what really commands the audience's attention at a concert most of the time is the performance itself. The comments one hears bandied about after an orchestral concert usually have to do with things like the difficulty of the fast tempos, the flubbed notes in the horns, the conductor's wild facial expressions, or the powerful effect of a particular tutti passage. Composers may have written the scores that performers play and sing from, but it is what happens in performance that keeps audiences coming back for more. After all, if the composer's intent is all we truly care about, and a recorded performance that we can play at home already expresses that intent to our satisfaction, then why would we want to go to concerts or listen to different recordings of that piece at all?

The centrality of performance to any satisfactory understanding of music may seem obvious to any ordinary music lover, especially if the music under consideration is non-classical or non-Western. Yet precisely because they had been hidebound for so long by the unquestioned assumptions that lie behind the classical tradition's reverence of the "composer," musicologists and music theorists have only recently begun to take performance seriously. One objective of this course will be to familiarize ourselves with the multitude of new and intriguing scholarly approaches to performance that have emerged in recent years. After carefully assessing this new wave of musicological thinking about performance, we will be better situated to assemble a workable theory of musical performance for ourselves (a second objective). And by taking this opportunity to reflect critically on the role of performance in our experience of music, we will also attempt to liberate ourselves from any unexamined habits of thinking that may have been limiting us as performers and musicians, thereby enabling us to make more creative and informed decisions in all areas of our lives that touch on performance (a third objective).

Learning Outcomes

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

- Define the concept of the "musical work" and explain its effect on how we customarily understand performance in the Western art tradition; assess different musical traditions in terms of their allegiance to this concept
- Describe the relationship between a given score and any particular performance of it; sort out what elements of a performance are due to the creative contribution of the performer (vs. what is notated in the score) and interpret the expressive or stylistic meaning of those contributions
- Summarize the essential features of the most influential approaches to the relationship between analysis and performance; interpret a particular performance as an analysis of the piece being performed; articulate an informed opinion about the usefulness of analysis to performance and vice versa
- Dissect performances in terms of identity, persona, and agency; answer the question, "who am I when I perform?" in multiple contexts and situations
- Sketch out a plan for an ethnographic/anthropological study of a particular performance context; analyze musical performance as a form of social and cultural activity
- Explain the role of the body and voice in creating meaning in musical performance
- Explain how what we see in a performance influences what we get out of it
- Evaluate the qualitative differences (if they exist) between live and recorded performances in various contexts; describe the effect of recording on our conception of musical performance
- Describe the nature and meaning of the forms of interactivity that unfold between the participants in a performance or rehearsal

- Assess the challenges and creative opportunities inherent in any attempt to recover past musical performances and performance situations
- Reveal the creative accomplishments and ideological underpinnings of the career of a notable performer
- Apply the concepts of the course to your own interests and activities in musical performance; conduct effective independent scholarly research into musical performance; create professional-level scholarly outcomes in musicology (i.e. conference paper)

Course Materials

All 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. The makeup assignment I give you will probably consist of a written summary and critique of the materials we had discussed for the class you missed, but it may consist of other activities as well. You need to complete the makeup assignment in order to avoid the 50-point penalty, and your performance on the makeup assignment will be counted as your preparation and participation for the class you missed (see info on preparation and participation grade 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

1. For the most part, this will be a discussion-based, workshop-style seminar course, supplemented by a few mini-lectures from time to time. Therefore, a significant portion of your final grade will be determined by the level of your **preparation and participation** in class. At the beginning of every class meeting, I will distribute an assignment sheet dictating what you are expected to read, listen to, analyze, study, think about, and generally do or be ready to do before our next meeting. Your preparation and participation grade will be based largely on how well you are able to demonstrate during our discussion that you have done this assignment. Your grade is also dependent on active, engaged, creative, thoughtful, and constructive participation in our discussions, both in terms of quantity and quality. Be aware that sparse, insubstantial and/or non-existent participation will likely result in a very low participation grade.

Shortly before the midpoint of the semester, I will send you a report to let you know how you are doing in the area of preparation and participation. I will give you a sense of what grade you would receive in that area if the class were already over. However, please keep in mind that this will only be an approximate indication of where your grade currently stands, not an actual grade.

2. For 11 of our class meetings, you will have the opportunity to submit a **response paper** as part of that week's assignment. At the end of each week's assignment sheet, I will explain what you need to do in this paper. Generally speaking, a response paper is a document of no less than 600 words (approx. 2 pages, double-spaced) in which you briefly summarize the material I've specified and offer your own critique and ideas in response to it, according to the stated instructions. These papers are intended to help you organize your thoughts before we meet, so that we can get right into the discussion with the questions, concerns, and ideas that you've already formulated. Papers are due on Blackboard by the beginning of class and should be submitted as Microsoft Word or PDF documents.

You need to complete 5 response papers by the end of the semester, which means you can skip 6 weeks of papers. It is your responsibility to keep track of this, however, not mine. Papers will be graded largely on how well they demonstrate that you've read and/or studied the material and made some substantial progress in coming to understand it. I also expect you to follow the instructions given in the assignment sheet about what you need to discuss in these papers. Your prose need not be perfect, but it should be clear enough for me to understand what you're trying to say.

3. Over the course of the semester, you will complete **three small project assignments** related to material we will be exploring during our regular class sessions:

- Analysis and performance assignment: distributed in Class No. 3 (Monday 9/12), due Friday 9/30
- Performance ethnography assignment: distributed in Class No. 6 (Monday 10/3), due Friday 10/21
- Self-study of video-recorded performance, focusing on issues of embodiment, visuality, interactivity, and/or voice: distributed in Class No. 9 (Monday 10/24), due Friday 11/18

More information about each of the three assignments will be distributed according to the schedule above.

4. At the end of the semester, you will give a **20-minute scholarly conference presentation** on a relevant topic of your choice. In this presentation, you will make an argument about an issue related to musical performance, applying some of the concepts we learned throughout the semester to a more specific subject and supplementing with your own research as necessary. Given the live aspect, you may wish to incorporate performative elements into your presentation. There will be 10 minutes after each presentation for discussion and questions. The presentations will be given in the manner of a professional scholarly conference, with concomitant expectations in terms of format and style. More information about the presentation will be distributed separately.

5. Sometime during the final exam period for the semester, you will also take a **final exam**. The purpose of this exam is to verify that you have understood and mastered the basic concepts of the course as explored in the readings. A week before the exam, I will give you a list of 10 questions that may be given on the exam. For the actual exam, I will choose 3 out of those 10 questions, and you will have 2 hours to write your answers in essay format. The exam will be given on Blackboard during a specific window of time TBD. This is an open-note exam, but you may not write your answers in advance.

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 only be used for a response paper or one of the small project assignments; no extension is possible for the presentation or final exam.

Please note that all response papers and the small project assignments must be submitted to Blackboard in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) or PDF format.

Grading Scheme

Preparation and participation:	250
Response papers:	150 (5 X 30)
Small project assignments:	200 (65, 70, 65)
Scholarly conference presentation:	250
Final exam:	150
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:

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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

All violations of the Duquesne University Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.duq.edu/academics/university-catalogs/2014-2015-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. Our learning environment 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 you can discuss each week's assignment with other students outside of class in order to help each other get a better handle on course material. However, when it comes to the actual execution of any graded assignment – the response papers, the small project assignments, the presentation, the final exam – you must do all your own work. (In addition, for the final exam, you may *only* consult with me for help.) 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 Special

Student Services. For more information, please see the office website at <http://www.duq.edu/special-students>.

Office Hours and Extra Help

Please knock on my door at any time if you would like my help with anything whatsoever related 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: Course mechanics; what is "performance"?

Monday 8/22

Class No. 2: Thinking about the musical "work" and its relationship to performance

Monday 8/29

NO CLASS 9/5: Labor Day

Class No. 3: Analysis and performance, performance as analysis; the performer as analyst

Monday 9/12

Small project assignment: analysis and performance (due Friday 9/30)

Class No. 4: How and why do performers talk about music? Towards a understanding and appreciation of "performer's discourse"

Monday 9/19

Class No. 5: Class No. 5: Identity, agency, and persona in music performance – who are you when you perform?

Monday 9/26

Analysis and performance assignment due Friday 9/30 at 8 pm

Class No. 6: Performance as ritual; ethnographic and anthropological approaches to musical performance

Monday 10/3

Small project assignment: performance ethnography (due Friday 10/21)

Class No. 7: Understanding the psycho-physical aspect of performance: embodiment, visuality, instrumentality

Monday 10/10

Class No. 8: Performance as interactivity

Monday 10/17

Performance ethnography assignment due Friday 10/21 at 8 pm

Class No. 9: "Voice"

Monday 10/24

Small project assignment: self-study of video-recorded performance, focusing on issues of embodiment, visuality, interactivity, and/or voice (due Friday 11/18)

Class No. 10: Live vs. recorded and mediatized performance

Monday 10/31

Class No. 11: Recovering performance styles of the past

Monday 11/7

Class No. 12: Case study – Glenn Gould

Monday 11/14

Self-study of video-recorded performance assignment due Friday 11/18 at 8 pm

NO CLASS 11/21: Thanksgiving break

Class No. 13: Final presentations 1 (4 students)

Monday 11/28

NO CLASS Wednesday 11/26: Thanksgiving break

Class No. 14: Final presentations 2 (4 students)

Monday 12/5

Final exam questions handed out

Wednesday 12/7: Conference day – remaining final presentations (schedule TBD)

Final exam: Monday 12/12, time TBD (taken on Blackboard)