

## CLASSICAL MUSIC IN AN AGE OF POP

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[email me](#)

[my website](#) (needs updating)

[the blog I used to write on the future of classical music](#)

[course overview](#)

### Class Schedule and Assignments

*You should read this every week, to find out what we're going to do in our next class. And to find out what your assignments for that class will be. For most of our classes, you'll have reading to do, and maybe music to listen to and videos to watch. Everything you have to read, hear, or watch is online. Just follow the links.*

*You'll also have written assignments: two short papers, and shorter assignments due one week after some of our classes. I'll email you about the short assignments. On this class schedule, I've alerted you in boldface type to the short papers, a week before they're due.*

*This schedule might change, depending on how long some of our discussions take. The assignments might change, too, because I might get new ideas — maybe from you! — of what I want to teach. I'll email all updates.*

*And one last thing. If you're reading the assignments for any week and come to a page break, please scroll down past the break. There may be more for that week on the next page. This may seem obvious, but after many years of life (and 26 years of teaching) I've learned that people — all of us, including me — sometimes miss what might seem obvious.*

January 11

*Introduction to this course. I'll tell you about myself, and about the course. Then I'll ask you all to tell me about yourselves. And, above all, about why the course interests you.*

January 18

*Your life in classical music*

In this first week after the introductory class, we'll talk about what you're doing in music now, and how you feel about it. The readings and videos are only meant as things to think about, or in the case of Ray Chen's video, something fun to amuse you. Maybe they all convey a kind of joy that I hope we all can find in our musical work. But beyond that, I don't mean to say you should do the kinds of things you'll find in this assignment. That's up to you.

Though it's true that classical music is changing. Which could give you more career choices, and also could give you more freedom — even crazy freedom — to go out of the box, and try new things.

reading:

Mark Rabideau, "[Dear Recent Music Graduate](#)"

Some thoughts about how you can shape your future. Originally from *21CM*, a webzine that used to be published by the [21st Century Musician Initiative](#) at the [DePauw University School of Music](#), the first conservatory I know of that radically changed its curriculum to address the needs of the future. Mark used to be the director of the initiative, which has been at the center of what DePauw teaches. He's now is an associate dean at the College of Arts and Media at the University of Colorado in Denver. You can read about him [here](#).

videos:

Ray Chen, "[Typical practice session \(that involves traveling back in time to clutch that embarrassing mistake you made 10 years ago\)](#)"

Mike Block, "[Breaking Away from 'Classical'](#)"

A talk from 21CMPosium, a conference held in 2016 at the DePauw School of Music. This was a conference about what it means to be a 21st century classical musician, and what conservatories should do to prepare classical musicians for the contemporary world. I gave the keynote speech.

[Mike](#) is a cellist who, among many other things, invented the [Block Strap](#), which lets him strap his cello to his chest so he can move around and even dance while he plays. He plays world music with Yo-Yo Ma's [Silk Road Ensemble](#), and directs the [Global Musician Workshop](#), a Silk Road summer program, in which musicians from many musical traditions work together.

Rimsky-Korsakov, [Scheherezade, conclusion](#) (Sinfónica de Galicia, Leif Segerstam, conductor; live performance, May 15, 2015)

This, by any standard, is a wonderful performance. But at the climax of the final movement...well, you'll have to see for yourselves. Can we *do* this, when we play classical music? And if we can, what else can we do?

*January 25*

*The crisis in classical music*

reading:

Classical music before the crisis:

Greg Sandow, "[Before the crisis](#)" (a post from my blog)

Greg Sandow, "[When opera was popular](#)" (another post from my blog)

Long ago, before the crisis, classical music was very different from what it is now. It was widely popular, was broadcast on many radio stations, and was shown on TV. New operas even ran as commercial productions on Broadway.

And the audience was young. Don't believe anyone who tells you it's always been old!

To show you how young it was, I've linked my blog post, "[When opera was popular](#)." Which tells you what happened when Geraldine Farrar, a glamorous soprano, retired from singing in 1923.

She gave a farewell performance at the Met Opera, which a famous soprano might do today. But — as a *New York Times* article on the event shows — a farewell performance in 1923 was a much bigger event than it would be now. Farrar had teenage fans, and they went wild, hanging a banner from the Met Opera balcony during the performance, and

throwing flowers on the stage. Reading about this is like taking a trip to another world, a world that really did exist, in which teenage girls went crazy for a classical music star.

The crisis begins, and grows:

reading:

Greg Sandow, "[Portrait of a crisis](#)" (blog post)

This is a description I wrote 10 years ago, when the crisis already was serious, but not as serious as it is now.

Optional reading:

Greg Sandow, "[Timeline of the crisis](#)" (blog post)

You don't have to read this, but you might find it interesting. You'll see the classical music crisis unfold, step by step, from the late 1960s into the 21st century.

Greg Sandow, "[The orchestra crisis, 2008 to 2021](#)" (prepared for this course)

Here's where the crisis starts to be very serious. You'll read about the financial problems that swept through major American orchestras, starting in 2008, and leading to bitter fights between orchestra managements and orchestra musicians. And — when musicians lost these fights, which they did every time — leading to cuts in musicians' pay.

None of this is new or secret information. I got all of it from newspapers. But what really *is* new is putting all of it together. When we look at all of it, how can we not see a major crisis unfolding? So many orchestras had to cut their expenses — sometimes drastically — in order to survive.

In the past few years, the crisis got even more troubling:

First, the pandemic made everything worse. Orchestras (and of course other classical music institutions) shut down. They stopped performing. Which put orchestras in really bad financial trouble. Normally, they make part of their income from ticket sales. Now that was gone. But they still had major expenses. Their musicians had contracts saying they had to be paid. So orchestras had to pay their musicians, even with a major part of their income gone.

reading:

Julia Jacobs, "[New York Philharmonic Musicians Agree to Years of Pandemic Pay Cuts](#)" (*New York Times*, December 7, 2020)

And then, starting this fall, the crisis began to look like...well, draw your own conclusions. What happens when the audience starts to disappear?

Orchestras and other classical music institutions were performing again, but for many of them, the audience they had before the pandemic didn't come back. Many orchestras — maybe most of the big ones in the U.S. — had trouble selling tickets. They were playing to halls that were half full, sometimes just one-third full.

There haven't been news reports about this. And yet it's happening, and surfaces sometimes in blog posts, tweets, and in at least one concert review. I've talked to people inside the orchestra world about it, and one of them, of course speaking privately, called it a "mega-crisis." And said that at least a few orchestra managers wonder how their orchestras can survive.

Because this hasn't been publicly reported, I've had to give you reading from private sources — a British blog, and a newsletter I send out.

Though there recently was a *New York Times* story about low ticket sales at the Met Opera. I've given you that to read.

Plus a press release from the Detroit Symphony, which says the orchestra is in a good place, financially. But as you'll see, the orchestra's own annual report shows this isn't true.

reading:

Andrew Mellor, "[We Need To Talk About Audiences](#)" (blog post, August 3, 2022)

Mellor is a British journalist and critic. As far as I know, he hasn't followed up on this blog post. But he was the first person I saw who called attention to the current audience crisis, which as you'll see extends beyond orchestras, and beyond the U.S.

Greg Sandow, "[Something that seems serious](#)"

This link takes you to the December issue of my newsletter. Please scroll down to find the section with the "Something that seems serious" title.

Though of course you can read the whole newsletter, if you'd like to. I love the photo of my 11 year-old son with a capybara, an adorable South American animal.

Javier C. Hernandez, "[Pandemic Woes Lead Met Opera to Tap Endowment and Embrace New Work](#)" (*New York Times*, December 26, 2022)

Detroit Symphony. spin vs. reality: What they want us to believe, and what's really happening.

["Detroit Symphony Orchestra Announces Tenth Consecutive Balanced Budget"](#)

A press release, in which they say everything is fine financially. They balanced their budget, meaning that they took in as much money as they spent. Sometimes orchestras run deficits, meaning that they spent more money than they made. That can be a sign of financial trouble, especially if the deficits go on for more than a year or two. The Detroit Symphony says they didn't do that.

[Detroit Symphony financial information, from their annual report](#)

But in that press release is a link to the Symphony's annual report, which tells a very different story.

You may not be used to reading financial information of this kind. So don't worry if you don't understand it now. I'll explain it in class.

But still, you should follow the link, and look at the report. You'll see that I've added a detailed explanation of what the numbers mean.

What it shows, in the end, is very simple. Yes, the Detroit Symphony balanced its budget in 2022. But they

did it by spending money they won't have this year. Which means they're now facing a very big deficit.

This isn't the first time I've seen orchestras pretending in public to be better off than they are. It's one reason the current audience crisis hasn't been in the news. Orchestras don't talk about it.

February 1

*What is classical music? Why should it survive?*

reading:

[Some definitions of classical music, and comments about it, from various sources](#)

An [excerpt](#) from William Weber's book *Music and the Middle Class*, describing the musical scene in Europe as it developed during the first half of the 19th century. And telling us where the term classical music comes from.

You may be surprised to learn that the term dates only from the early 19th century. And that it was used to mean music in the German tradition of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, as opposed to what was called "popular music," which meant opera and performances by popular virtuosos like Liszt. Among much else, this means that some music we now call classical — like Italian opera and some of Liszt's piano music — originally wasn't considered classical at all. And that "serious" people thought it was trash.

You may find this difficult to read, and I apologize for that. This is scholarly writing, meant for specialists, not for musicians like ourselves, or for the general public. But it's the only thing I know that explains where the term classical music came from.

listening:

[The 25 Best Classical Music Tracks of 2022](#), as picked by the *New York Times* classical music critics.

No, you don't have to listen to all of these! Though you might like to scroll through the full list, to see what these well-informed critics liked. As you'll see, they take an expansive view of classical music, and didn't only pick recordings of familiar masterworks.

I do want you to listen to three pieces from the list, all of them by living classical composers. Scroll down to find them, and then click to listen.

Dvorak and PUBLIQuartet: Improvisations on String Quartet No. 12, Allegro ma non troppo

Andrew McIntosh: "Little Jimmy at the End of Winter"

Kate Soper: "The Understanding of All Things"

Do you like these pieces? And, more important — in what way are they classical music? If these pieces are classical, how would that change any definition of classical music we'd make?

My own definition of classical music:

1. The music of the European tradition, with a long history, beginning around 1000 AD and continuing up to today, though with many changes.
2. Music that's planned in advance by a composer, and written down in a score that musicians follow when they play. This allows a composer to create music that unfolds in great detail over time, the way a novel or a film does.

I think the second part of my definition is important. People who don't listen to classical music do read novels, and do watch films. They might be interested to learn that music can engross them in much the same way.

But there's something else — things that might not be part of any formal definition of classical music, but which almost everyone, including classical musicians, believes are true.

It's what we think of when we think of classical music. It's what we hear in concert halls, what most of you study at Juilliard, what most of you play. It's music, for one thing, that's mostly from past centuries. And it's music for what we think of as classical music instruments, violins, oboes, clarinets, the piano, French horns, and all the rest. It's music that isn't improvised, isn't amplified, doesn't use electronic instruments, and doesn't have a pop music beat.

But notice that my definition of classical music doesn't rule any of these things out. And in fact, all of them have shown up in modern classical pieces. There's no reason we couldn't have a classical piece that's written for the instruments of a rock band, and for an improvising singer with a pop music voice.

Plus, if we performed 18th century and some 19th classical pieces as they were done when they were new, we'd hear a lot of improvising (as we'll see later in the course).

more reading:

Four statements by people in the classical music industry, including two leading musicians, saying in different ways that we need classical music in our culture:

Pinchas Zukerman (from a 2007 interview in the *Denver Post*):

If [classical music] is not synonymous with our existence, or [if] at least 5 to 6 percent of the population [listen to it], then society will become a jungle. And we don't want to see riots as we saw them in the '60s, because that was chaos.

Anne Parsons (former President and CEO of the Detroit Symphony, quoted in a Detroit Symphony press release during the pandemic):

The power of music has served as an enduring beacon of hope and joy through one of the most uncertain eras of our lives. Whether it's helping us escape into the beauty of a performance for a short time or bringing us together in new and unexpected ways for collective appreciation and connection, music has once again proven to be essential. This is why we are so passionate about restoring the presentation of live music for our audiences, whether that's socially-distanced and outdoors or virtually in your living room with DSO Digital Concerts.

The musicians of the Met Opera (from their website):

On March 12, 2020, the Metropolitan Opera House went dark due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In a matter of days, life in New York City was robbed of its heart and soul — the culture that vibrates through the veins of the city and makes it what it is.

Manfred Honeck (music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony; from their website):

Music provides understanding between humans and can help to foster peace where there is hostility, fear or suspicion. Music serves as a bridge between one person and another. It is through music that we can learn from each other, build connections between people, spread understanding and learn to respect each other's beliefs and values. Not only do we expand our own individual horizons and learn about other faiths and ways

of life, but it is also through music that we begin to see what we all have in common.

These are passionate statements, by people who deeply love classical music.

But what would people outside the classical music world think of what's being said? Would these statements be convincing?

Someone outside classical music — someone who doesn't listen to it, or think about it — might notice that Parsons and Honeck say "music" when what they really mean is classical music. As if classical music was the only music that exists, or the only kind that matters. Parsons so passionately wants to bring live music back, of course meaning live classical music, because it can serve as a "beacon of hope and joy." But, just possibly, could people in Detroit have been listening to music of other kinds, and gotten hope and joy from it?

Someone outside classical music might also wonder if civilization will collapse — if there will be riots — if people don't listen to classical music. I remember the 1960s, when classical was much more popular than it is now, but still there were riots. Which in any case were in Black communities, and were caused by racism.

And the Met Opera musicians... was life in New York City really robbed of its heart and soul when the Met shut down? How many New Yorkers would have felt that? How many go to the Met, watch its streaming performances in movie theaters, or even think about opera at all? How many even noticed that the Met wasn't performing?

Then when Honeck says that "It is through [classical] music that we can... learn to respect each other's beliefs and values," how true can that be, when classical music comes almost entirely from a European Christian tradition? What can it teach us about Muslim culture and religion? Or about the culture, history, and religions of India, Japan, China, or Korea? What can it teach us about Black American culture and history?

I don't mean to be harsh to Barenboim, Parsons, Honeck, and the Met musicians. As I said, they're deeply sincere. And all of us say things, at times, that others might question.

I just want to caution us. We should be careful about saying things about classical music that people outside our field won't think are true.

*February 8*

*Classical music and the rest of our culture*

**Written assignment: A paper due on Canvas, on Friday, February 17. I'll send you a link to where you should submit it there.**

**Here's the subject of the paper. I'll ask you to write about two things.**

**First, what does classical music mean to you? Why do you love it? What good things does it bring to your life?**

**And then, second, when you read what other people — people outside classical music — value in their culture, how would you compare that with what you value in classical music? Is it similar? Different? Does it give you what other people get from culture of other kinds? Is there anything in other culture that classical music can't give you? Is there anything in classical music that you can't get in other kinds of culture?**

**This should be a very personal paper. Please write it informally, speaking very much for yourself. Speaking, if you like, from your heart. Though you should use what you know about the culture outside classical music, both things you already know, or things you learn in this week's class.**

**Again, this paper is due on Friday, February 17. If you're going to be late with this — or with any other written assignment — you must let me know in advance, so we can set another due date.**

**How long should this paper be? As long or short as you like. I might suggest writing three pages, but if you can say what you're thinking in less space than that, go for it.**

**And again, feel free to write in a normal, everyday, informal style. This isn't an academic paper.**

graphics:

How important does the rest of the world think classical music is?

Take a look at these graphics:

[Many musical genres](#), as their names are displayed on Tidal, the streaming service I use. This is the page you see if you want to listen to music in a particular genre. You click on the genre's name, and you can explore what's available.

How important does classical music look here? They make it no more important than any other music. It's just one of many genres, listed equally with other musical styles, like hiphop, country music, and K-Pop.

And if you look at [musical genres on Spotify](#), the most popular streaming service, classical music seems even less important. It's one of 65 categories of music. There are so many categories displayed that I couldn't capture them all in a screenshot. And even then, you might have to zoom out in your browser, to see everything I *could* capture. How long will it take you to find classical?

reading:

Marcus Westbury, "[Mozart cover bands rake in the moolah](#)" (*Sydney [Australia] Morning Herald*, October 18, 2007)

A challenge to classical music — or, more specifically, to classical music funding — by [an important Australian cultural figure](#). He produces art events, and sometimes writes about the arts. He's not against classical music, but he asks a pointed question: Why should orchestras and opera companies get so much money, when other things in Australia, including other arts, get so much less?

Another question he asks is why classical music institutions focus so much on music from the past.

"Great art to me [he writes] creates a resonance and opens up possibilities; it isn't the echoes of the past. It's not something you reproduce proficiently. Art is made out of anger or curiosity or awe or beauty or because you're in love or want someone to fall in love with you.

"Artists don't just preserve the past. They make new things from the sum total of human experience."

What do you think of those ideas? Do they describe what we do in classical music?

"Cover bands," if you don't know the term, are pop bands that only play hits by other people. Since the leading people in pop music perform new music they write themselves, cover bands are considered inferior.

Harriet Sherwood, "[Nissan Dorma: future of opera is in car parks and pubs, Arts Council chief says](#)" (*The Guardian*, November 14, 2022)

If you think ideas like Westbury's don't convince many people, look at what the British arts council did last year. It took money away from big classical music groups, and gave it to smaller arts groups. It also took money away from groups in London, which of course is the biggest city in Britain, and the one with the most classical music. Some of the money that used to be given to classical music



in London now goes to groups in the north of England, a deprived area where there's less art of any kind.

One major group, the English National Opera, a very big opera company in London, will get no money at all. Well, unless it makes a major change in its operation, and moves to the northern city of Manchester. The British classical music community is outraged.

Here are some attempts to connect classical music to the world outside it, and especially to movements for social change:

Fred Bronstein, "[Diversity critical to survival of classical music field](#)" (*Baltimore Sun*, March 1, 2019; the dean at Peabody writes in the Baltimore newspaper that classical music can't survive without diversity).

Anne Midgette, "[A tenor looks beyond opera and explores being a black man in America](#)" (*Washington Post*, April 5, 2019)

Jasper Parrott, "[Classical music must play its part in tackling the climate crisis](#)" (*The Guardian*, December 20, 2019)

We surround ourselves with classical music, and then maybe we read or watch the news, full of problems like racism and climate change. And we may not think that classical music has much to do with any of that, because when we play Brahms, current problems don't seem to be involved. In these readings, though, you'll meet people who think classical music *should* be involved with current problems, including the dean of a major music school.

One of the people you'll meet is Lawrence Brownlee, an opera superstar. He's Black, and while he loves the familiar operas he sings, he also wants to sing music that speaks to his Black identity.

Jasper Parrott, finally, is an artist manager in Britain, and isn't the first to notice that when classical musicians go on tour, there's a bad impact on climate. We fly to our destinations, and there's growing awareness that planes release great amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, thus contributing to global heating. This is especially bad when orchestras tour, because they charter private planes that otherwise might not be flying. Parrott says we should take this seriously, and either tour less, or travel by train. Do you agree?

Finally, what does the world outside classical music really look like? What interests people? What do they think about, in culture and the arts, and in their lives?

Here's a look at this, as I've come across it in some of the reading I do every day:

["Everything's great when we're downtown"](#) (from *Seven:Thirty*, one of three newsletters I read about life in Washington, DC, where I live. This is their January 4, 2023 issue.)

["Music that will be forever in my heart": readers' best albums of 2022"](#) (*The Guardian*, January 3, 2023)

[Your DC-Area Playlist: 17 Local Musicians To Check Out in 2023](#) (from *DCist*, another Washington, DC newsletter, December 22, 2022)

I don't expect you to read every word of these. Just skim through, and see what they talk about. In the *Seven:Thirty* newsletter, for instance, look at the "Weekly Scheduler," listing things to do each day of the week. They recommend — besides serious talks about books, cooking, politics, and history — improvised music, free-style jazz, local rock bands, and music that's meditative. There's not a word about classical music.

In the music picks by *Guardian* readers, look at the variety of music, and how most of the artists aren't very famous. Also look at how old the readers are. You might think pop music fans are mostly young, but a lot of these people are in their 40s, 50s, or even 60s.

In the local DC musicians, look at how many musical genres there are, and how many of the artists combine many genres: "cherry-picking elements from emo, country, rap, and rock to create his own sound... classically-trained powerhouse vocals against loud messy guitar."

Also look at what their music is about: "the female experience and the frustrations that come with that... An avid runner, he showed love to Rock Creek Park... he raps about everything from his Liberian heritage to his complex feelings about his rising career."

People today expect music to be complex and personal in these ways.

On the larger subject of pop music, we should understand that it plays a huge role in worldwide culture. It's the musical universe most people inhabit, helping to shape their views of who they are, and of what's going on in the world around them. Often it challenges what people think.

You may know this, of course, and maybe you've found it true for yourself. But in my experience, this is something that not everyone in classical music understands. No matter how profound classical music might be, it might not offer the connection to the world that pop music does.

So here are reading and video assignments, to help show how important pop music can be, taking examples from two very different countries, Senegal and Ukraine.

Ricci Shryock, "["Rap does not shut up": hip-hop women of Senegal](#)" (*The Guardian*, December 31, 2019). Women in this African country use hip-hop to change the way they think of themselves. Instead of reading this, you could just watch a [video](#). Only five and a half minutes long, in which one of these Senegalese women says everything written in the reading. The reading is fine, but the video is more fun.

Liana Satenstein, "[Meet Alyona Alyona, Ukraine's Most Unlikely Rap Star](#)" (*Vogue*, April 11, 2019). This was written — and Alyona Alyona first got famous — before the war began.

So everything here is happy. There's a video linked in the reading, but I like [this one](#) better. It's Alyona's first big hit — called "Ribki" ("Fish"), in which this large woman looks joyful and free, showing herself off in a bathing suit.

Once the war began, of course things got more serious. Here's a [video](#), made with a Ukrainian rock singer, Jerry Heil, in which Alyona wistfully longs for better times.

I don't know whether you'll like this music. I like it, but no matter what any of us might think, we can ask ourselves what I think is a crucial question. Can classical music have as much impact?

February 15

*Classical music in the past (1)*

**Reminder: You have a paper due on February 18. You'll write about what classical music means to you, what it brings to your life, and how that compares to what people get from other kinds of culture.**

This week we'll see that classical music wasn't always formal or elite. Composers scrambled to make a living. The audience wasn't silent. It applauded or cried out when it heard music it liked. Musicians didn't stick to the written notes. They ornamented the music they played, they improvised, and they welcomed audience participation. Mozart, as you'll see, even designed one of his symphonies to make his audience applaud — while the music was playing.

reading:

E.M Scherer, *Quarter Notes and Bank Notes: The Economics of Music Composition in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, [excerpt from chapter 3](#), about how composers made a living, what they got paid to do.

Many of us may believe — because this is a common belief — that composers in the past were supported in large part by patrons. Sometimes they were, but as the reading shows, composers in past centuries in fact made their living in many ways. Often, they had jobs — Prince Esterhazy was Haydn's employer, not his patron. And often they engaged in commercial activity, working on their own to earn money, and in fact acting like entrepreneurial businessmen. From which we see that the current emphasis on entrepreneurship, in conservatories and elsewhere in classical music, isn't entirely new. Handel and Mozart, to name just two examples, wouldn't be surprised by what we're talking about now.

James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, [excerpt from chapter 1](#), about Baroque opera in Paris, and its noisy audience.

Some [descriptions](#) of performances in past centuries, from various sources. Note, among many other things, how much improvisation and ornamentation there was.

Examples of 18th century ornamentation, from *On Playing the Flute*, a book by Johann Joachim Quantz, published in 1752:

[“Extempore Variations on Simple Intervals”](#) “Extempore” means improvised. Quantz gives 28 examples of what a musician of his time would do, with music that, in a composer's score, seems very simple. The first passage is simply the same note repeated three times. But, Quantz says, you don't play what the composer wrote. You improvise something more elaborate, sometimes much more elaborate. These are two of his examples, on two pages of the PDF file.

[“Of the Manner of Playing the Adagio”](#) Here Quantz gives a longer example, of what a musician of his time would do with a complete slow movement. The music, in the composer's score, is again very simple. But the ornaments that would be improvised aren't simple at all.

Note that Quantz says that the adagio movement shouldn't be “overloaded with graces” (“graces” means ornaments). He writes: “When you are playing, it is unlikely that you will, on the spur of the moment” — meaning while you're improvising — “improve upon the inventions of a composer who may have considered his work at length.... The graces should be introduced only when the simple air [meaning the simple melody] renders them necessary, as is the case here.”

And yet the ornaments are extremely rich and complex. All of them, in Quantz's view, were apparently “necessary.” Which means that 18th century musicians took a very different view of written music than we do.

Examples of ornamentation by 19th century opera singers, from *The Art of Singing*, a book by Manuel Garcia, Jr., a leading 19th century voice teacher, published in 1841:

[An aria from Rossini's Barber of Seville](#), showing what Rossini wrote, and two ways the aria could be ornamented. Garcia likes the first way better than the second, because, as he says, the ornaments better fit the character in the opera who sings the aria. Note that Garcia's father sang this role in the opera's world premiere. I'd guess the first set of ornaments are what his father sang.

A [crazy example](#) of what 19th century musicians called “rubato,” meaning — for them — that the orchestra would keep a steady tempo, while a singer would vary from it. This example also comes from the *Barber of Seville*, and again is very likely what Garcia’s father sang.

A [brief passage from Bellini’s Norma](#), showing what Bellini wrote, and how it was sung by Giuditta Pasta, a great soprano who starred in the opera’s first performance. Notice that she sings quintuplets! I had no idea anyone in the 19th century would use them, especially in any music as popular as opera was then.

[Excerpt from a letter Mozart wrote to his father](#) on July 3, 1778, about the premiere of his Paris Symphony. In which he describes how he wanted the audience to applaud during the music, and composed the piece in a way meant to make sure they did.

listening:

[Mozart, Symphony No. 31, “Paris,” first movement](#) (Academy of Ancient Music, on historical instruments, jointly led by Jaap Schroeder, the concertmaster, and by Christopher Hogwood, who conducts from a harpsichord, playing along with the music as Mozart often did. Though maybe he doesn’t play on this recording, because, to judge from the letter about this symphony, Mozart didn’t play in the premiere.)

Mozart didn’t say exactly where he put the music that was meant to make the audience applaud. Where in this movement do you think it might have been?

Wilhelm Backhaus, a great pianist from the last century, [improvises a prelude](#) to Schumann’s “Das Abend”

When you read the descriptions of performances in past centuries, you’ll see that pianists in the 19th century improvised preludes to the pieces they played. Here’s a recording of a great 20th century pianist actually doing that. It was made in 1969, at the last recital Backhaus ever played, when he was 85 years old. He was born in 1884, and when he was young, at least some pianists still played preludes.

First you’ll hear an announcement from the stage, by a man saying in German that Backhaus isn’t well, and won’t play the scheduled work, Beethoven’s Op. 111 sonata. Instead, he’ll play a short Schumann piece, which we then hear, starting with the improvised prelude.

How do you like hearing this piece, with a prelude that Schumann didn’t write?

February 22

### *Classical music in the past (2)*

Old recordings will show us how lively and personal, how spontaneous and individual — at least in my view — classical musicians were in past generations. In the short written assignment I’ll give you this week, I’ll ask you to imagine playing this way.

listening:

Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, [overture](#) (live 1940 performance by the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Ettore Panizza, conductor)

Beethoven, Archduke Trio, [first movement](#) (Jacques Thibaud, violin, Pablo Casals, cello, Alfred Cortot, piano, recorded in 1928)

Optional: you might also like to hear these musicians play the [first movement](#) of the Schubert B flat trio. Not as controlled a performance, but maybe freer, and thus more typical of performances from that era.

Mendelssohn, Violin Concerto, [second movement](#) (Joseph Szigeti, violin, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor, recorded in 1933)

Schubert, “[Serenade](#),” recorded in 1941, and sung in English (instead of the original German) by Richard Crooks, a Met opera star who had a popular radio show. No serious singer would sing German lieder in English today, or take as much freedom with the tempo as Crooks does. But I think it’s beautiful.

videos:

In these videos, I think all the performers have larger than life personalities — rock star personalities, as we might say today. In the past, when classical music was more popular, many classical musicians had rock star personalities. But I think it’s less common now.

Puccini, *La bohème*, [end of Act 1](#), sung in 1956 by Jussi Björling and Renata Tebaldi, two of the leading opera stars of that time, with the Showcase Symphony Orchestra, Max Rudolf, conductor. This comes from *Festival of Music*, a classical music show broadcast live on network TV, complete with car commercials. The host of the show, whom you’ll see introducing the performance, is Charles Laughton, a leading British actor. He’s not the kind of highly polished personality we’d see on TV today, and clearly isn’t following a script. He’s making it up as he goes along.

The great cellist Gregor Piatigorsky ends a recital with an arrangement of “[The Swan](#),” from *Carnival of the Animals* (from *Carnegie Hall*, a 1947 Hollywood movie, which featured performances by many classical music stars). There’s an amazing theatrical element here — Piatigorsky is accompanied by seven young women, playing seven harps. This wasn’t Piatigorsky’s idea, and in fact most of the harp playing is fake. Only one of the harps really plays. But the film director made Piatigorsky go along with this. Which among other things shows that moves to make classical music more theatrical — and maybe to cheapen it — aren’t new today.

The great pianist Artur Rubinstein plays DeFalla’s “[Ritual Fire Dance](#)” (also from *Carnegie Hall*). Rubinstein’s performance is wonderfully theatrical, but if you know the piece, or look at a score, you’ll see that he gives himself the freedom to play part of the piece in a way that DeFalla didn’t intend. This is the part — unforgettable when you see it — where Rubinstein’s hands alternate on the keyboard, going high in the air. DeFalla wrote that passage to be played *pianissimo*. Rubinstein makes it big and loud.

March 1, 8

*Spring break, no class*

March 15

*Pop Music*

*pop music history, some quick listening:*

Sample the following songs, just listen to a little of all of them, to get an idea of how varied pop music can be, and how it’s evolved over time. Of course, if you want to listen to any or all of the songs all the way through, feel free!

I’ve added some questions for you to think about. To know the answers, you’d have to know a lot about pop music history, and I don’t expect you to know that. So don’t worry if you don’t the answers. Just think about the questions, and try to sense how much pop music can change..

Patti Page, “[How Much is That Doggie in the Window?](#)” (1953)

A big pop hit, from the time before rock existed. Very sweet and innocent

Little Richard, “[Long Tall Sally](#)” (1956)

A classic, by one of the pioneers of rock & roll. When he died two years ago, he was hailed as a beloved — and very important — American artist. I’ve given you

a video of him doing this song, so you can see how outrageous he was. Do you think Patti Page looked like this?

Pop songs once sounded more or less like Patti Page. And then rock & roll came along, with what at the time was considered its outrageous big beat. How did that happen? Where did rock & roll come from? How did people start making music like Little Richard, and how did people come to start listening to it?

Led Zeppelin. “[Whole Lotta Love](#)” (1969)

Another classic, by the first great hard rock band. How did simpler rock & roll — by people like Little Richard — develop into what Led Zeppelin did?

Joni Mitchell, “[All I Want](#)” (1971)

This was never a pop hit, but people now would say that Joni Mitchell is one of the most profound and original artists in pop music history. Notice that the song has very light instrumentation, and no drums. Where do you think this style could have come from? And how could it exist at the same time as Led Zeppelin?

Lil Louis, “[French Kiss](#)” (1989)

A classic from a dance music style that arose in Chicago, called house music. How do you think music like this evolved? How did people start making long dance music songs (this one is almost nine and a half minutes long), with a steady 4/4 beat, and often no singing?

Eric B. & Rakim, “[Follow the Leader](#)” (1988)

From the old days of hiphop. Same question again — where did this new style come from? How did people start speaking rhymes (often improvised, often with complex rhythms), over a beat?

*how pop music is made:*

Peter Guralnick, [excerpt](#) from his book *Sweet Soul Music*. About Aretha Franklin recording “I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You),” her first big hit. This will show you one way that pop records are produced.

This excerpt comes from a very long and detailed book, about the history of Black music in the 1960s. It starts in the middle of Aretha Franklin’s story. So you may be confused at first about what’s going on.

Here’s what you need to know. Aretha Franklin was a gospel singer from Detroit. Her father was pastor of a large and important church in Detroit’s black community, at a time when Detroit was a thriving city, not the troubled (but recovering) place it is today.

Aretha was an amazing talent, as recordings of her singing when she was a teenager show. (She was such a titanic force in pop music that people always call her by her first name, whether they knew her or not.) But when she started her pop music career in the early 1960s, record companies didn’t think her gospel sound would sell many records. So they toned her down. They recorded her singing pop and jazz songs. These recordings are quite good, but don’t remotely show what Aretha could do.

By the late 1960s, the climate had changed, and the mainstream white world was ready for a gospel vocal sound. There were a few mainstream record producers who knew how to record gospel music, and one of them was Jerry Wexler, now a pop music legend. Wexler signed Aretha to a recording contract, and brought her to a recording studio in the American south, where musicians understood the gospel style, which had now developed into something called soul music.

Wexler hired musicians — guitar, piano, drum, bass, horns (a pop music term meaning saxophones and brass instruments) — to record with Aretha.

The recording session began when Aretha sat at the piano, and sang and played a song she wanted to record. That's how it normally works in pop music. Rarely does anyone write the music down. Instead, someone demonstrates how a song goes, and the musicians work out for themselves what to do with it.

But Aretha provided more than a demonstration. From the first chord she played on the piano, she was so impressive that the piano player hired for the recording session said that she should play the piano, not him.

And things went on from there, with the horn players so inspired that they quickly went to another room to work out what they would play. So what you hear on the record is a cooperative enterprise, worked out by all the musicians together.

If you listen to the song, listen (among much else) for the entrance of the horns. Can you believe that these musicians, all on their own, planned something so perfectly right (at least in my opinion), and which — when they start playing offbeats — can get so dramatic?

optional: [listen to the song](#)

Dr. Mix, “[The Bass Line of ‘I Feel Love’ on a TB-303](#)” (video)

This shows you how professionals use one kind of synthesizer — one that only creates bass lines, and was heavily used in 1980s dance music. You'll hear the sounds it makes, and hear how they can change. And that's only the start! In just four minutes, you'll learn more about how current pop songs are made — well, one aspect of it, anyway — than I could teach you in half an hour.

Joe Coscarelli, “[‘Slow Burn’: Watch Kacey Musgraves Turn Country Music Psychedelic](#)” (*New York Times*, October 24, 2018; please read the short article, and watch the video embedded in it).

optional: [listen to the song](#) (with video)

Joe Coscarelli, “[A Staple Gun. A Dental Drill. See How Billie Eilish Made a Haunted Pop Hit.](#)” (*New York Times*, April 1, 2019; please read the short article, and watch the video embedded in it).

optional:

[listen to the song](#) (audio only)

[watch the video](#) (some of the images may be disturbing; don't feel you need to watch this if the images might trouble you)

*some songs to watch and listen to; are they art?*

Tengri, “[Heaven](#)” (video)

I'd never heard of this powerful singer, who's much loved in China, until last year, when one of my students, Ziyao Sun, wrote about him for an assignment. With his permission, I'm quoting what he wrote:

The pop song that I want to talk about is "Heaven" by Tengri(腾格尔 in mongol or 腾格尔 in chinese) This is a old song that published in 1997, but even now, it is still popular in China. Tengri, from Inner Mongolia, is a very famous pop singer in China. Many of his early works were songs about his hometown, depicting the inner Mongolian prairie with music, and the piece “Heaven” is his representative work. The lyrics of the whole song are very few and simple, but it depicts a vivid picture and strong feelings.

Here is the lyrics:

I see a blue sky,  
Over a green lake,  
Vast is the grassland,  
This is my homeland.  
Horses running wild there,  
Sheep as white as snow,  
Girl wait for me,  
Where my heart's at home.  
I love you, my homeland,  
My homeland, my heaven.  
I miss you, my homeland,  
My homeland, my heaven.

A few very simple lyrics, through his artistic and affectionate way of interpretation. Sitting in front of the TV, I was very moved. I think everyone has such a pure and peaceful place in their heart. Home, or far away, or just somewhere you don't want to be disturbed. When I heard this song, I was shocked, and the whole person seemed to follow him with a full smile to the beautiful prairie. Twenty years ago, China was still very poor. Many people left their hometown to live and earn money. This song gives great comfort to the young people who work outside their hometown at that time. I remember when I was child, a lot of people cry when they heard this song. I didn't understand at that time, but now I know, they want home.

Frank Sinatra, "[I've Got You Under My Skin](#)" (from his 1956 album *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*)

Lucinda Williams, "[Ventura](#)" (from *World Without Tears*, 2003)

James Brown, "[Get Up \(I Feel Like Being a\) Sex Machine](#)" (this is a single from 1970; a single, in pop music terminology, is a song released on its own, apart from any album)

Björk, "[An Echo, A Stain](#)" (from *Vespertine*, 2002)

We all agree that classical music is art. But what is pop music? Listen to these songs, and think about how you'd classify them. Clearly they're not classical music, but why? What are the differences? What makes them pop, and not classical?

And could they be art? If not, why not? As you think about this, ask yourself what's happening in the music in each song, just as you'd ask about a classical piece. In each song, is the music simple? Is it complex? Can it be analyzed by looking for the things that happen in classical pieces — you might especially ask this about the James Brown song — or is something else going on?

If these songs are art, they pose a serious challenge to classical music. People in our culture listen to pop music. If it's giving them art, why do they need the art that we're offering them?

We'll talk about all this in class.

March 22

*Fixing the crisis: Some ideas for the future, and some things that people have done*

video:

Greg Sandow, [keynote talk](#) at the 21CMPosium, the 2016 conference at the DePauw School of Music that Mike Block spoke at. In my talk, I tried to lay out the current condition of classical music, and what needs to change. The situation has changed, of course, since I gave this talk, but much that I said is still valid.



reading:

Greg Sandow, “[Four Keys to the Future](#)”

[A long list of new things](#) that classical musicians and classical music institutions have tried, assembled from various sources (including my own experience)

New kinds of performances, new kinds of music:

Dan Tepfer, [The Goldberg Variations Variations, excerpt](#). (Jazz pianist Dan Tepfer plays the *Goldberg Variations*, and instead of repeating the aria and each variation, as the score indicates, he plays improvisations on them. This recording was made some years ago. Later I heard Tepfer play this live, and his performance had grown greatly.)

Mozart, Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K. 216, [last movement cadenza](#) (Gilles Apap, violin, Sinfonia Varsovia)

Maya Beiser, “[Kashmir](#)” (A cellist plays an arrangement of a famous rock song, by Led Zeppelin. The arrangement is for solo cello, multitracked accompanying cellos, and recorded drums. The song was originally released on Beiser’s 2010 album *Provenance*, on which — apart from this track — she plays new music inspired by her multicultural childhood in Israel, where she heard traditional Jewish and Arab music, all of it with a Middle Eastern sound. Though even “Kashmir” fits with this concept, because the song has a Middle Eastern vibe, and because Beiser loved it as a teenager. This video shows a live performance, done for a radio show in New York.)

Optional listening, if you’re curious: the [original Led Zeppelin song](#), from their 1975 album *Physical Graffiti*.

Caroline Shaw, *Partita for Eight Voices*, first movement, “[Allemande](#)”

The Pulitzer Prize is America’s highest honor in composition, and in 2013 Caroline Shaw became the youngest composer to win it. She won it for the *Partita*, which she wrote for [Roomful of Teeth](#), a vocal ensemble she sang in. This is a live performance at the Music on Main series in Vancouver. The video I’ve linked to is of the entire piece. Your assignment is only to watch the first movement, which ends at 5:45. Of course if you like it and want to watch the rest, feel free. If you like the first movement, I think you’ll like the rest of the piece even more.

This is an example of a style of composition very common among young American composers. Very free, very relaxed, very informal, using any kind of harmony — and, in fact, any kind of sound — the composer likes.

Fifth House and Henhouse Prowlers, [Ain’t It a Shame](#)

[Fifth House](#) is an imaginative and strongly entrepreneurial chamber ensemble, based in Chicago. Here they collaborate with a bluegrass band (bluegrass is a kind of country music). Although the bluegrass group takes the lead, the performance is a true collaboration, featuring what might be the first bluegrass solos ever played on French horn and bassoon.

Debussy, *Afternoon of a Faun*, University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra.

As played in 2012 from memory, without a conductor — and *danced* by the student musicians. A video that just about went viral in the classical music world. Liz Lerman, a very original choreographer, designed the dancing, building it around movement the musicians were comfortable doing. James Ross, who at the time was the much-loved conducting teacher and orchestra director at the school, conceived the project and led the music rehearsals. You’ll notice that there’s a conductor onstage (a student), dancing along with everyone else, leading the music when he’s needed.

March 29

*More changes*

*Reactions to the pandemic:*

Ravel (with some improvised additions), “[Bolero](#)” (This is an online Juilliard performance, released just after the pandemic began, featuring Juilliard classical musicians, jazz musicians, and dancers. You’ll hear that the piece was changed in a few places, for instance so it could begin with pianist playing some jazz. He’s in fact very famous — Jon Batiste, a Juilliard graduate who works in many genres. He’s the leader of the band on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, and among many other things, wrote the score for the Pixar animated film *Soul*, for which he won an Oscar and many other awards. He’s a delight in this performance, though for me the whole performance is delightful, some of the most joyful music-making I heard during the pandemic.)

Fiona Maddocks, “[Igor Levit: ‘These concerts were life-saving for me’](#)” (*The Observer*, May 24, 2020)

Joshua Barone, “[Think Outside the Opera House, and Inside the Parking Garage](#)” (*New York Times*, October 21, 2020)

Anne Midgette, “[Fleeing the Gilded Cage: The COVID shutdown stalled careers. For some opera singers, it also opened doors](#)” (from the National Public Radio website)

“[Rachel Barton Pine To Perform 24 Violin Concertos In 24 Weeks](#)” (press release)

*Moves toward diversity:*

*Messiah/Complex*, a film of Handel’s *Messiah*, performed by the Toronto Symphony, and staged and filmed by Against the Grain Theatre, involving many aspects of Canadian life, and performers from all over Canada, representing many Canadian ethnic groups. It was streamed, without charge, for a short time last January, though viewers had to sign up for tickets. The run had to be extended, because so many people wanted to see the performance, and the film was brought back this year.

Don Bilefsky, “[A ‘Messiah’ for the Multitudes, Freed From History’s Bonds](#)” (*New York Times*, December 21, 2020)

[Artist Spotlight: Diyet](#). Diyet is a member of the Kluane First Nation in the Yukon, who sings “O Thou Who Tellest Good Tidings to Zion” in her native Southern Tutchone language. She hadn’t sung classical music in 20 years, and with this project, she could reconcile Handel with her native culture.

video:

*Messiah/Complex*, from the beginning to 26:55, the end of “O Thou Who Tellest Good Tidings to Zion.” Or, in Southern Tutchone, “Utawkwadjche yesi ch’e yan nañ käy.”

Because this is no longer being streamed to the public, the video is now private. Against the Grain Theatre has graciously allowed us to watch it. Out of respect for their control of their project, I’m not putting the link on this schedule, where many people might see it. I’ll email it to you privately.

I find this film extraordinary. You’ll make up your own minds, of course. One question is raised for me is what outreach, diversity, and inclusion really are. We talk about bringing classical music to people who don’t now listen to it, and we realize — more and more now — that many of these people are different from us.

So do we simply bring people what we do, hoping they’ll want to take part in it, more or less passively, just as watchers and listeners? Or do we

include them in what we're doing, as active participants, as happens in this film?

To me — and again, you'll decide for yourselves what you think — the second way is more powerful, more respectful, and more genuinely inclusive. What's immediately striking in *Messiah/Complex* of course is the inclusion of singers from indigenous groups. But as I watch the film again, I'm struck by how it includes all Canadians, using singers from all parts of Canada, and then filming them in many Canadian locations. In that way, Handel's *Messiah* comes to represent all of Canada. I find that very moving.

[“League of American Orchestras Launches The Catalyst Fund Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras”](#) (press release from the League, January 9, 2019)

Mark Brown, [“Preserved in aspic’: opera embarks on diversity drive”](#) (*The Guardian*, January 28, 2019)

These last two items make an interesting pair. The League launches a diversity initiative, while the English National Opera announces its own diversity plan. Each takes a different approach. How would you describe the difference?

April 5

*Creativity and careers; What should conservatories teach? What should all of you be learning? How creative can you be in your careers?*

You'll have reading assignments for this class, and I think you'll find them interesting. All of them are about new ways to train musicians. Some of them may be provocative. Certainly they're different from what goes on at most music schools, this one included. It'll be interesting to discuss all this in class. Since we're talking about something we're all intimately involved in, this discussion might be especially hot.

reading:

Ivan Trevino, [“My Pretend Music School”](#) (blog post by a percussionist)

Greg Sandow, [“A Stunning Manifesto”](#) (blog post about new ideas some years ago at the University of Maryland School of Music)

Greg Sandow, [“Path-breaking piano curriculum”](#) (blog post about what Canadian piano students have done at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario; they improvise, and play music in many genres)

Peabody Institute

To change the position of classical music in the world, and to change the way their graduates make their careers, Peabody— which of course is one of the leading conservatories in the U.S. — started what they call their Breakthrough Plan.

Here are some pages from their website, very quick to read:

[The Breakthrough Curriculum](#)

[Community Partnerships](#)

Longy School of Music at Bard College

A school that emphasizes music in the community, and a sense of community among its students.

Look at their [home page](#), and watch their short video.

DePauw University School of Music (where the curriculum was radically revised to focus on training entrepreneurial musicians):

The DePauw University School of Music, in Greencastle, IN, was the first conservatory I know of to change its curriculum in response to the classical music crisis. Other schools, like Eastman and New England Conservatory, were among the first to start entrepreneurship programs, and they did it before the changes at DePauw. But these entrepreneurship programs were voluntary. DePauw, to my knowledge, was the first school to make entrepreneurship and other 21st century topics required parts of its curriculum.

They called the program 21CM, meaning Twenty-First Century Musician. I was a consultant for them when they started this, and remained closely involved, among other things giving a keynote address at a conference they held.

In recent years, they seem to have downgraded the 21CM curriculum, and it's been some time since I've been involved with them. Recently, though, they appointed a new interim dean who's a powerful entrepreneurship advocate and teacher, so maybe they're going to redevelop the 21CM program again.

Here's some of what they did:

The school's concert series was changed, so that it featured entrepreneurial chamber ensembles. Some of them, like [Fifth House](#), have been in residence at the school and worked closely with students.

The school published a monthly webzine, about new developments in classical music, including new ways that classical musicians make their careers.

The school [took over the music program](#) at Greencastle's middle school. DePauw students have taught instruments and have helped coach the middle school choir and band.

There have also been courses in entrepreneurship and other contemporary subjects.

A donor couple gave \$15 million to the new curriculum when it was first established. They remained close to DePauw, and at one point gave money to buy and redesign a building in Greencastle, so it serve as a community facility for the school, as described below

["21CM at DePauw"](#)

A short video about the goals of the program. The trio you see playing is Project Trio, whose bassist, Peter Seymour, once played in the Cleveland Orchestra, and was the bass teacher at DePauw. All three members of the group are trained as classical musicians, but you couldn't call what they're playing classical music. It's a sign of what DePauw wanted to teach that they hired Peter to be their bass teacher. Of course he can teach classical bass playing, but he can go far beyond that.

In this video, you'll see Yo-Yo Ma playing a Bach movement to open a new space, and his participation was much more than a celebrity appearance. He was a big supporter of what happened at DePauw, and was the chairman of the 21CM Advisory Board (which I also was on).

The new space is a luxurious performance/party/teaching space downtown in Greencastle, IN, the town where DePauw is located. The idea was to bring the music school into its community, and the space has been so successful that the donors who funded it bought an adjoining building, so that even more could be done.

David Wallace, ["Becoming Village People"](#)

Video of a talk at the 21CMPosium at DePauw. David is the chair of the string department at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Berklee normally teaches pop music and jazz, but expanded its strings department when classical string

players wanted to go there, so they could also play music in other genres. In this Berklee program, as you'll see, every student can and does study with every teacher, learning to play in many musical styles.

Creative musicians describe their highly personal careers (in talks at the 21CMPosium):

Sarah Robinson, "[How I Stopped Asking Permission to Have a Career in Music](#)"

Sarah is a flute player in Los Angeles, who among many other things has written a terrific book about how to play classical music in clubs. She and her husband have an ensemble that plays in clubs with great success, sometimes getting the crowd to dance, and often playing music by Los Angeles film and TV composers.

But before she did any of this, she wanted to be an orchestral flutist. In this video, she tells the powerful story about how orchestral auditions almost destroyed her, and how she decided, with great joy, to make music in other ways.

Optional! Mike Block, "[Breaking Away from 'Classical'](#)" (Optional because you've watched this already. Now that you've been in the class longer, and we've discussed so many things, you might want to watch this again. Maybe some of what Mike says will strike you differently. But it's up to you. You're not required to watch this a second time.)

*April 12*

*Something you can do on your own: Entrepreneurship*

reading:

Seth Godin, [Tribes](#) (excerpt)

Greg Sandow, "[How to do it](#)" (blog post)

Clive Thompson, "[Sex, Drugs, and Updating Your Blog](#)," from the *New York Times Magazine*, May 13, 2007 (about how to promote a pop music career all by yourself, on the web)

entrepreneurial musicians:

[Anderson & Roe](#) (A piano duo. Both of them — Greg Anderson and Elizabeth Joy Rowe — took this class. They say I encouraged them, but I can't take credit for what they do. They were doing it long before they met me.)

Watch their video "[Hallelujah Variations](#)," in which they play variations they wrote on a Leonard Cohen song. If you're curious to hear it, the original Cohen song is [here](#).

Lara Downes:

"[Walking the Walk](#)" (how an entrepreneurial pianist in San Francisco got an audience for a concert series she created)

"[Success and Surprises](#)" (more on her concert series: how she drew a large audience to a performance by pianist Christopher O'Riley)

Victoria Paterson, "[Filling the House for New Music](#)" (how the American Modern Ensemble, here in New York, sells out the house for new musics concerts, and also pays its musicians very well)

Alecia Lawyer, founder, director, and principal oboe of ROCO, formerly River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, an entrepreneurial chamber orchestra in Houston, now in its 16th successful season:

Greg Sandow, "[We personalize what music is](#)" (blog post, in which Alecia talks about the group.

[“Why Not? With Alecia Lawyer.”](#) (an episode of *The H*, a podcast about Houston, in which Alecia talks — irresistibly, I think — about what she does and how she got there).

How composer Cristina Spinei [promoted a recording](#)

[Cristina](#) took one of my courses here years ago, and later moved to Nashville, where she developed an active entrepreneurial career. In an email to me, she described her plan — very imaginative, very enterprising — to market a recording of her music. Her plan was to get as many people as possible playing the music on the recording and listening to it, especially people outside the normal classical music audience.

*April 19*

*Fixing the crisis: Shaping your brand (1)*

reading:

Jade Simmons, [“Are You a Victim of Artistic Identity Theft?”](#) (a post from her “Emerge Already” blog)

Greg Sandow, [“Sell What You Are”](#) (blog post)

Greg Sandow, [“How to Write a Press Release”](#)

[“Ghosts and Flowers: The Handel-Halvorsen Passacaglia”](#) (A video made by two Juilliard graduates, Arianna Warsaw-Fan and Meta Weiss.)

[“Handel Hits the Road!”](#) (Daria van den Bercken, a Dutch pianist, goes on the streets of Amsterdam to promote her project of playing and recording Handel's keyboard music.)

I don't think these three musicians — Arianna, Meta, and Daria — meant to brand themselves with these videos. But still the videos (which are very different) serve as at least tentative branding. That's because they give anyone who watches a strong idea of what the people who made them might be like, as musicians and, maybe even as people.

How would you describe what you see in these videos? What would the videos make you expect from the three musicians in the future?

websites:

Look at these websites, and ask yourself how they make you feel. You don't have to look at any of them for a long time, and you don't have to look at anything except the home page (unless you want to).

The point is just to look at how each of these sites presents the person, group, institution, or company it represents. Does it make you want to go to these schools, hear these musicians, buy what this company sells? And if you did go to the schools, hear the musicians, buy what the company sells, what would your experience be?

You don't need to think very hard about this. Trust your first impressions. For instance: Zipcar is a company that rents cars for short periods of time, typically three to four hours. When you look at their homepage, do you get the idea that renting from them will be difficult? Or will it be very simple?

Why doing this is useful: Because in the future, or even now, you might want to promote yourself. And if you do, you want to do it in a way that makes people feel they want to go to the concerts or whatever else you're promoting. Your website wouldn't be the only place you'd do this. But lessons you learn from looking at websites can be applied to any kind of promotion you do.

Here are the websites I'd like you to look at:

[Juilliard](#)

Manhattan School of Music  
Peabody  
Misha Penton  
Renée Fleming  
Yo-Yo Ma  
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment  
MistoBox  
Zipcar

**Assignment for next week, due Monday, April 24.**

**I'm asking you to do two things.**

**First, write something down – a short phrase, a sentence, or simply a collection of words – that you could use to describe yourself as a musician. Words that sum up your musical essence.**

**You might want to think of more than one phrase, or more than one sentence. And don't worry if what you write doesn't seem perfect, or even if you think it's not very good. I'm not asking you to come up with something polished, something finished, something you can show the outside world. I'm just asking you to take a first step in describing yourself.**

**Second, look for images that seem to look or feel like what you do. Not literally — they don't have to be pictures of people making music. You should look for images that seem to feel like who you really are. Though of course if you have a logo, or photos or drawings of yourself that you like, feel free to use them.**

**The idea is simply to find something visual that seems to inhabit the same world you do. What you find doesn't have to fit you perfectly. Like the words that you'll think of, these images just a first step.**

**Please bring your words and printouts of your images to class. We'll look at them, and you'll tell us why you chose them. Then we'll talk about what your next step might be – your next step toward finding words and images that you really could use to define your personal brand.**

*April 26*

*Fixing the crisis: Shaping your brand (2)*

We'll look at your words and images. If we can't get to all of them, we'll do some at our final class on May 11.

final assignment:

**An informal paper, due on Canvas on May 10, the date of our final class:**

**Think of a piece you really love, something you play, or would like to play. Imagine that you're performing it on a concert that's an expression of your brand. By which I mean a concert that's entirely you, a concert that expresses the essence of your musical self, the same self that you've worked to capture in words and images. This concert should be aimed at people who don't normally hear classical music. So you'd most likely want to do something special to interest and even excite this new audience.**

**When you've figured out what that concert would be, please do three things:**

1. Briefly describe the concert. Where you'd give it, and how you'd present yourself — what you'd wear, and how you'd introduce yourself to the audience, either by speaking to them, or by presenting yourself to them in some other way. Also say who the audience would be, what kind of people and where you'd find them.
2. Then say how you'd present the piece. How you'd introduce it to the audience — what you'd say about it, and anything else special that you might do, like have some special lighting for it, or whether you'd stand or sit in a particular part of the performing space. When you tell me what you'd say about the piece to the audience, you don't have to write an entire program note. Just think of the two or three most important things you want the audience to know about the piece, and say what they are.
3. And finally, how would you play the piece? Your audience most likely has never heard it before. What are the main things in the music that you want them to hear and to feel? How would you play so that they hear these things? Pick one passage from the piece that you think is very important, and say how you'd play it, to make sure this new audience feels what you feel about it.

*Example: Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. I think one of the most striking things about it is the driving rhythm of the first movement. To make the audience feel that rhythm, I'd want to take a fairly fast tempo, and have the orchestra bring out the rhythm of the opening notes, at each of the many times that rhythm repeats during the movement. I'd want to articulate that rhythm very strongly. Maybe more strongly than I'd do if I were playing the piece for an audience that knows it.*

*One important passage, very obviously, is the transition from the third movement to the finale. I'd want that transition to start very softly, in what I could call a veiled tone, very quiet and cloudy. I'd want to create a sense of anticipation, a sense that something big is going to happen, without making anything in the transition specially stand out. Then of course when the finale begins, I'd want to explode out of the darkness, like a sudden burst of light.*

*As I said, that's pretty obvious. But how often do we really hear it played that way, with true suspense, and a dramatic burst of light when the finale begins? I'd want everyone in the audience to barely be able to breathe, as they wait to hear what's going to happen.*

**This paper might be three or four pages long. But, as before, write at whatever length – shorter than three or four pages, or longer -- that seems to make sense, to say what you want to say.**

May 3

*Jury week, no class*

May 10

*Final discussion.*

### **Informal paper due**

Among other things, in this last class we can see if your ideas about classical music have changed. And if you have new thoughts about how to play it, or about what to do in your careers. Not that these new thoughts are required. You may feel you're fine with the thoughts you had when you started this course. But if you do have new ideas, I'd be happy to hear them.