Spring 2026 – A Thousand Years of Listening
MUSHL 101: Section 01 & 02
Hunter College; North Building 404
M/W 8:30-9:45 am (Section 01) & M/W 10:00-11:15 am (Section 02)

Instructor: Fifi Zhang (she/her)
Email: fz517@hunter.cuny.edu
Office Hours: W 11:30-12:30, by appointment

Course Objectives:

Introduction to Western art music, often referred to as classical music, for non-majors. No experience or formal training in music is necessary. The class aims to foster an awareness and an understanding of classical music through the development of listening and analytical skills. Students will be able to understand elements such as pitch, consonance, dissonance, melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and instrumentation. Students will also become familiar with musical forms and genres, how these and other musical elements developed from the Middle Ages through the present, how these elements overlap with music in popular styles and in the music of non-Western cultures, and a basic knowledge of significant composers and repertory from the various stylistic periods. The workload will consist of a combination of listening assignments, readings, a concert report, and a final presentation, all aimed at developing the students' ability to combine their critical insight with their acquired listening and analytical skills.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view by focusing on repertoire from a range of musical sources: chronological periods of Western art music (Middle Ages to the present), popular music, and non-Western repertoire.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically about specific elements heard in assigned repertoire and the ways in which those elements facilitate human expression and contribute to the formation of a particular genre, form, and/or style of music.
3. Produce well-reasoned written and oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions by attending a live concert and writing essays that demonstrate the specific ways in which that repertoire achieves its expressive goals as it adheres to or exceeds the expectations for its particular style.
4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts of music with listening logs that highlight salient musical features in real time during the listening process.
5. Analyze how arts from diverse cultures of the past serve as a foundation for those of the present. By studying music of the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, and understanding the societies that produced them, students will understand their relationship to many contemporary styles such as pop, rock, jazz, blues, and classical
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process by learning to be an informed, attentive audience rather than a passive one: students will interact with guest performers in class, as well as responding to in-class demonstrations by their own instructors who are pianists, vocalists, and/or instrumentalists.

Recommended Textbook:

Morgan-Ellis, Esther M., ed. *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context.* Blue Ridge, Dahlonega, Georgia: University of North Georgia, University Press, 2020.

https://web.ung.edu/media/university-press/Resonances-v6.pdf?t=1660755053418
(Free to download!)

Course Calendar

Class	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	M 8/31	Welcome!	
2	W 9/2	Dimensions of sound	Listening Log #1 due 9/4 by 11:59 PM
NO CLASS	M 9/7		
3	W 9/9	Melody and harmony	Listening Log #2 due 9/11 by 11:59 PM
4	M 9/14	Texture, form, genre	
5	W 9/16	Medieval music	Listening Log #3 due 9/18 by 11:59 PM
NO CLASS	M 9/22		
6	W 9/23	Renaissance music	Listening Log #4 due 9/25 by 11:59 PM
7	M 9/28	Baroque period	
8	W 9/30	Johann Sebastian Bach	Listening Log #5 due 10/2 by 11:59 PM
9	M 10/5	Classical period	
10	W 10/7	Classical cont'd	Listening Log #6 due 10/9 by 11:59 PM
NO CLASS	M 10/12		
11	*T 10/13*	Romantic period	
12	W 10/14	Romantic cont'd	Listening Log #7 due 10/16 by 11:59 PM
	F 10/16	Class field trip: Sphinx Virtuosi @ Carnegie Hall	Optional, but **strongly encouraged**
13	M 10/19	Debussy and Ravel	
14	W 10/21	Modernism + Quiz review	Listening Log #8 due 10/23 by 11:59 PM
15	M 10/26	Second Viennese School	**In-class quiz: style periods**
16	W 10/28	Avant-garde	Listening Log #9 due 10/30 by 11:59 PM
17	M 11/2	Minimalism	
18	W 11/4	Opera	Listening Log #10 due 11/6 by 11:59 PM
19	M 11/9	Opera cont'd	
20	W 11/11	Program music	Listening Log #11 due 11/13 by 11:59 PM
21	M 11/16	Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*	
22	W 11/18	Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*	

23	M 11/23	Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*	**Concert essay due 11/25 by 11:59 PM**
NO CLASS	W 11/25		
24	M 11/30	Schubert & art song	
25	W 12/2	Ballet	Listening Log #12 due 12/4 by 11:59 PM
26	M 12/7	String quartet	
27	W 12/9	Concerto	
28	M 12/14	Final presentations	**Final presentations**
29	W 12/16 (02) **or** M 12/21 (01)	Final presentations	**Final presentations**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

GRADING POLICY

Listening logs	30%
Concert Essay	30%
Quiz	15%
Final presentation	15%
Class participation	10%

OFFICE HOURS

My in-person office hours are Wednesdays 11:30-12:30, by appointment only. If you'd like to meet at a different time over Zoom, e-mail me at least 24 hours in advance to make an appointment.

ATTENDANCE

More than two unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. If you need to miss class, for illness or any other reason, e-mail me in advance as early as possible.

LISTENING LOG

Each week, you will be given a list of two musical examples to listen and respond to via Brightspace. These are due on Fridays by 11:59 PM and should be 150-250 words. Structure them however you like.

Possible approaches:

- Do you recognize any instruments, scales, meters, forms, or other elements in this musical performance? Expand.
- Does it sound like anything you know? How so?
- What is the most striking thing about this example? Why?
- Is there anything about the musical performance that seems difficult to understand? What would you like to know about it?

- How would you describe this musical performance to someone who has never heard it?
- Can you imagine this musical example being used for a certain kind of movie scene, or some other audio-visual context? What is it about the musical example that lends itself to this interpretation? Be specific.

Tips:

- Keep an open mind. Try your best to engage with the music even if you don't like it.
- Listen to each example more than once.
- Use technical music terminology if you'd like but avoid consulting other sources. I'm interested in how *you* engage with the music.

CONCERT ESSAY

This essay is based on your attendance at a live in-person classical music concert, selected and approved in consultation with me. Resources to help you find concerts will be available on Brightspace. Choose one piece from the concert to write about. The essay should be two pages double-spaced and is due no later than **Wednesday, November 25th at 11:59 PM** on Brightspace**.**

Guidelines:

1. Give the date, time, location, and performers who played on the concert that you attended.
2. Identify the type (vocal, instrumental, program, absolute, etc.) and the style period (i.e. Baroque, Classical, etc.) of the piece that you are writing about.
3. Describe three musical elements (e.g. dynamics, tone color, tempo, melody, how the instruments interacted with each other, texture, etc.) that stood out most to you. Explain how they contributed to the overall experience of the work.
4. Discuss the performers' execution of the piece and how they engaged with the music and with each other.

FINAL PRESENTATION

In lieu of a final exam, we will have in-class presentations during the two class meetings of the semester. You will be assigned to groups, and each group will put together a 10-minute presentation on a piece selected from a list of works provided by me.

Guidelines:

1. Give a brief overview of the composer and their background and general style.
2. Discuss the historical context of the piece: when/where was it written? For what/whom was it written? When/where was it premiered?
3. Identify the salient aspects of the piece and explain why listeners should pay attention. Is there a specific compositional technique/device that this composer uses in other works? Use the terminology you have learned this semester.
4. Analyze the piece's formal elements (repetition, variation, contrast) and what effect they have on the listener.
5. Decide how much of the music to play during your presentation. If it's short enough, consider having us hear the entire piece before you present on it – or play it at the very end. If it's over five minutes long, play excerpts.

6. Choose a format/medium for your presentation. Use a PowerPoint, make a video, act out a skit, bring in instruments, etc. Get creative!

DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

Grade of Incomplete: In the Music Department, the grade of incomplete is granted only in cases of serious, documented emergencies, and then only when permission has been obtained in writing from the Department Chair, no later than one week before the final class meeting.

Withdrawal: Students who wish to withdraw from a class with a grade of W may do so by submitting a withdrawal form with the required signatures to OASIS by the announced deadline (around the 8th week of class). Withdrawal after the deadline is allowed only in cases of serious emergency and must be approved by Student Services. Students who stop attending a class without withdrawing officially will receive grades of WU, which count the same as F. The Music Department does not support requests to have grades of WU changed retroactively to W.

Plagiarism: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Policy on Sexual Misconduct: In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:
http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf

ADA Statement Regarding Accessibility: In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of Accessibility for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of accessibility located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.