

2017 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

School of Music

Moderator: Clare Sher Ling Eng

April 20, 2017

3:30pm-5:00pm

JAAC 2141

4:00pm-4:15pm

Oliver Messiaen: The Search for God through the Absence of Truth

Keith Tobin

Faculty Advisor: Terry Klefstad, Ph.D.

Oliver Messiaen, one of the most influential and prolific composers of the twentieth century, helped to set the terms for compositional innovation in a post-tonal environment by augmenting his compositions with extra-musical principles and philosophies. The material analyzed in this paper will include Medieval Christian symbolism, theological influences such as Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica*, Messiaen's background as an organist, and non-Western influences such as Hindu dance rhythms, birdsongs as references to non-human realities, and non-Western tonal systems. The result is an output that can seem contradictory on its insistence on cerebral, academic practices and mystical, spiritual, non-Western influences. This paper seeks to demonstrate how Messiaen's oeuvre paints a beautifully harmonious picture of the heterogeneous reality of the Christian life as seen from different angles of intellectual reflection and worshipful praise.

4:15pm-4:30pm

Musical and Stylistic Innovations in Jon Hassell's "Toucan Ocean"

Lauren Booke and Hannah Thompson

Faculty Advisor: Clare Sher Ling Eng, Ph.D.

During the 20th century, music, like other art forms, evolved. While the early 1960s saw the beginnings of minimalism, this style began to evolve by the mid-1970s. This evolution into what was called post-minimalism did not involve a radical change of style. Rather, post-minimalism consisted making small changes to different defining elements of minimalism. Jon Hassell's "Toucan Ocean" is a noteworthy example of a piece that successfully melds elements of minimalism with non-traditional features, and technological and timbral innovation, creating a type of post-minimalist music that the composer calls "Fourth World Music."

4:30pm-5:00pm

Whose Drum is it Anyways? Percussion and Colonization in the Early Americas

Christine Comer

Faculty Advisor: Virginia Lamothe, Ph.D.

When Spaniards colonized the New World, they brought along a stowaway: percussion instruments. Both the colonists' native musical traditions and those of their African slaves

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entered the cultural melting pot of South and Central America. As a result, a new synthesis of percussion came into being. This paper examines the previously-neglected subject of percussion instrument creation and performance adaptation, as well the lasting effects on modern percussion performance. The presentation will include demonstrations of selected indigenous instruments and modern counterparts.

The essay begins by examining pre-existing native percussion instruments of the Araucania and Inca people. It then proceeds to investigate how percussion from foreign cultures became assimilated, first looking at Spanish instruments both in Europe and then its colonies, especially Chile and New Mexico. Specifically addressed is usage by Jesuit missionaries and the military. The paper then explores the impact of the slave trade on this synthesis in Peru and the Indies, including a discussion on the origins of marimba. This essay makes use of primary source documents about indigenous South and Central American musical traditions in connection with sources about Spanish and European percussion heritage.

Each of the three peoples: African, European, and indigenous South and Central Americans, accepted many of each other's percussive traditions, contributing to the cultivation of new musical ideas, many of which endure today. Spanish conquerors, missionaries, and African slaves all utilized drums differently, yet by their adaptations, they synthesized a new sound that evolved into modern percussion.