

# Musicians in Fiction

1st-year tutorial, Fall, 2002

## SCHEDULE

August				September				October			
Week	Date	Day		<a href="#">1</a>	3-5	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">5</a>	1-3	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>
				<a href="#">2</a>	10-12	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">6</a>	8-10	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>
				<a href="#">3</a>	17-19	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">7</a>	15-17	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>
<a href="#">0</a>	29		<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">4</a>	24-26	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	Fall Break, Oct 19-27			
								<a href="#">8</a>	29-31	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>
November				December				<b>2002</b>			
<a href="#">9</a>	5-7	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">13</a>	3-5	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Th</a>				
<a href="#">10</a>	12-14	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	10-12	<a href="#">Tu</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>				
<a href="#">11</a>	19-21	<a href="#">Tue</a>	<a href="#">Thu</a>								
<a href="#">12</a>	26	<a href="#">Tue</a>									

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Thursday, August 29, 2002

Assignment: Read Willa Cather's short story "Eric Hermannson's Soul" (1900), and listen to music related to the story: the "Intermezzo" from Pietro Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890; track 1 from CDM864 at Burling's Listening Room) and a traditional *gangar* (improvisatory dance for couples; track 23 from the "Sweden-Norway" disc of CD set V8118 at the Listening Room) played on Norwegian *hardanger* fiddle. Read a [synopsis](#) of the plot of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and consider why Cather chose to refer to this opera and this particular excerpt from the opera in her story.



Tuesday, September 3

Assignment: By the end of the day on Friday, e-mail [chenet@grinnell.edu](mailto:chenet@grinnell.edu) with a one-sentence thesis statement for a paper you will never write about the role of music in delineating character and developing the plot in Willa Cather's "Eric Hermannson's Soul". Read Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, pages 1-145, and listen to Orpheus's lament, "*Che faro*," from Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1762; disc 2, track 13 from CD set G52oF at the Listening Room.) Note that the original language, and the language of the recording, is Italian rather than

Wunsch's German. You should recognize the repeated cries "Euridice! Euridice!" A rough paraphrase of the passage would be something like "I've lost you, Eurydice. I am still faithful, Eurydice, but for me there is no hope nor help on earth nor in heaven."

Thursday, September 5

Writing assignment 1 due: description. Write a single paragraph or page of at least eight sentences describing the assigned musical example in such a way that someone who has never heard it might be able to imagine what it sounds like. The performer plays the Mongolian *morin khuur*, a 2-stringed fiddle with a horse's head carved into its scroll. Also, skim chapters 30 to 43 of the *College Writer's Reference*, reading more intensively about topics with which you are less familiar.

In-class introduction to librarian Rebecca Stuhr and basic library information and services. Academic honesty exercise. Consideration of writing- and discussion-related topics.



Tuesday, September 10

Assignment: Read Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, pages 147-222, and listen to movements one and two of Antonin Dvorak's Symphony in E minor, "From the New World," referred to on page 181. (Because of the length of these examples, you may wish to listen at Burling's Listening Room.) For class, write a short response essay (a paragraph to a page) about what this episode at the symphony concert seems to reveal to Thea.

Thursday, September 12

Assignment: Read Read Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, pages 225-261, and focus on the significance of Thea's rendition of Edvard Grieg's song "Takk for dit rad (Say what you will)" pp. 239-253. Also read *The College Writer's Reference*, chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7.



Tuesday, September 17

Assignment: Read Read Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, pages 265-336, and listen to Ludwig van Beethoven's song "Adelaide" (1796), which has a fourth and final verse beginning with the lines Ottenburg sings on p. 333. A translation of the full song text follows:

Alone does your friend wander in the Spring  
garden mildly encircled by magic light  
that quivers through swaying, blossoming boughs,  
Adelaide!

In the mirroring stream, in the snow of the Alps,  
 in the dying day's golden clouds,  
 in the fields of stars, your image shines,  
 Adelaide!  
 Evening breezes whisper in the tender leaves,  
 silver bells of May chime in the grass,  
 waves rustle and nightingales pipe:  
 Adelaide!  
 One day, o wonder! from my grave will sprout  
 a flower from the ashes of my heart;  
 and clearly on every purple leaf will shimmer:  
 Adelaide!  
 (text by Friedrich von Matthisson)

Hand-write or type a paragraph explaining the significance of this song (or the lines Ottenburg sings) to the plot of *Song of the Lark*. The original mention of Wunsch's inscription on his gift to Thea appears on p. 86.

Thursday, September 19

Assignment: Read Read Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, pages 339-417, and listen to music mentioned on pp. 358-9 and 408, "Elsa's Dream" from Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1850), music mentioned on p. 396, "Ca' the yowes", and music mentioned on pp. 407-408, from Wagner's *Die Walkure* (1870), including "Mir allein", "Siegmond -- So nenn' ich dich!", and "If you are Siegmund, I am Sieglinde!"



Tuesday, September 24

Writing assignment 2 due: Write an approximately three-page essay in which you present and support a thesis about the role of music in delineating character and developing the plot in Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*. You may focus narrowly on one episode in Thea's life or consider a range of episodes and the role that music plays in them. In-class session with librarian Rebecca Stuhr on locating and assessing information related to class topics, using the library and electronic resources.

Thursday, September 26

IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, ATTEND TUESDAY NIGHT'S  
 PERFORMANCE BY THE PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND IN  
 HERRICK CHAPEL AT 8 P.M.

Assignment: Read Eudora Welty's short story "Powerhouse" (1941),

read James Baldwin's short story "Sonny's Blues" (1948), and listen to "Handful of Keys" performed in 1941 by jazz pianist Fats Waller (leading directly into the 1978 original cast recording of a takeoff on "Handful of Keys", from the Broadway show *Ain't Misbehavin'* -- Burling CD Ai6, CD1, track 4.) For discussion, consider similarities and differences between Welty's evocation of jazz in the opening pages of "Powerhouse" and Baldwin's in the closing pages of "Sonny's Blues." How do they compare in both technique and significance to the story?



Tuesday, October 1

Assignment: Read Nick Hornsby's *High Fidelity*, pages 3-206, and listen to music by artists referred to in these pages, Elvis Costello (p.98) and Marvin Gaye (p.146).

Thursday, October 3

Assignment: Read Nick Hornsby's *High Fidelity*, pages 207-323, and listen to music referred to in these pages: Art Garfunkel's Bright Eyes (p. 263), Solomon Burke's Got to Get You off My Mind (p. 263), and Marvin Gaye's Let's Get It On (p.312).



Tuesday, October 8

Writing assignment 3 due: Write an approximately three-page essay in which you present and support a thesis about Rob's musical choices, his self-understanding, and the development of his character in *High Fidelity*.

Thursday, October 10

Assignment: Work on midsem portfolio. Individual conferences.  
8 a.m. Susan  
8:30 Jason  
9 Liz  
9:30 Emily  
10 Evan  
10:30 Rose



Tuesday, October 15

Assignment: Work on midsem portfolio. Individual conferences.  
8 a.m. Erin  
8:30 Andrew

9 Molly  
9:30 Niyantri  
10 Caity  
10:30 Marissa

Thursday, October 17

Assignment: Midsem writing portfolios due. Revise papers 1-3 as desired. Highlight all changes (colored ink or highlighter pen or marginal annotations) or indicate if you completely rewrote a paper. Submit the essays together in a folder or binder. You may print double-sided, in order to save paper. You will receive a single grade for the quality of all the work in the portfolio as your mid-sem grade for the writing component of the course.

My expectations: At the very least, correct any mistakes I have noted. I also expect you to re-read your essays and make any other changes that you think would improve them. You are welcome to take the essays to the Writing Lab for help.

Fall Break



Tuesday, October 29

Assignment: Read Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* to page 55, and listen to the songs "Der Doppelgänger/The Ghostly Double" (referred to on p. 4 -- CD Sch7scP, track 14) and "Die Forelle/The Trout" (p. 5 -- CD Sch7soWu, track 21) by Franz Schubert, the Prelude from Partita in e by Johann Sebastian Bach (p. 6 -- CD B12sovHa, track 1), and Piano Trio in c, opus 1/3, movements I, II, III, and IV (later arranged as Quintet, opus 104) by Ludwig van Beethoven (pp. 31-55 intermittently -- CD B39ptA, tracks 1-4 on CD2).

Thursday, October 31

Assignment: Read Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*, pages 55-155, and listen to Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* (pp. 29, 70-71 -- CD V46seB, track 8), Franz Josef Haydn's String Quartet in A Major, opus 20/VI movements I, II, III, and IV (pp. 59-60, 86-87, CD H32qsQ, tracks 9-12 on CD1), and the first contrapunctus of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Art of Fugue* (pp. 120-121, etc. -- CD B12kMa, track 1).



Tuesday, November 5

Assignment: Read Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*, pages 155-254, and listen to Franz Schubert's "Trout" Quintet movements I, II, III, IV, and V (pp. 197, 202, 220, 238-240, 253, etc., CD Sch7qupS). Select a brief passage from this section of the novel to share with the class. Place it in context, read it, and reflect briefly on its significance and relationship to important themes in the novel.

Thursday, November 7

Assignment: Read Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*, pages 257-383, and listen to the Largo of Vivaldi's first Manchester Sonata, referred to in the novel on pp. 269 and 359 (CD V83so v.1, track 3), and the piano version of the first contrapunctus from Bach's *Art of Fugue* (p. 288, 380, etc.)



Tuesday, November 12

Writing assignment 4 due: 3-5 pages. Choose from among the following assignments, or write your own assignment pertaining to music and important themes in Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* (include assignment # or self-written assignment on cover or first page of essay):

1. Present and support an interesting thesis (arguable claim or interpretation) connecting some music-related topic or element in Vikram Seth's novel *An Equal Music* to one of the book's major themes. Possible topics or elements to focus on include:
  - any music that transforms or exists in multiple versions (Schubert's Trout song and quintet, Beethoven's c minor trio and quintet, Bach's *Art of Fugue* in string quartet and piano arrangements – choose one, or comment on the significance of all of these chameleon compositions)
  - any music that appears frequently (music mentioned above or Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*)
  - one or more of the musical performances (Maggiore Quartet at the Wigmore Hall, Vienna concert involving Julia and the quartet, Julia's performance at the Wigmore Hall)
  - musicians' relationships to the instruments they play and to each other
  - the relationships between musical intimacy and romantic intimacy
2. Present and support an interesting thesis concerning the novel's initial episode (section 1.1) and its foreshadowing of one or more of the novel's major themes or conflicts.
3. Present and support an interesting thesis concerning the novel's final episode, Michael's attendance at Julia's Wigmore Hall concert,

and its relationship to one or more of the novel's major themes or conflicts.

4. Present and support an interesting thesis concerning the causes and consequences of Michael's breakdown during the intermission (or as the English say, "interval") of the concert in Vienna.
5. Present and support an interesting thesis concerning the role of one or both of Michael's musical mentors, Mrs. Formby and Carl Käll, in advancing the novel's plot and developing Michael's character.

Thursday, November 14

Assignment: Read Oscar Hijuelos's *An Old Habana Melody*, pages 1-133, and listen to the song "Guajira Guantanamera" mentioned on p. 107. For discussion, select a passage from the novel that seems to you to illuminate a significant theme that is emerging. Prepare a short presentation putting the passage in context, reading it to us, and commenting on its relevance to one or more of the book's themes.



Tuesday, November 19

Assignment: Read Oscar Hijuelos's *An Old Habana Melody*, pages 135-255. select a passage from the novel that seems to you to illuminate a significant theme that is emerging. Prepare a short presentation putting the passage in context, reading it to us, and commenting on its relevance to one or more of the book's themes.

Thursday, November 21

Assignment: Read Oscar Hijuelos's *An Old Habana Melody*, pages 257-342, and watch *Buena Vista Social Club*, video B8615 on the Chenette reserve shelf at the Burling Listening Room.

Tuesday, November 26

Writing assignment 5 due: 4-5 pages. Choose from among the following assignments, or write your own assignment pertaining to music and important themes in Oscar Hijuelos's *An Old Habana Melody* (include assignment # or self-written assignment on cover or first page of essay):

1. Present and support an interesting thesis (arguable claim or interpretation) concerning the significance of the song "Rosas Puras" to Levis at different points in his life, connecting it with the ways in which he develops as a character.
2. Present and support an interesting thesis interpreting the reasons

- for (and/or consequences of) Levis's inability to avow openly his love for Rita Valladares.
3. Present and support an interesting thesis concerning the sources of inspiration for Levis and the reasons that these fail him in later life.
  4. Present an interesting thesis about how Levis's later life might have turned out in the areas of love, faith, and music had he escaped persecution by the Nazis. Support your predictions based on evidence from the novel.
  5. As an alternative to the preceding assignment, create a new version of the novel's opening scene (pages 5 to 15), imagining that Levis had managed to escape Nazi persecution and remain safely in Paris throughout the war. Begin with the same phrase: "In the spring of 1947, when Israel Levis, composer of that most famous of rumbas ' *Rosas Pusas*,' returned to Habana, Cuba, from Europe aboard the *SS Fortuna*," and continue from there. Make your version as credible as possible based on the style of the author and what we know about Levis from the novel. Use well-formed sentences and paragraphs, even though these are not always essential in creative writing.
  6. Present and support a critical review of the novel, what it purports to be about, and the degree to which the author succeeds or fails in crafting a compelling narrative and saying something worth hearing. Be clear about your critical criteria and the ways in which the novel fulfills or falls short of your expectations. In preparation for this, you may read other critical reviews of the novel such as the one that appeared in the New York Times on June 23, 2002. Include such reviews on a "Works Consulted" page, even if you never explicitly refer to them in your essay.

### Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, December 3

Assignment:

Thursday, December 5

Assignment: Individual conferences.



Tuesday, December 10

Assignment: work on final portfolio. Individual conferences.

Thursday, December 12

Assignment: Final writing portfolios due. Revise and extend previous essays 4-5 as desired. Submit the original versions of each essay

with my comments on them together with revised versions of each.  
Highlight all changes.



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