Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify basic musical elements including melody, rhythm, harmony, and musical form.
2. Define basic musical terms associated with musical elements and musical performance.
3. Identify the instruments of the orchestra both aurally and by materials of construction.
4. Identify most common musical ensembles used in western classical music.
5. Evaluate western art music, and follow musical examples with help of the listening guides.

Written Lecture

Welcome to Music Appreciation! This course will be an introduction to Western classical music for most students, and is presented in two major parts. It is wonderful if you have played an instrument while growing up in school, or still do today, though this class is for everyone who enjoys music and is willing to listen with an open mind to many different styles of music from many different periods of history. The two parts of the class will begin with this first unit as an introduction to basic musical elements, and the instruments heard in Western classical music. The second part of the class will be a survey of music history from the Middle Ages to the present day. This is an incredibly long span of time for one course, so the most important events and composers of music history will be highlighted with several musical examples, while other periods will contain less information and fewer musical excerpts.

The great jazz musician Duke Ellington said, “There are two types of music…good and bad.” We will now begin to find out what it means to have an informed opinion about music. This includes how and why music sounds the way that it does.

The first musical element studied in Unit I is melody. This is usually the most recognized part of a musical piece. Choose a favorite piece of music, this can be a popular song, movie theme, classical piece, tunes used in television commercials or heard on the radio, or whatever source for listening you use. Try to describe this melody’s range and shape, or contour. Why do you like this melody? How does it make you feel?

Rhythm is the next musical element and is also very important to how we perceive a musical example. Again, choose a piece of music familiar to your ears. Does the rhythm make you want to get up and dance? Does it calm or relax you? As rhythm propels the music in time, it also gives the music a portion of its character. Simply, rhythms are the lengths of individual musical sounds, whether they are long or short. The combinations of these different lengths of
sound create rhythm. In many cases, language and speech patterns create the rhythm heard in music. This could be heard easily in early music such as Gregorian chant, or in modern hip-hop music.

Harmony may not be as familiar or as obvious as the previous two musical elements. Harmony is the combination of musical sounds, or pitches. This is something that is usually performed on instruments such as pianos or guitars, or the combination of several instruments played simultaneously in a piece of music. Intervals and chords are the essentials of harmony and provide support for the melody. Along with the individual character of the melody, harmony provokes our response to music whether it is simply happy or sad. There are of course many other human responses that can be felt when listening to music. At this point, harmony should be viewed as an element that adds depth to the overall sound in music. We will talk about specific types of harmony as the class progresses.

Musical form is the set of plans that allows listeners, performers, and composers to keep music organized. This is the most difficult concept to understand at first. When writing an academic essay, a particular format is used to keep the thoughts of the author organized in such a way that the words used are not just an endless stream of thoughts. A point is being made in the essay. Having a simple format such as an introduction, body, and conclusion helps the reader to understand what the essay is about. Another analogy of how form is used in music can be in understanding the rules of an athletic sport. In baseball for example, why would the pitcher intentionally walk a batter? The goal is for defense to get every batter out! Or in basketball, why do players not go for the three point shot every time since it is the highest number of points that can be scored at once? If you understand the rules of these and other sports, then they are much more enjoyable to watch or play. Musical form does the exact same thing. When we understand the rules, we become more actively a part of the music.

Now, choose a song that you can sing. It does not matter if you do not think you can sing or not. Almost everyone sings during the day to themselves in the shower, or in the car, etc. Popular songs follow a very simple format, and usually repeat a phrase and melody many times. A simple song format called strophic form is most commonly used in pop songs. Most of the time, the beginning of the song starts with the main melody sung and played with lyrics, (usually the title of the song). Next comes the first verse of poetry, followed by a repeat of the chorus which is the melody heard in the beginning. These two elements may alternate many times, and then the song comes to an end. See if you can hear this in your favorite song that you sing. In Classical music, form is often times more complex than this. The listening guides in the textbook and on StudySpace will help you to keep your thoughts organized while listening to the music. The most important thing to realize while listening to music in the beginning of this class is that there are different sections to the music. Study the terminology associated with the form used in musical examples so you can become more of an active listener.

It is important to remember that classical music spans the entire range of human emotion. It is not always meant just to relax us or help us sleep, or for simple entertainment while studying another subject. As an active listener, your attention is focused on the music just as you are focused while watching a movie, or reading a book. This takes practice! Start now!

There are two listening activities in Unit I. The first is meant to aid in learning the instruments of the orchestra. Benjamin Britten’s The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra introduces not only the instruments of the orchestra, but it also
introduces musical form. Theme and Variations with an ending Fugue is the form and students should follow the piece just as the listening guides in the textbook and in StudySpace present the music.

The next piece is Carl Orff’s *O fortuna*, from *Carmina burana*. This work includes lyrics, (though they are in a Latin/German dialect). Do not be frightened by foreign languages! There will be many others heard in the class, and the translations are in the listening guides.

**Using the Course Textbook:**

To begin this unit, we will review the course materials, as well as instructions to accessing the web-based materials so that you can get off to a good start. As mentioned before, the StudySpace website that is provided with the textbook contains listening guides that are a valuable resource in the class. In addition to the electronic listening guides, the website provides much needed help with examples of the musical elements. This is found in the “Materials of Music” tab and is there to help with this first unit, and may be revisited throughout the class as appropriate to each unit’s content. All students are urged to explore StudySpace entirely, though some of the web content will not be required for successful completion of each unit assessment.

The textbook and StudySpace access are packed with all of the materials needed to successfully complete this course. The StudySpace website may be accessed by following the instructions included with the course materials packet. There will be an access code that will need to be entered on the given website, along with your name and the name of the university, (Columbia Southern University). There is StudySpace basic access, and StudySpace Plus access. Students should register for StudySpace Plus access to get all of the musical examples in the class. This comes with the purchase of the textbook packet at no extra charge. Some students who do not know this register for the basic access, and do not have access to all of the materials. Here you will be able to listen to most of the musical examples, take practice quizzes, and study each chapter’s material in great detail. Once again, this resource should be explored!

**Learning Activities (Non-Graded)**

- Internet resources including web-videos, images, and especially scholarly articles published for public viewing provide extra help and should be considered for use to enhance the knowledge gained in this class. For essay questions asked in unit assessments, source citations in APA format must be included both in-text when paraphrasing or quoting, as well as at the end of the essay response. Outside sources can be very helpful to students to reach the two hundred word minimum requirement for essay responses. Scholarly articles can easily be found when performing an internet search for subjects and composers studied in the class. Just include in the search, “scholarly article” before or after the subject or composer. To be sure that a source is appropriate for academic research, check to see that the article has its own bibliography or source citation. Students can be confident that the content is appropriate if the author(s) of the article are associated with a major university. Websites such as Wikipedia.com or About.com may not be used in this class as a source citation. The sites are a great start for most research, though the information on these types of websites may not be trusted since anyone can edit the articles with no proof of authentic information. When using wiki
or others, go to the articles' bibliography, if available, and find the original source. Whenever questions arise about sources, course content, or just general questions about a subject, students may at all times contact their professor.

- Listen to all musical examples in the StudySpace website.

- There is no replacement for live music attendance. It is strongly suggested that if students have opportunities to experience live music, especially classical recitals and concerts, to take advantage of the helpful learning and entertaining events in your area.

- There are listening examples included in almost every chapter of the textbook. Though they are all not required, it is strongly suggested that you listen to as much music as possible to gain a true appreciation for music.