

Listening to form in/through contemporary musics

Anthology Resource

Sam Reenan Department of Music Miami University (Oxford, OH)
reenans@miamioh.edu

3rd Pedagogy into Practice Conference, 2-4 June 2022, Michigan State University

The seven pieces in the short resource below afford students the opportunity to engage formal inquiry about music without relying on prior knowledge of musical *forms*. Sample prompts are provided, inspired in part by the writings of Arnie Cox, Michèle Duguay, Mariusz Kozak, and Judy Lochhead. Additionally, many of these pieces can serve as touchpoints for re-engagement throughout an aural skills curriculum; some corresponding topics are provided in the final column.

Bibliography

- Cox, Arnie. 2016. *Music and Embodied Cognition: Listening, Moving, Feeling, and Thinking*. Indiana University Press.
- Duguay, Michèle. 2019. "Physical Balance, Gravity, and Tension in Contemporary Piano Works." *Theory and Practice* 44: 1–28.
- . 2020. "Gendering Virtual Space: Vocal Placement in Recorded Popular Music." Presented at the virtual Society for Music Theory Conference.
- Kozak, Mariusz. 2019. *Enacting Musical Time: The Bodily Experience of New Music*. Oxford University Press.
- Lochhead, Judy. 2016. *Reconceiving Structure in Contemporary Music: New Tools in Music Theory and Analysis*. Routledge.

Sources for New Music Scores

The *Contemporary Music Score Collection*, published by the UCLA Music Library:

<https://escholarship.org/uc/uclamusicscores>

I Resound Press, digital press/archive for music by women composers, edited by Linda Dusman:

<http://iresound.umbc.edu/index.php/about>

Composer	Work Title, Year & Links	Some Proposed Sample Prompts	Touchpoint Topics
<u>Robert Glasper</u>	<p>“You and Me” 2016 Youtube</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to 0:00–1:37. How many parts play? How many sections occur? How do the playing parts reinforce your interpretation of different sections? • Are there any repeating melodic ideas? Can you sing them? Do they change shape or instrument? • How do repeating gestures contribute to the organization of the musical sections? • Where is the voice coming from? How near or far does it sound? Does its location seem to change? 	<p>Verse-Chorus Form</p> <p>Vamp</p> <p>Chromatic Third-Relations</p> <p>Motivic Transformation</p>
<u>Caroline Shaw</u>	<p><i>entracte</i> 2011 Youtube Preview Score</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to 0:00–0:54. Contemplate the social dynamics of the ensemble. Are the parts working together? In dialogue? At odds with each other? • Are there any repeating rhythmic ideas? Can you recreate them with your body? • How near or far does the ensemble sound? Chart the ensemble’s perceived location in time on a spectrum from very near to very far. 	<p>Binary Form</p> <p>Homophony</p> <p>Metric Dissonance</p> <p>Cadence</p>
<u>Caroline Shaw</u>	<p><i>Lay All Your Love on Me</i> 2021 Youtube</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the piece several times. After a few times listening, map the trajectory of the piece. What kinds of players enter, and what do they contribute? • How does the initial set of musical gestures change over time? • Where (visually) are the instruments located in relation to the voice? Aurally? 	<p>Theme and Variations</p> <p>Chaconne</p> <p>Relative Minor/Major</p>
<u>Anna Thorvaldsdottir</u>	<p><i>Spectra</i> 2017 Youtube Preview Score</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to 0:00–2:00. Think about the ensemble as an ecosystem. How do instruments interact? What do they share or compete for? • How many different kinds of sounds do you hear? Map in your listening the terrain of sound types in the first thirty seconds of the piece. • What is the overall shape of the piece? 	<p>Drones/Pedal Tones</p> <p>Call and Response</p> <p>Arch form</p>

Composer	Work Title, Year & Links	Some Proposed Sample Prompts	Touchpoint Topics
<u>T. J. Anderson</u>	<i>Contrast</i> 2015 Purchase Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the score. Imagine each gesture. How might you generate the variety of sounds represented in the score? • Contemplate “repetition” and “contrast” (the work’s title!). What changes as gestures are repeated? How is form constructed moment to moment? Overall? 	<p>Intervals</p> <p>Ametric music</p> <p>Call and response</p>
<u>Linda Dusman</u>	<i>Elio: Visions of Light II</i> 2007 Preview Score and Audio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Movement IV. Catalog the musical gestures in each voice. How many kinds of gesture occur in the hand drum? In the voice? Do these musical materials suggest any large-scale organization for the movement? • Contemplate the drama of the vocal line. Sing the opening melodic gesture. Then, examine the pitches of the remainder of the vocal line. What factors help create a sense of climax or denouement? 	<p>Motivic transformation</p> <p>Set-class analysis</p> <p>Through-composed form</p> <p>Text setting</p>
<u>Vijay Iyer</u>	<i>Machine Days</i> 2008 Youtube Purchase Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to 0:35–1:00. Focus your initial listening on the bass. How often does the bass change its note? What rhythmic patterns does it play? Can you echo these rhythmic gestures? • Consider the piano and saxophone. How do they interact? Are they homophonic? Polyphonic? Heterophonic? • Work to sing the pitches of the saxophone. Start by identifying the highest and lowest pitches it plays. Sing along with the recording on these boundary pitches. Then try to arpeggiate the harmony it outlines. 	<p>Assymmetric meter</p> <p>Vamp</p> <p>Extended tertian harmonies</p>