

MUSC 0246 A Cappella Ensemble Performance SPRING 2019

Syllabus

M/W/F 9:05 AM - 9:55 PM Mead Chapel
Professor Jeffrey Buettner

Course Description

Unaccompanied vocal music is rich in cultural expression and artistic beauty. Singing in an unaccompanied vocal ensemble enhances creativity, musicianship, and communication skills. This course affords an opportunity to develop analytical and ensemble skills that contribute to creative and informed performance. Through study of scores and source readings, students will explore vocal technique, performance and cultural context in European art music, North American folk songs, and styles of improvisation. The course concludes in a public performance and may include additional performances off campus. Music reading is required, prior singing experience is not. A preview of the reading requirement available at go/Ensemble246. 3 hrs lect./disc. ART, CMP (J. Buettner)

Goals

Goals for the course include exploration of vocal techniques, cultural and musical contexts for a variety of repertoire, and ability to perform repertoire successfully. **Attendance is required at all class meetings.** Preparation is required outside of class including all repertoire, source readings, audio and/or video recordings and other study materials as assigned. **Advance preparation of the notes your part in each piece of music is necessary.** Meet with Professor Buettner or a classmate outside of class if you have difficulty.

Requirements and Materials

- Oxford Dictionary of Music (inexpensive, or available online with Midd login)
- Online access to go/246, the ensemble/class Canvas site
- Pencils
- 3-ring binder
- Notebook or “composition” (writing) book, or 3-hole notebook paper to insert in binder
- Scores and readings as provided, or for student download/printing

Assignments

- Journal responses to readings, scores and listening (weekly; typically Monday)
- Skills and reading drills on Canvas website (weekly/as assigned)
- Research and rehearsal preparation for assigned repertoire (as assigned)
- Final course/ensemble concert (finals week/TBD)
- Final cumulative journal: this may be a class group project, or individual if necessary (due in finals week)
- Performance of course/ensemble literature in outreach activities including singing for Project Independence, Mary Hogan Elementary School, as available/feasible

Calendar

- See course calendar for readings and preparation deadlines, any particularly important class periods, and outreach engagements. The calendar will necessarily develop over time, so we will attend and refer to it routinely.

The Voice for Singing

Developing ensemble vocal performance skills begins with learning to use your voice. Study of anatomy and technical and sensational approaches to using your voice provide a comprehensive beginning to the understanding of the your voice and its potential. Certain issues will be common among all singers, and necessarily common for an ensemble, but many aspects of singing must be approached individually, then interpreted and adjusted personally in order to contribute to a group sound. Discipline is important, as is sensitivity, willingness, patience, and persistence. This is a constructive, non judgmental environment in which we will develop our own vocal sound and vocal ensemble - our own distinctive band.

Ensemble Singing

Singing in a vocal ensemble is an exciting endeavor. Tuning a unison, octave, chord, or creating a soundscape is an adventure; developing genuine and emotional communication in a complex polyphonic work is a new and surprising journey with every performance. It is most helpful to develop a thorough knowledge of one's own voice, and to couple that with excellent listening skills including attention to intonation, sensitivity to dynamic and fluctuation of tempo, and a myriad of subtlety that enables us to know each other's intent as we sing together. At the core of a vocal ensemble is a relationship that is fostered and developed with care and respect.

Improvisation

The term *improvisation* is usually associated with jazz or performances such as the circle songs of Bobby McFerrin. But improvisation is essential in the development of any music, and inherent to folk and classical or "art" music, even though that music is conveyed notes on paper. Behind all vocal music there is a human being with something to "say." We will regard improvisation part of the creative process, as something we do rather than learn, and part of communication musically and extra-musically. Here are a few ideas to facilitate a basic understanding of how improvisation is a part of this course:

1. All music is "improvisation" at some stage, so consider...
 1. diction (in the variety of sounds and phonemes available to you),
 2. delivery of text (in repetition, response, extension/word association),
 3. melodic modes (the pitch collections from which you form ideas for melodies),
 4. harmony, or chord and sonority building,
 5. rhythm (ostinatos/loops, variety, relationship to text and diction),
 6. your sound (explore and know your vocal extremes, uniqueness, and fun sounds),
 7. that you have something to "say" - or not!
2. Improvisation is largely based in listening.
 1. What do you hear in your world, your environment, your past, your thoughts?
 2. What does someone else have to "say"? How do you create or contribute to a musical relationship?

Ensemble Direction

Nothing reinforces ensemble performance skills like teaching and rehearsing an ensemble. As we develop individual vocal and ensemble musicianship skills, we should develop the capability to assume a leadership and teaching role. We should practice study, communication, listening, evaluation and overall efficiency from the perspective of ensemble member but also be prepared to assume leadership of the ensemble. In turn, the responsibility of ensemble leadership develops these aspects in a performer and creates a higher level of discipline and standard of performance. The process of listening and evaluation will be practiced in the ensemble rehearsal (class) and exercised in listening examples.

Introduction to Ensemble 246: An Ethic for Ensemble Singing

In this course, we will study music from a range of time periods and cultural origins. We will most likely habitually reference the musical heritage of Europe, and in that, the sacred music, as the European Christian tradition has been host to highly influential developments in the history of (especially) vocal ensemble music. But (especially) vocal music has highly significant connections to culture and tradition globally, so we will approach our music making with regard to what is “traditional” in the sense of the development of the modern vocal ensemble (often called a “choir”), as well as what are truly unique global traditions in making sound and expression with the human voice, especially in group situations. I’ll begin this introduction by reviewing those basic concepts, first of European historical trend and influence, then observing how, generally and in brief, we can observe a more diverse purpose for music and “ensemble” music making. Add to this the many skills that we will study and exercise, and we have what I believe to be a truly remarkable effort on your part, that includes your own ability, your desire to sing, your appreciation of beauty, your work ethic, and your sense of care towards each other and the people of the world.

Music prior to the 16th century was developed according to somewhat different aesthetics compared to that of the common practice period and forward. Mathematical principles factored highly in the development of composition, including rules of rhythm and pitch choice. Music was included among the essential disciplines of the liberal arts.

Music as an expression of innate and personal beauty reached an historic high point in the 16th century, the high Renaissance. While accessible to a relatively small segment of the population of Europe and the American Colonies, art music became fashionable among the wealthy and nobility, who participated as audience, student, and performer. The court or town musician was regarded as an employee, but several composers who found high court and chapel positions were highly celebrated, even published, and enjoyed lasting success. Vocal polyphony became popular throughout Europe, exemplified in the madrigal of Italy but including similar genres from across the continent. Influenced by humanism, composers made a deliberate effort to evoke emotions through vocal sounds and musical gestures within the musical language of the time. “Madrigalisms,” (musically imaginative vocal effects and text setting), and general attention to the text became essential qualities in vocal music. The Roman Catholic Church supported many of the great composers of the era, yet church leadership opposed some of the more dramatic or theatrical aspects of the music. Church music nevertheless flourished, and composers such as Palestrina produced some of the most exquisite musical art ever conceived, in part because they developed methods of musical expression within restrictions of church doctrine. Much of modern vocal ensemble music is grounded in the principles and style developed in the 16th century.

Instrumental and instrumental/vocal music develops to a great extent in the 17th-18th centuries, along with significant developments in instrument building, and expansion of European church and civic music programs. The development of opera gives rise to a new genre and new dramatic possibilities for vocal and instrumental music, and the age of the virtuoso begins. A cappella vocal music is not developed as aggressively (for example, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote essentially no a cappella vocal music) as instrumental accompaniment become a standard, and composers wrote deliberately for specific instruments in expressive ways. Vocal polyphony continues with many similarities the previous era, along with newer developments in harmony and form.

From the 19th century, “singing societies” have maintained a tradition of singing generally separate from that the elite professional of the centuries prior. People began to sing in choruses formed as artistic societies (oratorios), and as social ensembles in environments such as factories and places of work or social gathering. Professional composers became highly active with these groups (Johannes Brahms, Arnold Schönberg, Ralph Vaughan Williams) and the foundation for the modern community chorus, student a cappella group, and to some extent, the university or college choral tradition was laid. Singing became an avocation and

social event for enthusiasts and skilled amateurs, including volunteer singers who were not paid and not trained lifelong for that purpose. With the rise of the virtuoso, the development of the modern public concert, the burgeoning middle class, as well as fundamental change in the strength of monarchic society, the professional musician was no longer relegated to a low status but had the potential of great fame and notoriety. Interestingly, this period also shows a renewed interest in folk music and influence of folk style through transcription and arrangements by professional composers, and also in music of a combination of folk and art characteristics, such as Shape Note and Spiritual traditions.

Much of the previous continued into and in the 20th century, including trends in nationalist music and sacred music for the concert hall, both especially pertinent to vocal/choral music. Choral masterworks including Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, as well as Penderecki's and Pärt's choral music, are all non-liturgical pieces. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the sacred and the secular are essentially indistinguishable in musical terms, and often in textual ones as well; the definition of sacred and the specificity of religious context is often regarded as fluid, for various reasons. (This is certainly debatable by tradition, place, etc.) Composers sought and currently seek to expand their musical language beyond traditional singing or playing technique, to incorporate non-tonal musical language, sounds of nature and sonic environment, popular music, and what we typically call "folk" styles from around the world. There is a recognition of the beauty of indigenous music, and there is an inherent argument over preservation of that music, or incorporation of musical style into modern performance or compositional contexts, or some combination. Global music, sometimes called "world" music, refers to music of native traditions across the globe. "World music" should encompass the music of all of us, and especially that which is developed in a context of specific or deliberate human activity, in a society with a common cultural identity. "World music" often contradicts definitions and blurs modern borders. For many people, "world music" includes the uniquely American genre of the African American Spiritual, that has become one of the most popular forms of vocal ensemble music in the world. Two important fundamental thoughts come at the end of this: there is a reason Middlebury and other institutions host classes such as "What in the World is Music," and, the general observation by ethnomusicologist Jeffrey Titon that most all human cultures sing.

The voice, and for our purposes, singing, is innately connected to us as individuals, whether we sing in a group or not. Our voice is part of our identity, and our sense of identity is reflected in our preferences for music, and the sounds that we make. As singers we are vulnerable, but in that vulnerability there is great potential for expression, and perhaps even greater potential for connection: we share our voice, and we need each other. That cyclical, symbiotic existence of individuality and community can enable and sustain a society. At least, as well as anything else.

Finally, to learn and test this all successfully, to a degree that respects music, culture, and each other, we need to learn our music, study our culture, and listen to each other. This course is an exercise in doing better. Not, better than others, but better of ourselves for others. This includes individual musicianship, learning effort, listening skills, and cooperative participation. We will explore what it means to lead an ensemble, and just how far we can go with the potential for "ensemble." We will develop a mission statement for ensemble singing, and I hope that we will discover how that mission applies to our lives outside the ensemble, in how we engage others with our musical selves. How does your pursuit of ensemble singing make you a better person?

Repertoire for Singing, Study and Listening

Repertoire for this course will be selected from the following general categories and time periods. This is an essentially chronological listing of topics, but the rehearsal of the music will not be. Folk music, which may be very old or relatively recent (modeled on the very old) is listed in the last chronological area for convenience and relevance. There will be study repertoire (listening, discussion, creative model) and performance repertoire, and both.

Listed by general genre, this list is entirely flexible, but basically demonstrative of content.

Classical

Sumer is acumen in - anonymous (English); the earliest extant recorded (written) polyphony
In principio omnes (or other plainsong) - Hildegard
Verbum patris humanatur - anonymous (plainsong; recorded by Sequentia, Barbara Thornton)
Organum (early polyphony, melodic line, parallel part)
Quam pulchra es - Dunstable (hear recording by Middlebury Collegium, 2018)
Clapping Music - Steve Reich
The Wedding (or) The Lamb - John Tavener
Flower Songs - Benjamin Britten
Sacred forms (mass movement, motet) by Palestrina, Victoria, Brumel, Morales, Alleluia - di Lasso, J. S. Bach
Secular partsongs (madrilgal, chanson, villancico, lieder) of Europe (Purcell, Haydn); Mille Regretz - Josquin des Prez (attr.), Les chant des Oiseaux - Janequin, As Vesta Was - Thomas Weelkes
Art Music of the 19th-21st centuries (Brahms or Mendelssohn, Holst, Debussy, Dvorak, Pärt, Lauridsen, Uusberg, Shaw)
"Allemande" from Partita - Caroline Shaw (sometimes categorized as, "Alt-Classical")

Folk

African folk song - different countries/languages
African American Folk: Spirituals, work songs, shouts (polyphonic call and response)
Arranged Spirituals (Ain't That Good News, others)
Es tönen die Lieder/Heut' kommt der Hans - German folk/play
Fhir abate - Scotland (IPA study; website/listening file will accompany)
Ghanian community song - a field recording will be provided by Karl Haas, Visiting Assistant Professor of Music, and we will learn it by rote. (Students in the course, Music in Global Cultures will transcribe it, and we will ideally pool resources during the semester.)
Nanila - Georgia (Zedashe Ensemble; Northern Harmony)
Overtone singing (various examples)
Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder - African American work song
Shape Note polyphony (Northern Harmony, Southern Harmony, Sacred Harp)
Silver Dagger - American folk
Solnishka - Ukrainian Romani folk song

Popular music

Gold Gate Gospel Quartet
Barbershop/Sweet Adelines (Barbershop for treble voices)
Summertime - George Gershwin, arr. Deke Sharon
Triumph of the Heart - Björk
Sweet in the Morning, Common Threads - Bobby McFerrin
Improvised vocal polyphony (Sweet Honey in the Rock, other examples)
Wanting Memories - Ysaye Barnwell (Sweet Honey in the Rock)

Reading/Representative Course Bibliography

All readings are available in Davis Library, or will be provided. The reading list this semester depends on what is studied or performed in class. New articles may replace those listed here. *I've tried to keep it all to one page, please pardon inconsistencies.*

Apfelstadt, Hilary. 2016. "Warm-Ups: Building Strong Foundations for Ensemble Singing." *The Canadian Music Educator* 57 (4) (Summer): 33-35.

Bunch Dayme, Merdith. *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*.

Divided into six units:

1	Introductory chapters, pp. 1-29	4	Phonation 89-114
2	Artistry 37-42; overview 43-53	5	Resonance 116-144
3	Posture and Breathing 56-86	6	Articulation 145-155

Owner's Manual to the Voice. Selected from units 1-5 (after spring break).

Sataloff, Robert Thayer. 2006. *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*. Volume II. Plural Publishing Inc. (Selected chapters.)

Lim, Chern Mei. "In pursuit of harmony-The social and organisational factors in a professional vocal ensemble." In *The Psychology of Music* (journal), 2014.

Potter, John, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*. Cambridge: 2011. (Selected chapters)

Whalen, Wendell. *The Books of American Negro Spirituals*. 1925. Introductions (two volumes).

Phillips, Kenneth. *Directing the Choral Music Program*. Oxford: 2004. Selected pages.

Garretson, Robert. *Choral Music: History, Style And Performance Practice*. Selected pages.

Ross W. Duffin, ed. "The Voice," in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*. pp. 264-291. (See ex. 20.6, "Verbum patris humanatur," p. 280.)

Kite-Powell, ed. *A Performer's Guide to Renaissance Music*. NY: Schirmer, 1994. 3-51.

Smith, Anne. *The Performance of 16th-Century Music*. Oxford: 2011. Relevant/further interest.

Butt, John. *Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque*. Cambridge: 1994. Select pages (if Bach/Baroque is included.)

Elliott, Martha. *Singing in Style*. 13-19 general; 19-32 Italian (quite technical); ornamentation 110-125; *bel canto* 126-144; living composers 286-306, conclusion 305-6.

Smith reading, pp. 109-123 music and analysis; other pages prior for other aspects of composition as pertains to ensemble performance)

Carlin, Richard. *English and American Folk Music*. NY: World of Music, 1987.

Lomax, Alan. Source readings from field recordings (Smithsonian Institute).

Potter, John. *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology*. Pp. 47-66; possibly 83-86. 190-199.

Maultsby, Portia. Various articles.

Titon, Jeffrey Todd. 2009. *Worlds of Music*. Schirmer Cengage Learning. (Chapter 1.)