

Humanities Seminars Program
Understanding Music: Theory and Structure of Common-Practice Tonality
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The music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and many others, forms a canon of works held dear by performers and concert-goers alike. While each of these composers has their own distinct style, structurally their music derives from a set of principles collectively referred to as *common-practice tonality* (CPT). This course seeks to familiarize participants with the concepts and terminology central to CPT. The course is designed with the belief that deeper understanding of these principles will lead to more meaningful listening. Through dynamic lectures, musical demonstrations, and weekly listening and reading assignments, esoteric terms and concepts will be demystified. Topics will include harmonic progressions, cadences, consonance and dissonance, chromaticism, meter and hypermeter, motivic development, sonata form, and much more. **The course meets from 1 – 3 Monday afternoons in the Poetry Center.**

Recommended Text: Aaron Copland, *What to Listen for in Music*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1956.

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| Jan. 27 | Session 1 – Introduction and Overview (Copland, Chapters 1-3)
Ways we listen; Evolution of musical style; Creative process in music |
| Feb. 3 | Session 2 – Rhythm and Meter (Copland, Chapter 4)
Metric structure; Hypermeter; Rhythmic and metric disruptions |
| Feb. 10 | Session 3 – Melody, Scales, and Intervals (Copland, Chapter 5)
What makes a good melody?; Types of scales and intervals |
| Feb. 17 | Session 4 – Harmony and Dissonance (Copland, Chapter 6)
How to begin and end a harmonic progression; Spicing things up with accented dissonances |
| Feb. 24 | Session 5 – Phrases, Periods, and Sectional Forms (Copland, Chapter 8-10)
Building blocks of musical form; Binary/ternary/rondo; Linking sections |
| Mar. 2 | Session 6 – The Dramatic Arc of Sonata Form (Copland, Chapter 13)
Exposition/development/recap; Exceptional cases |
| Mar. 23 | Session 7 – Chromaticism as Drama
Modal mixture (aka., major vs. minor); Narrative devices; Aug./dim. sonorities |
| Mar. 30 | Session 8 – Programmatic Music and Leitmotif |
| Apr. 6 | Session 9 – Three Challenges to Tonality
Start in one key, end in another; Abandonment of tonic/dominant; Emancipation of the dissonance |
| Apr. 13 | Session 10 – Tonality in the 20 th -Century
Referential sonorities; The rise of symmetry; Whole-tone and octatonic strategies |

Partial List of Repertoire: Haydn, Sym. 102; Mozart, Sym. 40, Requiem; Beethoven, Sym. 3, 5 and 7, “Waldstein” sonata; Schubert, *Die schöne Müllerin*; Wagner, Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*; Brahms, Sym. 3; Stravinsky, Piano Concerto; Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste*. Also music by Bach, Schumann, Liszt, Wolf, others.