Agapē Agape, William Gaddis’s fifth and final novel, was published posthumously in 2002. Composed of a single paragraph of first-person narration, it potently concentrates several themes that recur consistently across Gaddis’s literary output. Gaddis had begun planning Agapē Agape in the 1960s, initially conceiving it as a social history of the player piano. Although the final product became something quite different, the player piano remains essential to Agapē Agape’s jeremiad, being the narrator’s central obsession and a source of his disillusionment with modern technological culture. In this paper, I explore the theme of presence that permeates both Gaddis’s novel and the marketing history of the player piano. Drawing on Jacques Derrida, I take presence to be a metaphysical thesis suggesting that unmediated access to meaning is possible and desirable. Throughout the player piano’s popular ascendancy, manufacturers insisted on the ability of their instruments to provide fulfilling musical experiences to listeners, conjuring up the spirit of the pianist whose playing was recorded onto the piano roll. In Agapē Agape, the concept of presence undergirds the narrator’s invective against forgery and mechanization. However, the player piano’s false simulation of presence ironically parallels the narrator’s own failure to achieve self-presence. I argue that this ironic duality in Agapē Agape reveals Gaddis’s own ambivalence toward the concept of presence. While the novel’s narrator apparently believes in some possibility of true presence through music (a possibility tragically derailed by the player piano), Gaddis’s novel formally performs deconstructive work, implying that musical presence is always illusive.
"'Playing in the Mud': Cassette Tapes and the Do It Yourself Histories of East Bay Punk"

Sean Peters (Cornell University)

Punk histories often omit the material conditions and labor of music scenes to tell the stories of “legendary” bands. This approach to writing history has been an awkward fit for a subculture that views itself as egalitarian and shuns ‘rock stars.’ In this paper, I shift my focus from genealogies of great bands to the material conditions of the scene, specifically its use of cassettes, to take a bottom-up approach in telling the story of the 1980s/1990s East Bay Punk scene of Northern California. Through archival research and interviews, I theorize an East Bay Punk ontology built on the tenets of collectivism, leftist activism, and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic enabled by the material affordances of the compilation tapes produced by scene participants. I focus on two compilation cassette tapes produced by scene members that were donated to Cornell University, exploring how each cassette exemplifies the broader scene’s ethos. The first cassette, *Get Off My Guts* (1982), defined an identity for the scene through a shared aesthetic that prized lo-fi recordings and a DIY approach to music-making. The second cassette, *Absolutely Zippo!: Time Capsule* (1997), illustrates the memory work and approach to history (re-)making that has allowed East Bay Punk participants to shape how we remember the scene through tape. Ultimately, my paper asks how objects can record and tell histories?
"The Earnestness of Wit: Returns in Haydn's Finales as Sites of Moral Edification"

Robert Wrigley (The Graduate Center, CUNY)

One of Haydn’s celebrated motivic techniques, especially frequent in finales, is to tease thematic returns by repeating isolated upbeat figures, a procedure which I term “upbeat fragmentation.” Drawing on Mathew’s (2018) exploration of how Haydn constructed his music so as to capture the attention of his audiences, I argue that upbeat fragmentation is a way of directing the ears even of relatively untutored listeners to moments of structural articulation, thereby achieving the effect of moral edification proposed by Schroeder (1990). Toward that end, I offer a reading of four moments of upbeat fragmentation in the finale of Symphony no. 98, investigating how the procedure may function to pique listeners’ interest selectively at important moments.

My analysis, furthermore, heeds Webster’s (2009) call to reframe our understanding of Haydn’s earnestness and wit in terms of dialectic rather than polarity. While Rosen (1971) and Burnham (2005) view the isolation of upbeats as a principal mechanism of the composer’s humor, I argue that upbeat fragmentation shows how wit and earnestness operate jointly and simultaneously, each dependent on the other for its impact. Just as the humor of upbeat fragmentation draws its power from the expectation of return, the witty rhetoric of the moment draws attention to important structural junctures. In addition to exploring the communicative significance of Haydn’s formal techniques, my work therefore also suggests a need broadly to rethink our interpretation of musical humor, with the understanding that making a joke is not necessarily making light.
This presentation argues that Black pop music containing overt political messages frequently uses what I call a “tonic anticipation” as an important rhetorical device. Drawing from scholarship by Nicholas Stoia, I posit that a tonic anticipation occurs when a melody outlines a tonic mode over a pretonic harmony, increasing the harmonic tension and heightening the expectation for a tonic. Although its effect is similar in some respects to a classical anticipation, it is distinct because it occurs solely in the melody and draws from a collection of pitches, rather than being a single note. James Stewart argues that Black pop played an important political role in the decade following the civil rights movement because it allowed listeners to use the lyrics in relation to their personal struggles. But the influence of melody and harmony on how lyrics are interpreted has not yet been examined. The tonic anticipation heightens general tension, and surrounding musical context allows listeners to interpret the political message positively or negatively. In Sam Cook’s “A Change Is Gonna Come (1965)”, the bridge concludes with a tonic anticipation as Cook’s highest vocal resonates over a dissonance between ^8 over V7. Both factors draw attention to Cook’s frustration regarding societies lack of empathy. Stevie Wonder’s “Visions (1973)” also features a tonic anticipation with a sharp dissonance highlighting shattered dreams of a society without hate. By considering the tonic anticipation in Black pop, we can appreciate the role of music in some black American’s self-definition during the post-civil rights era.
"I Can't Say No: Re-Problematizing Through Female Agency in the Oklahoma! Revivals"

Janna O’Leary (University of Arkansas)

This paper investigates how the 2019 revival of Oklahoma! explores and reinterprets the problematic elements of the original 1943 Broadway production, while also infusing new problems into the narrative that reflect the social issues of the United States in 2019. This analysis centers the musical reinterpretation and representation of the soubrette character Ado Annie, through the song “I Cain’t Say No.” The essay uses audio samples, transcriptions, and scores to show how, while the harmonic, melodic, and lyrical content largely remain unaltered, the changes in orchestration, timbre, and ornamentation bring new meaning to the work, and allow for new interpretations of the pre-existing harmonic, melodic, and lyrical content.
Benjamin Britten’s chamber opera The Rape of Lucretia is well-acknowledged in scholarship that details musical obscurity, violence, and treatment of women in twentieth-century opera; however, few have considered how this opera and its volatile content are displayed on a modern stage. Glyndebourne’s 2015 production reimagines this forgotten work as a contemporary air that comments on both the original composition’s thematic approaches and modern rape politics. Britten’s initial creation used the “heroine” as a plot device rather than as a central character. Had the opera been about Lucretia herself, the composer might have named it Lucretia; however, the focus on the act of rape tells us that her rape is more important than her body. In this paper, I demonstrate that Glyndebourne production designers Fiona Shaw, Michael Levine, and Nicky Gillibrand, crafted a space that reconstructed Britten’s narrative, which, in turn, gave the opera urgency and the titular character psychological agency. I focus specifically on the titular act’s scene and the ways that production elements such as costume and light design, stage construction, and choreography are manipulated to divert the audience’s attention away from explicitly violent imagery to focus on the complexities of human tragedy. By humanizing Lucretia, this production shifts rape as shock factor to sympathetic portrayal of a sexually and psychologically traumatic moment. As many dramaturgists and theatre creators have explained, attempting to stage sexual violence in an age with a heightened awareness of violent sexual deviancy poses great challenges. But, by identifying these strategies, we gain insight on how to communicate the intricacies of rape culture through a socially sensitive framework. I conclude that this Lucretia offers effective and humane ways to reimagine operatic depictions of sexual violence in the twenty-first century.
American popular culture has not been kind to Asian Americans. Both the image and sound of Asians and Asian Americans in American mainstream popular culture—largely invented by non-Asians—have consisted of several harmful, silencing stereotypes nonrepresentative of Asian American people. In addition, media portrayals of Asian Americans’ relationships with other minoritized groups have been generally negative, framing Asian Americans as a “model minority” and, as a result, a potential detriment to these groups. Asian Americans have, however, been fighting these false narratives and stereotypes; one such example is Chinese American saxophonist Fred Ho. Ho, who passed away in 2014 from cancer, spent the majority of his life using his music and image to fight false narratives surrounding Asian Americans, and advocated for Afro Asian solidarity as a means to encourage unity among people of color. A strong advocate for women, Ho also used his music to confront the marginalization and oftentimes forced silencing of sexual assault victims. Drawing on George Lewis’ and Fumi Okiji’s theorizations about jazz and Kathy Park Hong’s arguments about sexual assault and silence among Asian Americans, I argue that in his jazz suite, *Yes Means Yes, No Means No, Whatever She Wears, Wherever She Goes!*, Ho confronts the belittled position of women in narratives about sexual assault and sheds a positive light on the relationships that African Americans and Asian Americans have. In the rise of anti-Asian attacks and media silence surrounding many of those attacks, his silence-breaking music is now especially relevant.
"Exploring the Hidden Curriculum: Diversifying Gender Representation in Music Theory Pedagogy"

Tori Vilches (Indiana University)

This project critically examines the Western music theory pedagogical canon through a feminist lens in order to highlight the effects of underrepresentation in music theory textbooks and anthologies. I build on Philip Ewell’s research of the seven most frequently sourced U.S. music theory textbooks to show how the most common musical examples used in theory texts and anthologies primarily consist of works by the “big three” — Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. I explore the “hidden curriculum” of music theory as presented by Palfy and Gilson in order to reveal the ways in which women are consistently undervalued in the current pedagogical canon. I argue that the general exclusion of women from textbooks is detrimental to the professional development of women in the field, therefore proving the necessity for gender diversity in pedagogical material. I compare the low membership numbers of women in the Society for Music Theory, arguing that perhaps the lack of representation of women in our textbooks and anthologies has a direct correlation to the gap in representation in the field of music theory; perhaps one of the roots of the problem starts with our textbooks and teaching materials. I show analyses of excerpts composed by three women – Fanny Hensel, Julie von Webenau, and Lili Boulanger, with an eye toward increasing gender representation in theory pedagogy. I present these excerpts as supplemental musical examples that can be integrated into pedagogical analytical instruction at the university level.