

[Note: 5/08: INCOMPLETE. Please contact me for revised final syllabus.]  
Honors Seminar - Spectral music: a chord or an attitude?  
- V71.0901.002 MW 12:30 - 1:45 room 318  
Prof. Elizabeth Hoffman [elizabeth.hoffman@nyu.edu](mailto:elizabeth.hoffman@nyu.edu)

In this course we will consider 1) what spectral music is 2) how it is made  
3) what it sounds like 4) what its composers have tried to achieve 5) how spectral music,  
as a movement, may or may not have been related to the time and place in which it arose  
6) what assumptions spectral music may lead us to deconstruct, about formalism,  
interval, structure, time, and space.

As an upper level honors course, this class will include a challenging amount of  
reading; careful listening; writing assignments that are graded on their  
form as well as on their content; and class presentations. In addition, there will be  
ongoing small assignments involving composition and psychoacoustic research.

Readings on cultural politics and history:

Drott, Eric. 2005. "Timbre and the Cultural Politics of French Spectralism"  
in Proceedings of the Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology  
(CIM05). on blackboard.

Jameson, Fredric. 1981. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially  
Symbolic Act. (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press). electronic access.

Hirsh, Arthur. 1981. The French New Left : an intellectual history from Sartre to Gorz /  
(Boston : South End Press). HX263 .H57 1981 [excerpts]

Musical organicism and its alternatives / by Nadine Marie Hubbs.  
1990. PhD dissertation, U. Michigan. ON ORDER.

[On] Benjamin, Walter? Paddison, Max? on Adorno?

Mahnkopf, Morphology?  
Capitalism, socialism, ecology / André Gorz ; translated by Chris Turner.  
London ; New York : Verso, c1994.  
HD6957.F8 G6713 1994

LISTENING AND SCORE STUDY:

**Gerard Grisey XCD 41066**

Garth Konx, viola ; Asko Ensemble ; WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln ; Stefan Asbury, conductor.

Prologue : pour alto seul (1976) (15:28) –  
Périodes : pour 7 musiciens (1974) (15:28) –  
***Partiels : pour 18 musiciens (1975) (22:02) – score***

Modulations : pour 33 musiciens (1976-77) (16:10)  
Transitoires : pour grand orchestre (1980-81) (19:54)  
Epilogue : pour 4 cors soli et grand orchestre (1985) (8:03)

**Tristan Murail**

***Memoires/erosion - score***  
Gondwanda  
***ethers - score***

la barque mystique  
treize couleurs

### **Hugues Dufourt**

Antiphysis / Hugues Dufourt XCD 15348, disc 5  
*Surgir*, for orchestra **M1045.D84 S9 1985**

– order recording?

### **Schoenberg**

“Farben” [see Slawson excerpt]

---**Philippe Hurel**

**M175.X6 H963 no.2 2002**

Loops II : pour vibraphone / Philippe Hurel (8:34) in processing

---**Michael Levinas**

Trois études per pf. / Michaël Lèvinas (6:50 XCD 12341

La conference des oiseaux [sound recording] / Michaël Levinas. XCD 15072

Froissements d'ailes : pour flûte / Michaël Levinas M62.L665 F7 1975

recording only: XCD 48307

In Processing Ouverture pour une fête étrange (16:20) -- Les rires du Gilles (7:05) -- Concerto pour un piano-espace no 2 (12:30) -- Clov et Hamm (7:27) -- Contrepoints irréels-rencontres (4:55).

---**Horatio Radulescu - TBA**

### Readings on spectral music's compositional techniques, and philosophies:

Anderson, Julian. 2000. “A Provisional History of Spectral Music.”  
Contemporary Music Review, vol 19/2, 7-22.

Teodorescu-Ciocanea. 2003. “Timbre Versus Spectralism.” Contemporary  
Music Review, vol. 22, nos. 1/2, 87-104.

Rose, Francois. 1996. “Introduction to the Pitch Organization of French Spectral  
Music,” Perspectives of New Music, vol. 34/2, 6-39.

Moscovich, Viviana. 1997. “French Spectral Music: An Introduction.” Tempo,  
New Ser., No. 200, 21-27.

Murail, Tristan. 2000. “Afterthoughts.” Contemporary  
Music Review, vol 19/2, [6]-9. [article excerpt.]

1984. “Spectra and Pixies.” Contemporary Music Review, vol 11/1, 157-170.

Ledoux, Claude. 2000. “From the Philosophical to the Practical.” Contemporary  
Music Review, vol 19/2, [45]-65. [article excerpt.]

Fineberg, Joshua. 2000. “Guide to the Basic Concepts and Techniques of Spectral  
Music.” Contemporary Music Review, vol 19/2, 81-113.

Grisey. 1996. Interview with David Bundler. *20th-Century Music*,  
**March 1996. Accessed 1/15/08 at**  
<http://www.angelfire.com/music2/davidbundler/grisey.html>

In French:

Dalbavie...? from *Le Timbre*

Readings on musical acoustics and psychoacoustics:

Slawson, Wayne. 1985. *Sound Color*. chapters 3 and 4: “Evidence from Auditory Physiology”; “Evidence from Psychoacoustics” (Berkeley: U. Calif. Press).

Cogan, Robert. *Sonic Design*. [“The Color of Sound” chapter excerpt, pp. 365-427].

Readings on computer assisted composition:

Computer software used: AS, PW, MAX/MSP

Some other composers tangentially involved, or associated with this movement through aesthetic and philosophical congruences:

maiguashca, fritsch, barlow; vivier, scelsi, dalbavie, hurel, harvey, radulescu