Theorizing African American Music
Emory University
Conference Program
June 5–7, 2025

Thursday, June 5, 2025

Registration: 2:00–6:00pm, Carlos Museum and Harris Hall
Hors d'oeuvres: 5:00–7:00pm, Carlos Museum
Opening remarks: 6:00–7:00pm, Carlos Museum

Concert: 7:30pm, Performing Arts Studio (PAS)
featuring Khari Joyner, cello; Laura Gordy, piano
Lydia Bangura, soprano; Cornelius Johnson, tenor; and The Gary Motley Quintet

Friday, June 6, 2025
Morning Sessions (**presentation abstracts listed below alphabetically by presenter last name**)

Session 1: 8:30–10:30, "Black Women and Cultural Legacy,"
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Karen Painter (University of Minnesota)

- 8:30–9:00: Sasha Doster (Columbia University), "The Language of a Mother's Prayer: A Timbre Analysis of Signifyin(g) Black Womanhood in H. Lawrence Freeman's *Opera Voodoo*"
- 9:00–9:30: Monica A. Hershberger (Lehigh University), "Dorothy Maynor at Westminster Choir College, 1933–1935: Recovering the History"
- 9:30–10:00: Christoph' McFadden (Yale University), "Clark-Sister Fans, Intimacy, and the Remediation of Celebrity"
- 10:00–10:30: Lydia Bangura (University of Michigan), "In Collaboration with Florence Price: A Lecture Recital"

Session 2: 8:30–10:30, "Beyond Bars,"
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Naomi André (UNC Chapel Hill)

- 8:30–9:00: Theo Greer (Michigan State University), "Who is 'You'?: Intimacy and Mode of Address in Kendrick Lamar's 'u'"
- 9:00–9:30: Heidi R. Lewis (Colorado College), "Make Rappers Rap Again: Interrogating the Mumble Rap 'Crisis'"
- 9:30–10:00: Cedric Preston McCoy (Yale University), "Towards a Music Analytical Methodology for Hip Hop Studies: Tracing Musical and Racial Lineages in Stretch Music and Solar Music"
- 10:00–10:30: Terence Kumpf (TU Dortmund University), "Cold Analytical: How Transculturation Might Inform African Americanist Methodologies"

BREAK: 10:30–11:00am

Session 3: 11:00am–12:30pm, “Historical Echoes,”
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Marvin McNeill (Oxford College of Emory University)

- 11:00–11:30: Sarah Gerk (Binghamton University), “From Saint-Domingue to Congo Square: The Haitian Revolution and Music in New Orleans”
- 11:30–12:00: Alexis Lowder (University of Memphis), “A New Day a-comin' for the Poor and Unemployed: Florence Price’s Monologue for the Working Class”
- 12:00–12:30: Aradhana Arora (Austin, Texas) and Nico Schüler (Texas State University), “Analysis and Reception of Late-19th Century African-American Songs: ‘Shivering and Shaking Out in the Cold’ (1875) and ‘Carve dat Possum’ (1874)”

Session 4: 11:00am–12:30pm, “Sacred Sounds,”
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Xieyi “Abby” Zhang (Georgia State University)

- 11:00–11:30: Kay Norton (Arizona State University), “On the Road with Sallie Martin, Gospel Entrepreneur”
- 11:30–12:00: Richard Desinord (Michigan State University), “Gospel Music Shout Schemata in Secular Music”
- ~~12:00–12:30: DaVaughn L. Miller (Appalachian State University), “Choral Conductors Beware: Stereotypes of Collegiate Choir Members Towards the Concert Spiritual Enthusiast”~~

LUNCH: 12:30–2:00pm (On your own)

Friday, June 6, 2025
Afternoon Sessions

Session 5: 2:00–4:00pm, “Radical Learning,”
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Courtney-Savali Andrews (Oberlin Conservatory)

- 2:00–2:30: Elizabeth Frickey (New York University), “Entering the Tone World: Theorizing Collective Improvisation Through Intergenerational Pedagogy”
- ~~2:30–3:00: Clay Downham (Yale University), “Praying for Eric”~~
- 3:00–3:30: Mikkel Vad (University of Copenhagen), “Moseholm & Pettiford’s Jazz Bass Facing (1962): Writing Music Theory Across Transatlantic Colorlines”

Session 6: 2:00–4:00pm, “Between the Beats,”
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Guy Capuzzo (UNC Greensboro)

- 2:00–2:30: Winnie W. C. Lai (Dartmouth College), “Theorizing R&B Ad-libs: Intercultural Soul Aesthetics and Racialized Listening in Sinophone Pop”
- 2:30–3:00: Jeremy Orosz (University of Memphis), “Understanding Genre Hybridity in Contemporary R&B Formal Design”
- 3:00–3:30: Audrey Slote (University of Chicago), “Groove Subjectivity and Black Indie Minimalism in Solange’s *A Seat at the Table*”

- 3:30–4:00: Kyra Gaunt (University at Albany SUNY), “Algorithmic Bias in Blacksound: AI, Big Data, and the Future of African American Music Studies”
- 3:30–4:00: Elizabeth Durrant (Yale University), “‘You ain’t nothin’ but a …’: Black Women Sounding & Honoring Big Mama Thornton in Doja Cat’s ‘Vegas’”

BREAK: 4:00–4:30pm

Panel 1: HBCU Musical Traditions, 4:30–6:00pm, Performing Arts Studio (PAS)
Fredara Hadley, moderator (Juilliard School)
Marvin McNeill (Oxford College of Emory University)
Lisa Beckley-Roberts (Jackson State University)
Aaron Carter-Enyi (Morehouse College)

BREAK: 6:00–6:30pm

6:30pm: Keynote Address, Horace Maxile (Baylor University), Performing Arts Studio (PAS)

“On Home, Lullabies, and Extensions of Traditions”

Abstract: Reflections on family and songs I heard as a child will frame a few analytical commentaries on Black composers’ works that engage lullabies and themes of “home.” Although home is sometimes referenced as heavenly or a place of rest, journeys toward and away from home can, at times, be complicated. Departing primarily from topics pertaining to musical signification, my commentaries will take move between analytical and interpretive stances. Expanding on my current work and thinking about a Black compositional tradition, I hope to situate lullabies and evocations of home as topics to consider within such a tradition.

Saturday, June 7, 2025
Morning Sessions

Session 7: 9:00–10:30, "Persona and Identity,"
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Daniele Shlomit Sofer (University of Dayton)

- 9:00–9:30: Sarah Tobin (Michigan State University), "'Let the Vagina Have a Monologue': Exploring Persona in Janelle Monáe's Music"
- 9:30–10:00: Jordan Brown (Harvard University), "Centering Blackness at the Margins: Embodying Queerness through Alternative R&B"
- 10:00–10:30: Jordan Ealey (University of Rochester), "Da Art of (Abortion) Storytellin': Listening for Reproductive Justice in Black Women's Hip Hop"

Session 8: 9:00–10:30, "Embodying Blackness,"
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Kyra Gaunt (University at Albany SUNY)

- 9:00–9:30: Raylana Ciceron (Case Western Reserve University), "Free At Last, Free At Last: Jon Batiste's Embodied Liberation"
- 9:30–10:00: Rachel Gain (Yale University), "Interrogating Epistemologies of Academic Tap Dance Transcription"
- 10:00–10:30: Molly Reid (Florida State University), "Choreographing Chaos: A Gestural-Kinesthetic Analysis of Undine Smith Moore's 'Before I'd Be a Slave'"

BREAK: 10:30–11:00am

Session 9: 11:00am–12:30pm, "Orchestrating Blackness,"
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Aaron Carter-Enyi (Morehouse College)

- 11:00–11:30: Ryan Dohoney (Northwestern University), "Julia Perry's Metamodernist Drift"
- 11:30–12:00: Stanley Ralph Fink (Drake University), "The Doppelgänger as Musical Complement in Julia Perry's *The Cask of Amontillado*"
- 12:00–12:30: Lauren Eldridge Stewart (Washington University), "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Envisioning Diversity at the Symphony"

Session 10: 11:00am–12:30pm, "Cityscapes,"
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Fredara Hadley (The Juilliard School)

- 11:00–11:30: Michael Berry (Puyallup School District), "Hip-Hop History in the City of Brotherly Love"
- 11:30–12:00: Kimberly Hannon Teal (University of North Texas), "Labor Day in Detroit: The Detroit Jazz Festival and Urban Space"
- 12:00–12:30: AJ Kluth (Case Western Reserve University), "New Light from the Dark Tree: Tracing Contiguities of 'Black Aliveness' in Los Angeles"

LUNCH: 12:30–2:00pm (On your own)

Saturday, June 7, 2025
Afternoon Sessions

Session 11: 2:00–4:00pm, "Black Futures, Media, and Memory,"
Tharp Rehearsal Hall at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Marc Hannaford (University of Michigan)

- 2:00–2:30: Stephen Stacks (North Carolina Central University), "Counter Memory and the Freedom Singing of the Civil Rights Movement"
- 2:30–3:00: Evan Martin-Casler (University of Arizona), "Swallowing Gods and Spitting the World into the Floor: Black Hardcore and the Curation of Abolitionist Lifeworlds"
- 3:00–3:30: Collin Felter (University of California, Irvine), "Baadasssss Songs (An Analysis): Blaxploitation Soundtracks and 1970's Funk"
- 3:30–4:00: Ashley Martin (University of Arizona), "Swing Low, Sweet Mothership: Afrofuturistic Prophecies of Displacement in Anthony Davis's X and A Tribe Called Quest's 'The Space Program'"

Session 12: 2:00–4:00pm, "Jazz Legacies,"
Theater Lab at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Moderator: Kelsey Klotz (University of Maryland)

- 2:00–2:30: Martin Hundley (University of California, Los Angeles), "Free Jazz and Building Community: Horace Tapscott and the Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra"
- 2:30–3:00: Andrew Berish (University of South Florida), "Racialized Affect and the Public Reception of Jazz in the 1950s"
- 3:00–3:30: Danny Fratina (University of Pittsburgh), "Omnidominance and the Avant-Garde Big Band Compositions of Sam Rivers"
- 3:30–4:00: Hannah Krall (Shaw University), "The Case of Duke Ellington's 'The Sheik of Araby': Complications of Musical Borrowing in Sidney Bechet and Johnny Hodges' Solos"

BREAK: 4:00–4:30pm

Panel 2: The Black Composer Speaks, 4:30–6:00pm, Performing Arts Studio (PAS)
Dwight Andrews, moderator (Emory University)
Joel Thompson (Primo Artists, Houston Grand Opera)
Lauren McCall (University of Victoria)
Matthew Evan Taylor (University of California, Berkeley)

Closing Remarks: 6:00pm, Performing Arts Studio (PAS)

ABSTRACTS (Listed alphabetically by presenter last name)

Aradhana Arora (Austin, Texas) and Nico Schüler (Texas State University), "Analysis and Reception of Late-19th Century African-American Songs: 'Shivering and Shaking Out in the Cold' (1875) and 'Carve dat Possum' (1874)"

Racial discrimination persisted after the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). However, Black-only Minstrel and Jubilee ensembles became popular and offered opportunities for earning a good income and an outlet for artistic expression. Songs written for such performances also found their way into early Black Musical Theatre. The first Black music drama was Out of Bondage (1876), which was commissioned by the Redpath Lyceum specifically for the Hyers Sisters and Sam Lucas; it depicted Black lives amidst slavery during and after the Civil War. Two songs that were originally written for African-American minstrel shows and later integrated into Out of Bondage are the Sam Lucas songs Shivering and Shaking Out in the Cold (1875) and Carve dat Possum (1874). While Shivering and Shaking is a song without racial reference about a "poor wretch" being out in the cold, Carve dat Possum is a humorous song written in African-American dialect and refers to catching, cooking, and eating an opossum. Both songs are in verse-chorus form and have a memorable melody with relatively simple harmonic progressions. But while Shivering and Shaking didn't become immensely popular (according to mentions in newspaper articles), Carve dat Possum, based on the melody of the traditional spiritual Go Down, Moses, became a widely (internationally) performed and recognized song across racial boundaries. This paper will summarize the re-discovery (primarily based on newspaper articles) of African American music and discuss the reception and an analysis of Sam Lucas' songs Shivering and Shaking Out in the Cold and Carve dat Possum.

Lydia Bangura (University of Michigan), "In Collaboration with Florence Price: A Lecture Recital"

The theorizing of Florence Price's music would not be complete without an understanding of how she collaborated with performers and composers during her lifetime. This 30-minute lecture recital seeks to develop a theory of collaboration between contemporaneous composers and performers, as well as extend collaboration across temporal boundaries through the analysis and performance of Price's songs. Building on existing scholarship in performance studies (Johnson 2003) and Black feminist theory (hooks 1981; Hill-Collins 1990), my definition of collaboration is inflected with a Black feminist ethos. By studying Price's collaborative relationships with other Black women in interwar Chicago, I theorize how Price's role as a collaborator was not only fundamental to the way she navigated her career but was integral to the aesthetic properties of her music. I argue that collaboration is both an ethic and a performed aesthetic that bears musical traces of the collaborators involved. Featuring the performance of five short songs with accompanying analyses, I detail Price's working relationships and their effect on the music. Drawing from performance and analysis scholarship (Cook 2013; Leong 2020), I emphasize the agency of the performer and posit them as an active collaborator, rather than a vessel for the composer's intentions. By including my own intentions as a scholar-performer, I fashion an alternative response to music academia's characterization of performers as beholden to authority, duty, and faithfulness. I demonstrate how modern-day Black women performers can participate in and further Price's spirit of collaboration.

Andrew Berish (University of South Florida), "Racialized Affect and the Public Reception of Jazz in the 1950s"

In this paper I argue for the necessity of rethinking the history of jazz's aesthetic reception through the lens of "racialized affect" (Berg & Ramos-Zayas). Following Bourdieu, studies of taste have focused on how aesthetic judgments are part of a social drive for "distinction": class position and cultural capital. But this analysis avoids questions of emotional investment; affect is treated as epiphenomenal. But, as Ben Highmore argues, affect is foundational to taste discriminations. Taste, Highmore concludes, is "an agent that orchestrates sensibilities" but always within the confines of a specific ideological and material reality. In the U.S., that reality has been fundamentally shaped by race and racial thinking. Throughout its more than one-hundred-year history, the act of

evaluating jazz has been a means of engaging the place of Blackness in American life. To demonstrate how this nexus of taste, race, and affect works, I turn to the reception of jazz during the 1950s. In the post-war moment, American leaders sought to direct the rebellious and distinctly Black affect of modern jazz—"bebop" and "cool jazz"—into supporting post-war priorities. Through a close-reading of a 1955 short story published in the Saturday Evening Post, "The Lady Hated Jazz," as well as two popular Hollywood films from the same time, 1955's *Blackboard Jungle* and 1957's *Jailhouse Rock*, I will show how the affective power of jazz was channeled into post-war social goals, managing the presence and power of Blackness in American life through both the containment of Black bodies and Black sounds.

Michael Berry (Puyallup School District), "Hip-Hop History in the City of Brotherly Love"

In the hook to "Takeover," Jay Z lists the Roc-a-Fella rappers who "run this rap shit." The list includes Memphis Bleek, B. Mac [Beanie Sigel], Freeway, O [Oschino] and Sparks, and Chris and Neef. Bleek aside, all the rappers that Jay mentions hail from Philadelphia. In this paper I build a case for reconsidering Philly's role in shaping hip hop to craft a more robust and accurate account of the culture's origins because NYC-centered narratives of hip hop's origins co-constitute Philadelphia's status as "second city." Sociologist Jerome Hodos posits that a second city relies more on manufacturing and service industries than global capital; tends to be culturally innovative; and depends on domestic migration (as opposed to international immigration). Combined with Philadelphia's historically different attitudes toward race, hip hop's origin story looks and sounds quite different from this perspective.

I offer four case studies to support my claim. Soon after The New York Times ran its story on TAKI 183, another article honored Philadelphia as the "graffiti capital of the world" thanks to writers like Cornbread and Kool Earl. Radio personalities "Jocko" Henderson and Lady B both released rap records in 1979—the same year that "King Tim III" and "Rapper's Delight" were released—and used their radio programs to platform the new genre. While gangsta rap is usually associated with West Coast artists, many of them credit Schoolly D's "P.S.K. (What Does it Mean)" as foundational. Finally, DJs like Cash Money and Jazzy Jeff elevated DJing to an art form.

Jordan Brown (Harvard University), "Centering Blackness at the Margins: Embodying Queerness through Alternative R&B"

This paper uses a phenomenological approach to describe Black queering beyond sexuality and struggles, by instead highlighting Black queer thoughts, feelings, and emotions as embodied through alternative R&B music. Music is but one attribute of human interaction, a connection that can extend beyond what words can convey. It has the power to liberate and validate feelings, and create open spaces by which those who feel outcast by society can be at home. In a similar manner, queerness, extending beyond sexuality, is about agency; every person in theory has the power to contribute to our lived reality. The discussion surrounding Black queerness thus far, however, has hit barriers that have prevented the subject from moving beyond the physicality of the Black queer body and the stereo-typified musical canons that accompany it. In response, this paper will instead use ethnographic research at The Recording Academy to discuss the hybridization of genre that has birthed a decolonial orientation of resistance and an exploration of musical identity that mimics lived reality (Crawley 2017). Furthermore, using works by Sara Ahmed, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Fred Moten, and Alexander Weheliye, I explore this Black popular culture phenomenon through the resurging genre of alternative R&B through the lens of experimental artists Erykah Badu and Willow Smith. By describing the humanity in relationality in music, as opposed to solely the sexual promiscuity of Black queer bodies, I center the importance of what it means to realistically occupy such space under a Western hegemonic structure.

Raylana Ciceron (Case Western Reserve University), "Free At Last, Free At Last: Jon Batiste's Embodied Liberation"

Dance has long been vital to black music making, a medium utilized and tapped into as a conduit for extrication. This paper examines this relationship between music, the body, and movement, considering Jon Batiste's "Freedom" as a call to dance. The 2021 record is representative of what the artist terms "social music": i.e., holistic and corporeal musicking, engaging with the idea of what it means to reclaim one's humanity. With its structure based on the 12-bar

blues, “Freedom” invites those who engage with the song to share in reinvigorated life, prompting corporeal engagement as sound and body fuse into each other to grasp liberation.

For the “Freedom” music video, Batiste leads his Louisiana community in a decentralized processional, translating sound into bodily movement as they dance and sing through the New Orleans’ streets. This act (what Batiste calls a “love riot”) is reminiscent of a New Orleans Second Line, linking individuals together in an experience where one’s body produces and responds to the sonic vibrations around them. The result of this active engagement is an attuned convergence, a vibrant mix of timbre and energy rooted in joy. Constructing a rhetoric of retrospective and gesture, Batiste and his NOLA community move by example as they encourage listeners to participate in curating a synesthetic encounter. By demonstrating how the flesh is channeled to forge a corporeal unity, my analysis probes how Batiste’s music fosters an embodied consciousness, shaping sound, time, and space in communal musicking.

Jordan Ealey (University of Rochester), “Da Art of (Abortion) Storytellin’: Listening for Reproductive Justice in Black Women's Hip Hop”

Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* eroded federal protections for abortion care in the United States, activist campaigns such as Shout Your Abortion and We Testify, among others, have encouraged the public sharing of abortion stories to destigmatize the highly politicized healthcare procedure. Thus, I turn to Black popular music as a space to engage reproductive justice through the modality of storytelling. Rappers such as 2Pac, OutKast (from whose 1999 song this article’s title comes from), Doug E. Fresh, CyHi The Prynce, and others have utilized hip hop as a mode to discuss the nuances of abortion, pregnancy, and parenthood. In this paper, however, I listen to music by Black women musicians Ladybug Mecca, Lauryn Hill, Noname, and Coco Peila to consider their perspectives on reproductive justice and bodily autonomy through storytelling. The songs by each artists sound the well-known feminist proclamation, “the personal is political,” by oscillating between their complex feelings about abortion, motherhood, and the choices that they have made. By encountering these abortion stories in the form of music, I argue that these artists employ the intimacy of sound and performance to ground the politicized decision-making that happen on a macro-level to a scale that personalizes it for listeners and consumers. I borrow approaches from Black feminist theory, sound studies, and (Black) performance theory to situate Black women’s musical abortion stories within a larger continuum of protest music.

Richard Desinord (Michigan State University), “Gospel Music Shout Schemata in Secular Music”

In this talk, I build on Shelley’s (2021) discussion of the communicative function of shout music, introduce the concept of “gospel shout schemata.” I start by outlining three prototypes for what I call the “plagal shout”, as I offer my own interpretation of Smallwood’s “Calvary” that diverges from Shelley’s by focusing on the harmonic framework. Some may view the tonic 6/4 chord as an unrealized cadential 6/4, but I invoke Temperley’s (2017) view of the harmony as a “goal 6/4” as a useful interpretation. I then show this progression is ultimately tied to the plagal cadence and how it is used to accentuate the climax of sermons by Black preachers. In the last part of the talk, I demonstrate how these shout schemata functions as a shout topic when used outside of gospel music or church services through examples from Jon Batiste during his time as bandleader on the Late Show. When Stephen Colbert makes a point to ratchet up the audience, Jon Batiste plays the progression similar to how keyboardists and organist play the shout schemata as a Black preacher is “tuning up.” I turn to a Meek Mill single to argue that the harmonic progression, through its use in Black gospel, functioned as an added stimulus, and ultimately a musical topic, that spurred the use of textual tropes derived from spiritual convention.

Ryan Dohoney (Northwestern University), “Julia Perry's Metamodernist Drift”

Resurgent interest in the music of Julia Perry has provoked a problem of categories. Critics frequently reach for “neoclassicism”—thereby likening Perry’s music to that of Stravinsky and Copland. Such assimilation of Black musicians' creative work to known categories speaks to a broader tendency among musicologists to assume that we know what modernism was. Its givenness allows us to plug any and all musicians into extant categorical schemes. In this talk I assert the contrary—that we don't yet know what modernism is and Julia Perry might help us figure it out.

To that end, I turn to the correspondence between Perry and Eileen Southern, wherein the composer stakes out a musical poetics we might call metamodernist: a syncretic praxis to which no form of creativity was alien. Building on the work of Tammy Kernodle and Moyo Okediji, I take metamodernism as a decolonial term that draws our attention to the ways in which so-called modernity is unequally distributed among or even denied those embroiled in its processes. I argue that Perry's metamodernism takes the form of ""drift""—realized as geographical displacement and refusal to commit to a single aesthetic stance. To drift is to take fugitive action born of dislocation and diaspora, movements enforced through the middle passage of Perry's ancestors and her volitional expatriation to Europe in the 1950s. Perry's drift—demonstrated in Frammenti and Six Contrasts—points to a way that we might reconstruct modernism's universality but this time from the standpoint of Blackness.

Sasha Doster (Columbia University), "The Language of a Mother's Prayer: A Timbre Analysis of Signifyin(g) Black Womanhood in H. Lawrence Freeman's Opera Voodoo"

H. Lawrence Freeman's opera Voodoo (1914) combined traditional operatic tropes with Black cultural experiences and memories showcasing the relevancy of classical European art forms to Black expression in the early 20th century. As a member of the New Negro movement, Freeman's operas fit into a philosophy of racial uplift aspired by the Black intelligentsia of the time, highlighting the beauty in Black culture and history. Freeman, in Voodoo, particularly displays the beauty of Black womanhood through the three main female characters: Lola, Cleota, and Chloe. Chloe, the eldest of the group, plays an important role in this opera—as the mother of Lola, a role in Black creative output that allows for a space vulnerability. To capture this loving relationship, Freeman composes Chloe an aria to express her love for her daughter. Using the relationship between timbre, the musical form of a vocalise and the embodiment of the Black female voice, I analysis how Freeman signifies Black womanhood in Voodoo. Specifically analyzing "Chloe's Aria" in the second act, timbre, pitch, and rhythm culturally display the essence and significance of Black spirituality and the power of a mother's prayer. I look at the use of the moan as a Black vocalise, tracing the moan or groan's importance in Black spiritual practices. Through the lens of Black Feminist Musicological study and theory, I ask what it means to combine womanism, politics of care, cultural theory, and music theory, combining the work of scholars such as Daphne Brooks, Farah Jasmine Griffin and Nina Eidsheim, in classical music.

Elizabeth Durrant (Yale University), "'You ain't nothin' but a …': Black Women Sounding & Honoring Big Mama Thornton in Doja Cat's 'Vegas'"

Among the essential, reparative work that centers singers like Willie Mae, Big Mama, Thornton in the past, present, and future of popular music in the United States, one particular example stems from a surprising source—Baz Luhrmann's 2022 movie Elvis. Although Thornton is not the film's main character, she occupies a central place in the music and video for "Vegas" by Doja Cat, a popular song from the soundtrack. In addition to the headlining singer, the music also features the late Shonka Dukureh, the performer who played the role of Big Mama Thornton in the movie, singing parts of Thornton's original version of "Hound Dog." Together, these women use their artistry to create a space that honors Thornton's legacy with clear and poignant precision.

In this paper, I argue that Willie Mae Thornton's voice is an essential component of "Hound Dog's" legacy. Drawing on the work of Maureen Mahon, Eric Weisbard, Ben Wynne, David Ritz, Jerry Leiber, and Mike Stoller, I discuss the history of the song's origins, its cover versions, and how systems of categorization, such as genre, effected Black musicians in the recording industry. I then analyze performances by Thornton, Dukureh, and Doja Cat to examine how each singer contributes new layers to "Hound Dog." Ultimately, I contend that the contemporary interpretations in "Vegas" not only emphasize Thornton's artistry, but also present new iterations of Black women's substantial presence and agency in the roots of popular music.

Lauren Eldridge Stewart (Washington University), "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Envisioning Diversity at the Symphony"

There has been an upsurge in scholarly writing discussing the diversity aims of orchestras and the impact of their programming (Kolbe 2024, Bull 2019), concomitant with rapidly changing discursive and policy landscapes. Orchestras are in a tough spot, caught between opposing cultural and political

imperatives. On the one hand, orchestra administrators are pressed to make a case for the continued relevance of music that, in many cases, is centuries old. On the other hand, orchestra administrators make that case amidst a landscape where public discourse around diversity has been fraught with a zero-sum tension. Organizations meet this challenge with evasive language: public discourse around diversity focuses primarily on race, but the public-facing position of orchestras on diversity has been framed as "community outreach," which encompasses issues of race, class, and access. This rhetorical disconnect allows orchestras to continue to espouse community-centered mission statements with broad public support. But a closer look at advertising and programming reveals a persistent engagement of visible diversity, using allusive photography and language to communicate moral intentions and create a vision of community impact. That vision has a use value. In this paper, I consider how race is put to work at the symphony. Individual actors, including musicians, attendees, and staff, perform the labor of diversity, but my focus here is identifying how their collective actions produce a vision of diversity through the concert experience, and beyond the stage in a weekend of performances by guest soloist Randall Goosby at the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Collin Felter (University of California, Irvine), "Baadasssss Songs (An Analysis): Blaxploitation Soundtracks and 1970's Funk"

Sex, drugs, and violence became the focal point of 1970s Blaxploitation films that long stirred controversy both within, and outside of, the Black American population they sought to bring into theaters. While much has been written about the impact of the "genre" alongside its opportunities and degradations, little research has focused on the driving force of the films - music. Funk moguls James Brown, Curtis Mayfield, and Isaac Hayes are just a few of the familiar figures that defined the soundscape of Blaxploitation films. These soundtracks were often released prior to the films to bolster consumer excitement. Whether it be Curtis Mayfield providing counter-commentary to Superfly (1971) through song or James Brown releasing his only gold-certified record, The Payback (1973), after it was rejected as a soundtrack due to its lack of film-specificity, there is an unequivocal connection between the Blaxploitation soundtracks and the larger funk style.

This paper maps said funk and Blaxploitation connection through close analysis of rhythm, timbre, lyrics, melody, and harmony of select songs within the context of the films they score and the artists' surrounding discography. It is through this close reading that we can not only see how the funk soundtracks scored their accompanying visuals and plots but also understand the inward and outward impact between the Blaxploitation scores and the funk style more broadly. This case study of Blaxploitation musical analysis then acts as a small offering to address the widely understudied styles of Black American popular music in the field of music theory.

Stanley Ralph Fink (Drake University), "The Doppelgänger as Musical Complement in Julia Perry's The Cask of Amontillado"

In Edgar Allan Poe's story *The Cask of Amontillado*, Montresor lures the unwitting Fortunato to his wine cellar to exact a deadly revenge. In one interpretation of Poe's story, Fortunato is Montresor's doppelgänger, representing his conscience (Stepp 1976). As an example of opera's "shadow culture" (André 2018), Julia Perry's *The Cask of Amontillado*—her 1954 opera after Poe's story—gives voice to multiple underrepresented perspectives within the genre, such as those of Black opera composers and women opera composers. I will argue that, within the Scene 1 Duet (mm. 212–40), by consistently dividing a twelve-tone row into discrete hexachords and assigning the first hexachord to Montresor and that hexachord's complement to Fortunato, Perry reads Fortunato as Montresor's doppelgänger. My analytical methodology will also demonstrate that complement relations organize the Duet in two other ways: through "contiguous row subsets" (Boss 2022) and form. Applying Moseley's (2019) principle of element exhaustion, I argue that these three complement relations reveal Fortunato to be Montresor's musical doppelgänger. Perry's use of twelve-tone serialism to musically represent the concept of a doppelgänger notably bypasses two potential sources: African American musical idioms such as spirituals or the blues (Walker-Hill 2002; Green 1975), and preestablished means of depicting the doppelgänger—especially those connected with Franz Schubert's song "Der Doppelgänger." Since Perry chose to have a second singer embody Montresor's doppelgänger (unlike Schubert's song), the musical means of complement relations provide a solution to the problem of how to communicate the doppelgänger reading of Poe's story.

Danny Fratina (University of Pittsburgh), "Omnidominance and the Avant-Garde Big Band Compositions of Sam Rivers"

Sam Rivers (1923–2011) was a renowned saxophonist in 20th and 21st-century avant-garde jazz. Little attention, however, has been paid to his innovations in big band arranging and composition. Through an examination of Rivers' unique approach to large ensemble writing, this paper contributes to broader discussions on authenticity and genre in music, particularly in the context of Black American musical innovation.

Using archival sources, this work analyzes Rivers' compositional style as a harmonic language, termed here "omnidominance." Rivers uses a 10-note mode combining all usable pitches from standard and altered mixolydian scales. By embracing maximal harmonic density without sacrificing tonal clarity, Rivers creates a tension between tradition and experimentation. Through complex harmonic structures and dense chordal voicings, Rivers blends the avant-garde with conventions of big band arranging, reimagining his ensemble as a space for collective improvisation and rigorous compositional discipline.

Rivers' music resists easy categorization, engaging with the legacies of the jazz orchestra while asserting a uniquely avant-garde aesthetic. By analyzing his compositions alongside his writings and interviews, the paper contextualizes the politics of categorization, inspiration, and authenticity. In doing so, Rivers' omnidominance—a harmonic and structural philosophy grounded in both personal creativity and historical dialogue—inevitably also becomes an invitation to reconsider existing pedagogies and historical narratives that often prioritize more narrowly defined stylistic conventions of authenticity and genre.

Elizabeth Frickey (New York University), "Entering the Tone World: Theorizing Collective Improvisation Through Intergenerational Pedagogy"

Founded in 1996, Arts for Art (AFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated explicitly to "the promotion and advancement of FreeJazz—an African American indigenous art form in which improvisation is principle." Through a variety of educational initiatives, AFA also supports new generations of musicians. Included amongst these are weekly Intergenerational Ensemble rehearsals led by William Parker. Each week, musicians of all ages and backgrounds are invited to join in a practice of pedagogically-oriented free improvisation, "learn[ing] ways to build a creative improvising musical vocabulary by listening and responding," and "find their way into the Tone World." The AFA Intergenerational Ensemble thus provides new avenues for consideration: what can we learn about improvisation from a pedagogical perspective, especially one aimed at intergenerational students? What might it take to traverse "the Tone World"? Here, I draw upon my own experiences performing with the AFA Intergenerational Ensemble as a means through which to theorize collective improvisation. I examine the anatomy of an Intergenerational Ensemble rehearsal, and through evidence from direct conversations with Parker and other participants, I argue that this pedagogical practice constitutes what Mark Hannaford calls "fugitive music theory." I provide a comparative analysis of an audio recording from an ensemble rehearsal alongside a publicly-released track from the album Universal Tonality. In so doing, I interpret Parker's "Tone World" to mean not an explicitly harmonic or timbral space, but something more utopian in nature. In so doing, I demonstrate how improvised music in this setting emphasizes an explicitly activist, radical empathy.

Rachel Gain (Yale University), "Interrogating Epistemologies of Academic Tap Dance Transcription"

Alongside the recent proliferation of music scholarship on rhythm tap dance, the matter of developing appropriate, carefully considered research methodologies becomes more pressing. This body of research typically uses ad hoc methodologies and rarely interrogates their origins or epistemological consequences. As such, this paper initiates a reflexive approach to methodology, responding to calls within and without music theory to "have a critical understanding of some of the tools of research—not just the obvious technical tools but the conceptual tools" (Smith 2008, in Lochhead 2023), especially as they relate to racialized methods and logics (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008, Perchard 2015, Ewell 2023).

I focus on transcription as a site that represents the sub-discipline's broader methodological situation in microcosm. While scholars have frequently leaned on transcription and notation as a key part of their methodology, to date, there has been no serious scholarly examination of how to use transcription, nor of its affordances and conceptual ramifications. This echoes a broader trend diagnosed by Rusch, Salley, and Stover: a long-standing inattention to transcription in music theory writings (2016). I argue that the standard "rhythms and steps" approach to transcription focalizes and reifies these two elements as tap's primary

sites of meaning. This encourages limited textual formalist theorizing, rather than asking how those rhythms and steps mean beyond themselves (for instance, as understood somatically, affectually, contextually, or intertextually). Ultimately, this paper points towards an "otherwise," demonstrating what novel music-theoretical insights (tap) research might afford if its tools centered alternative epistemologies—emic or otherwise.

Kyra Gaunt (University at Albany SUNY), "Algorithmic Bias in Blacksound: AI, Big Data, and the Future of African American Music Studies"

As African American music circulates through user-generated platforms like YouTube, Genius, and Wikipedia, ethnomusicology must evolve to engage with vast digital archives. This paper explores how big data analysis, AI-driven content curation, and mixed-methods research—conducted with undergraduates—can expand African American music studies and address algorithmic bias.

Building on kinetic orality and digital ethnomusicology, I examine how platforms both amplify and erase Black musical traditions. Songs by Black women on Genius often lack annotations, suggesting their voices have no deeper meaning, while male artists' lyrics receive extensive analysis. Wikipedia articles on figures like Jay-Z and Olly Wilson remain "start-class" due to outdated academic biases against Wikipedia, despite its growing legitimacy. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines digital ethnography with big data tools, I analyze how these platforms shape African American music's cultural memory, artistic labor, and historical framing—and how undergraduates can help correct these omissions.

Integrating big data methodologies into ethnomusicology is crucial for theorizing how Black music is perceived, circulated, and monetized online. Drawing from Olly Wilson, Samuel Floyd, Guthrie Ramsey, Portia Maultsby, Wayne Marshall, and Mark Anthony Neal, I propose an interdisciplinary framework bridging music theory, Black feminist thought, AI ethics, and digital humanities. By training students in digital research, we democratize African American music studies and ensure Black musical knowledge is both preserved and critically interrogated in the age of AI.

Sarah Gerk (Binghamton University), "From Saint-Domingue to Congo Square: The Haitian Revolution and Music in New Orleans"

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the population of New Orleans exploded with immigrants from unrest in Saint-Domingue, which was restored to its Indigenous name of Haiti in 1804. Historians highlight ways in which Haitian communities in New Orleans shaped the city's exceptional musical practices. Musicologists, however, have few archival sources documenting the music made in New Orleans in places like Congo Square, or among the city's enslaved population, leaving many unanswered questions about music at Congo Square before the U.S. Civil War.

Trauma theory can fill this significant gap by encouraging us to examine not just the music as a text, but also the experiences and practices of the Haitian communities in New Orleans. This includes pre-immigration life (which I frame as life in pre-revolution colonial Saint-Domingue) as well as the journey itself (which I frame as experiences during the revolution itself as well as the migratory journey to the mainland, often via Cuba, which was quite hostile to fleeing Haitians). Tracing the prominent African patterns in the music of these places and considering the personal and cultural traumas of Haitians in New Orleans, we can understand the significance and role of music making in Haitian-New Orlinean culture. Comparing what we learn about this early history of music in New Orleans to the distinct musical of New Orleans as it later emerged in the 1860s, we can perhaps start to understand the Haitian Revolution's distinct mark on U.S. music.

Theo Greer (Michigan State University), "Who is 'You'?: Intimacy and Mode of Address in Kendrick Lamar's 'u'"

Recent music-theoretical scholarship has highlighted the rhythmic complexity, savvy sampling techniques, and layered storytelling of rap music. Moreover, albums such as Kendrick Lamar's To Pimp a Butterfly challenge traditional analytical frameworks and highlight rap's capacity to evoke empathy and engage with cultural discourse, as explored in the 2019 Music Theory Online symposium on the album, introduced by Philip Ewell. Building on the insights from this symposium, I focus on the less frequently discussed yet pivotal song "u," which Lamar himself considers an essential turning point in both the album's narrative and his personal journey. Applying BaileyShea's (2014) approach, I consider the moment-to-moment trajectory of how Lamar's complex narrative

voice addresses both himself and a broader audience. I show how ambiguity in the addresser/addressee relationships, varied vocal delivery, non-textual vocalizations, and evocative sound effects interact to allow for multiple interpretations of Lamar's mode of address. This simultaneous self- and audience address evokes universal feelings of inadequacy, shame, and self-doubt, challenging the listener to engage with Lamar's vulnerability through two concurrent modes of empathy: as both a witness of and a participant in his anguish. My approach to real-time perception of mode of address can also serve more broadly to enrich our analytical approach to biographically-oriented songs other than "u," songs which might otherwise invite singular, final-state interpretations of meaning. By engaging with a song's lyrics and music as they unfold, we can uncover aspects of meaning that might otherwise be overlooked.

Kimberly Hannon Teal (University of North Texas), "Labor Day in Detroit: The Detroit Jazz Festival and Urban Space"

Jazz is inextricably linked to the history of race in America, and that history is largely defined by places and the ways in which people move through or are restricted by them. As George Lipsitz writes, "race is produced by space…it takes places for racism to take place." As sites of temporary integration in urban areas that remain largely segregated more than half a century after the Civil Rights Movement, jazz festivals can play a role in confronting, illuminating, obscuring, or exacerbating racial inequalities. In this paper, I examine the use of urban space at the Detroit Jazz Festival through theories of place and space and philosophical writing on whiteness. Focusing on violinist and composer Regina Carter's Gone in a Phrase of Air, a multimedia work on the nature of urban renewal performed at the 2023 festival, I argue that the structure of the festival in terms of geography and funding allow for the presentation of works that critically engage issues of race. Unlike many urban American jazz festivals, the Detroit Jazz Festival draws a large contingent of local residents from one of America's largest and most concentrated Black urban areas that mixes with the more typical jazz festival audience of predominantly white tourists. Maintaining free admission, a downtown location, and a Labor Day weekend schedule aligns with local cultural centering of the working class, creating the potential for connections outside the segregated norms of the everyday.

Monica A. Hershberger (Lehigh University), "Dorothy Maynor at Westminster Choir College, 1933–1935: Recovering the History"

In the fall of 1933, a young African American soprano named Dorothy Maynor arrived in Princeton, New Jersey, to attend Westminster Choir College (WCC), having been hand-picked a few months prior by WCC co-founder and president John Finley Williamson. Maynor graduated from WCC in just two years, and she went on to become a renowned concert artist. In 1953, she was selected to sing the National Anthem at the Inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Ten years later, she retired from the stage and embarked on a new phase in her career, founding the Harlem School of the Arts, an institution that exists to this day.

Maynor is one of WCC's most famous graduates, yet it is difficult to reconstruct her time at the school. She is often missing or obscured in WCC's archives. There are, however, ways to piece together her WCC experience. Materials in the John Finley Williamson Collection at WCC document the early history of the school. This history, in turn, begins to clarify Maynor's educational experience. There is also a batch of correspondence in the Hampton University Archives between Williamson and white administrators at Hampton Institute, the school Maynor attended before WCC, that shows how Maynor was viewed largely as a means to enhance both schools' reputations and fundraising efforts. In this paper, I seek to center Maynor within WCC's history, while also illuminating the margins to which she, the first African American student to attend the predominantly white institution in the 1930s, was so often relegated.

Martin Hundley (University of California, Los Angeles), "Free Jazz and Building Community: Horace Tapscott and the Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra"

The Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra was founded in 1961 by Horace Tapscott (1934–1999), a pioneering African American musician and community organizer working in Los Angeles. Tapscott conceptualized the group as a community orchestra which, during a period of geographical dispersion within the music scene centered around Central Avenue where Tapscott grew up, began with the mission of preserving Black arts by playing music of unknown composers in community concerts. Tapscott's work offers a window into the power of music to build community, claim space, and cultivate political agency for artists. The Arkestra's creative practice of collective improvisation lends insight into the philosophical foundations of L.A. based community arts movements during a period

of volatile racial politics marked by the Watts Rebellion of 1965 and a renaissance of Black cultural activism. This paper considers the Arkestra's music as a hybrid form that responds to the social contexts of the 1960s and 1970s in South Los Angeles, expressing conceptual correlations between the aesthetics of free jazz and the politics of Black radicalism and self-determination. Drawing from the Horace Tapscott papers at UCLA and interviews with Arkestra musicians, the paper highlights contributions of individuals such as Linda Hill (d. 1987), a founding member of "the Ark" who spearheaded initiatives to develop its social and educational reach, and Samuel Browne (1908–1991), a music teacher at Jefferson High School who set the template of learning and mentorship inherent in the ensemble which lives on and continues to nurture emerging artists in L.A. today.

AJ Kluth (Case Western Reserve University), "New Light from the Dark Tree: Tracing Contiguities of 'Black Aliveness' in Los Angeles"

This paper extends Kevin Quashie's (2021) formulation of "black aliveness" from literary analysis to music analysis to help make sense of perceived historical contiguity of race and genre in black musics, taking a multigenerational communities of South Los Angeles musicians as case studies. Rather than focusing on analyses of formal structure, historiographies, or performative strategies, black aliveness names a poetic ecology of being evidenced in expressive practices conditioned by—but not foreclosed upon by—the outcomes of anti-black racism in the US. Participating in the discourse related to Afropessimism, black aliveness responds to the claims of an overdetermined, racialized necropolitics. Rather than objectifying persons racialized as black, this analytical approach considers the social apparatus that produces and animates the concept of "blackness" as much as its boundless modes of expression. Beginning with the Central Avenue scene of the mid-20th century and moving to South Central Los Angeles, connections are drawn from communitarian art ecologies of the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, the Watts Prophets, and the Multi-School Jazz Band to contemporary genre-expanding artists Thundercat and Kamasi Washington. Building upon insights related to the aesthetic figuring of race and genre from black studies, black aliveness is a relational mode of being-as-becoming that demonstrates the necessity for studies of raced music to consider intra-personal poetics as much as the social, cultural, and ideological.

Hannah Krall (Shaw University), "The Case of Duke Ellington's 'The Sheik of Araby': Complications of Musical Borrowing in Sidney Bechet and Johnny Hodges' Solos"

New Orleans jazz musicians often composed their own jazz solos by ear over time, which came off as improvised to their audiences. As asserted by Bob Wilber, New Orleans clarinetist and saxophonist Sidney Bechet gave his students his "improvised" solos on popular jazz standards as a pedagogical tool. The most famous manifestation of Bechet's gifting occurs in the standard, "The Sheik of Araby," recorded by the Duke Ellington Orchestra in 1932 and Sidney Bechet's One-Man Band in 1941. In the former case, Ellington hired former band member and rising star Bechet as an arranger for this standard. Instead of sending in manuscripts, however, Bechet arrived in-person to teach the band and their soloist, Johnny Hodges, his arrangement, leaving trombonist Juan Tizol and others to quickly transcribe what he taught. Using archival evidence from the Smithsonian Institution from this session in 1932 and my own transcriptions of recordings from 1932 and 1941, I argue that Bechet taught Hodges his own improvised soprano saxophone solo, allowing him, as his former student, to embody Bechet's persona while injecting moments of his own individuality. With the 1932 recording in mind, Bechet's own recording of the solo in 1941 offered him the opportunity to recreate and recontextualize his musical creation. These two recordings are remarkable in their own right, but this relationship reveals essential musical and historical context for both pieces.

Terence Kumpf (TU Dortmund University), "Cold Analytical: How Transculturation Might Inform African Americanist Methodologies"

Since the turn of the millennium, scholars have argued that hip-hop, particularly outside the United States, constitutes a transcultural phenomenon, i.e. one that resides at, and hums along, entwined cultural strands. Be it sonically or linguistically (often both), producers and emcees fashion heady brews, the results of which can be marvelous, intoxicating, and uplifting. Problematically, many of the scholars making transcultural arguments in hip-hop have neglected Fernando

Ortiz, the Havana-born Cuban polymath who coined the term in his cultural anthropological study of Cuba. Instead, hip-hop scholars have quite cavalierly utilized his term, or various permutations thereof, for the last 25 years without sufficient intellectual rigor.

Not cool.

In a superficial sense, the term 'transcultural' does descriptively capture the heady mélange bubbling up in hip-hop cauldrons. Yet is mere description ever enough to apprehend, and thereby better understand (and thus truly appreciate), the technical intricacies of America's mightiest musical export, either at home or abroad, or do we need to get cold analytical? Building on my recent article "Epistemological Quandary" (2024), this paper will highlight one of Fernando Ortiz's crucial analytical keys to demonstrate its untapped potential in practical application. This conference paper will include a short constructed historical sound clash between Germany and the United States to show how hip-hop has been 'transculturating' since at least 1980, if not considerably longer. Has African Americanism been 'transculturating' too, or has transculturation been 'african americanating'? If so, what does that mean moving forward?

Winnie W. C. Lai (Dartmouth College), "Theorizing R&B Ad-libs: Intercultural Soul Aesthetics and Racialized Listening in Sinophone Pop" (Remote Presentation)

This paper studies racialized listening and the interculturality of R&B and soul ad-libs in Sinophone pop, especially Cantopop. The work examines how the American pop industry and vocal improvisatory styles rooted in Black American music have influenced musical aesthetics among Sinophone pop singers, the judges of Hong Kong singing contests, radio DJs, and Cantopop audiences. As a (returning) singer-songwriter, I wonder why vocal performance using ad-libs and highly expressive virtuosic vibrato garners high competition scores, what makes such improvisations sound good, and what ad-libs mean (or whether they mean anything at all). These questions have led me to consider how performers and listeners articulate soul aesthetics. To date, R&B-influenced musical style in Sinophone pop has received limited scholarly attention (Hao 2023; Xie 2015). From performance to theory, I argue that there is a synergy between performer and listener that depends on the "enculturation" (Eidsheim 2018) of the listener who identifies Blackness or soul in the voice. This culturally inflected aurality emerges through a process of expressive territorialization that articulates a translated soul aesthetics. Employing (auto)ethnographic and online archival materials, this study of intercultural soul encounters focuses on the translation (and potential transformation) of the aesthetics of Black vocalization and R&B ad-lib virtuosity in transnational and intercultural contexts.

Heidi R. Lewis (Colorado College), "Make Rappers Rap Again: Interrogating the Mumble Rap 'Crisis'"

Many critics claim Mumble Rap is not real Hip Hop (e.g., authentic or pure), because mumble rappers are ignorant about Hip Hop history, disrespectful toward Hip Hop elders, too similar, unskilled, prone to rapping about nonsense, and too soft or feminine. Some critics have even declared Hip Hop dead (again!). Contrarily and perhaps controversially, I argue Mumble Rap is real Hip Hop. Relying primarily on discourse analysis, I examine Mumble Rap's congruence with oft-forgotten or subjugated Hip Hop cornerstones like illegibility, melody, the DJ, and the subgenre, as well as the ways most mumble rappers practice citational and collaborative politics that are congruent with real Hip Hop. I also take a critical approach to examining the Mumble Rap sound, arguing it is much more complicated than it's often characterized, especially concerning flow and production. To explain the subjugation of Mumble Rap, I situate the subgenre as southern and examines the ways it challenges dominant notions about real Hip Hop masculinity vis-à-vis mumble rappers' attention to the mental and emotional, drug use and addiction, and the fallacies of gender and sexuality norms. Last, but not least, I argue Hip Hop will never die.

Alexis Lowder (University of Memphis), "A New Day a-comin' for the Poor and Unemployed: Florence Price's Monologue for the Working Class"

Little is known about Florence Price's political views; she discussed politics rarely in her letters, and few of her works are expressly political. A recently discovered song, Monologue for the Working Class (published by G. Schirmer, 2020), may help shed some light on her political leanings. This song, a setting of an unpublished poem by Langston Hughes, is a rallying cry for workers to band together against the ruling class. Hughes was, for a brief time in the 1930s, an

outspoken proponent of leftist political organizations, including the Communist Party USA, which he supported but never officially joined, and the theme of working-class uplift defined his works for a large part of this decade.

This paper examines the compositional choices Price made and how they reflect the poem's message of working-class solidarity. With a simple, bluesy melody and frequent unity between voice and piano, Price reinforces the text in many subtle and overt ways. For example, there is a strong differentiation between sections in which the worker stands alone versus the moment when they unite with comrades to "show 'em what the working class can do." I will also discuss the song's significance amongst the populist works of other composers such as Aaron Copland and other members of the Composers' Collective. Price's music holds an important place in music history, and in today's political and economic climate, one in which the gulf between rich and poor continues to grow unabated, Monologue for the Working Class is especially prescient.

Ashley Martin (University of Arizona), "Swing Low, Sweet Mothership: Afrofuturistic Prophecies of Displacement in Anthony Davis's X and A Tribe Called Quest's 'The Space Program'"

The mothership on the Metropolitan Opera stage hovered above Blackfolk of the past, present, and future in Robert O'Hara's staging of Anthony Davis's 1985 opera X. First envisioned as the ship obtained for the Garveyites' exodus, the spacecraft never leaves the stage, connecting Black realities across time and space. Names such as Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice flow across the spacecraft's screen above vignettes of Malcolm X's life/pending death. The staging asks the audience to simultaneously imagine Black pasts and futures, yet no one boards the ship throughout the opera's 200-minute runtime. This suspension of future movement brings to mind A Tribe Called Quest lyric from the 2016 single "The Space Program": "ain't no space program for niggas, yeah you stuck here, nigga." The song is a prophecy predicated on the history of Black people in space, as displacement, gentrification, and the rush to colonize the final frontier point to how our relationship to the current biosphere impacts our present and future relationships with beyond-human worlds. This paper will discuss Afrofuturistic prophecy in O'Hara's staging of X and "The Space Program" by A Tribe Called Quest, informed by space scholars Edythe Weeks and Ayodele Faiyetole. I will discuss the historical realities of deindustrialization and displacement in Black communities to contextualize current conversations of space colonization and its relationship to Black futurity. The sociopolitical systems that dehumanize marginalized groups use space as a primary means to oppress, affecting humanity's relationship with the physical environment both earthside and aboard the mothership.

Evan Martin-Casler (University of Arizona), "Swallowing Gods and Spitting the World into the Floor: Black Hardcore and the Curation of Abolitionist Lifeworlds"

While Black artists' essential contributions to hardcore punk have historically been erased or downplayed, modern artists such as Zulu, Soul Glo, Buggin', Move, and Thirdface have managed not only to amass large followings within the subgenre's sphere, but also to build coalitions among themselves, reterritorializing the aesthetics and politics of the long-gentrified musical style. Gaining recognition and notoriety following the circulation of Zulu's "Abolish White Hardcore" shirt, these "Tribes of Tha Moon" have introduced vital and timely critical analysis into a genre that, though always nominally political, has long espoused platitudes over real discourse. With releases like Diaspora Problems, Freedom Dreams, Our Day Will Come, Black Radical Love, and Songs to Yeet at the Sun, these groups demand a re-politicized listenership, one committed not to colorblindness and casual scene loyalty, but to radical liberation and the imagining of new Black horizons. By engaging with thinkers such as Christina Sharpe, Fred Moten, Jean Baudrillard, and Sun Ra, this piece will explore the crucial contributions these artists are making to the living archive of hardcore as they shape a liberationist future, one moshpit at a time.

Cedric Preston McCoy (Yale University), "Towards a Music Analytical Methodology for Hip Hop Studies: Tracing Musical and Racial Lineages in Stretch Music and Solar Music"

Broadly, scholarship on Hip Hop has been concerned with the origins of its performance art and culture through the lens of its practitioners' "primary thematic concerns: identity and location," (Rose 1994). Central to this scholarship has been the music of Hip Hop; however, rarely in the field have we discussed the music itself rather than as a product or reflection of the aesthetics of the culture. Historically, popular music studies has struggled to approach close "reading" the music, and "Music Scholarship" proper is woefully unprepared to offer Hip Hop Studies with a pragmatic approach to music analysis. Ultimately, the music has become tangential to its own study.

What I offer in this paper is a method of analysis that engages the music at the level of text, that seriously considers the project of close "listening" as fundamental to Hip Hop scholarship. I aim to respond to this methodological gap by looking to what I perceive as new and emerging directions in the music of Hip Hop: Chief Adjuah (formerly Christian Scott)'s Stretch Music and Butcher Brown's Solar Music concepts. In my analyses, each work finds its genesis (at least in part) in Hip Hop sonic practices – rhythmically, lyrically, structurally, or otherwise. To complete this study, I reject the use of notation, formal harmonic analysis, and other traditional music theoretical approaches. Instead, I develop academically rigorous analysis using methodological frameworks adapted from sound studies, media studies, and Black Studies.

Christoph' McFadden (Yale University), "Clark-Sister Fans, Intimacy, and the Remediation of Celebrity"

Celebrated for their musicianship, fashion, and faith, The Clark Sisters are considered "gospel royalty" within the American gospel music industry. In addition to their professional accolades or chart rankings, The Sisters' celebrity status is decisively qualified by the loyal output of their followers. In digital space, fan preoccupation with The Clark Sisters is evinced again and again through intricate and gripping creations (i.e. memes, song covers, reenactments, etc.) which respond to The Sisters' performance and lifestyle. Research on gospel music has considered the means and effects of packaging, disseminating, and profiting from the genre within the wider popular music industry (see Jackson, 2004; Kernodle, 2006; Pollard, 2008; Burford, 2018; and Harold, 2020). Yet, less research has been published on the accompanying development of celebrity culture within the Black gospel community. This paper considers Black sacred arts in non-traditional spaces by evaluating the convergence of black religious music, fandom, and celebrity culture. Using digital ethnography, I identify motives which animate thousands of Clark-related fan-texts posted on various social media platforms. Inasmuch as these creations characterize the fans who post them, I demonstrate how these fan-texts also clarify the motives of The Clark Sisters themselves. Further, I argue that fan creativity is chiefly motivated by a mimetic impetus towards intimacy and virtuosity. Ultimately, my analysis highlights a correlation between celebrity culture and several black cultural idioms: namely, communal participation, artistic intensification, and extended kinship.

Kay Norton (Arizona State University), "On the Road with Sallie Martin, Gospel Entrepreneur"

A lifelong performer, Sallie Martin (1895-1988) began to develop a successful plan for the proliferation of the earliest Black gospel beginning in 1929. She participated in the founding of the National Conference of Gospel Choirs and Choruses (NCGCC), and the Martin and Morris Music Studio, the longest continuously operating Black music publisher to date. In her illustrious career, Martin mentored and employed dozens of aspiring gospel vocalists and instrumentalists, headlined on a European tour with a Chicago gospel choir in 1966, and in retirement, sang nightly in a six-week gospel retrospective in Paris.

Black newspapers in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Atlanta, Indianapolis, New York, and Philadelphia provide crucial information on Sallie Martin's marketing tours from 1933 to 1949. In the midst of the Great Depression, she traveled to the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West Coast by automobile to promote Thomas A. Dorsey's business prior to 1939, then later added rail travel to similar itineraries for her own group, the Sallie Martin Singers. This paper details the winning strategies that she and Kenneth Morris devised to build their business after 1940. In addition to performing regularly, Martin was manager for

tour stops, musical collaborations, accommodations, and transportation, all in the interests of selling her company's music. Her efforts brought to her—and to many of those who traveled with her—unprecedented fame, wealth, and respect.

Jeremy Orosz (University of Memphis), "Understanding Genre Hybridity in Contemporary R&B Formal Design"

This paper will explore the formal design of music from an underexplored genre: R&B. The lack of attention paid to this music is in part understandable, as the term R&B—coined as a marketing category to replace the term "race music"—initially applied to an impossibly broad range of musical practices. R&B of the long 1990s, however, has enough shared stylistic features to form a coherent object of study; indeed, I argue that most R&B of this period contended with the same delicate dance of balancing influences from three proximate genres: Pop, Hip Hop, and Gospel.

This paper will demonstrate that R&B producers incorporate formal elements from each of these genres. As countless sources attest (esp. Temperley 2017, Nobile 2020), Verse-Chorus form with contrasting bridge or interlude is the norm in Pop music of the late 20th century. Hip hop, rather, is comprised primarily of alternating Verses and "Hooks" (see Duinker 2020). And Gospel music, as Shelley (2021) has demonstrated, has yet another formal default: Ternary "ABC" form.

When it comes to form in R&B, like pop, a clear verse, chorus, and (at least) one other contrasting section is expected. Like hip hop, many R&B songs have a rotational design, and feature an altered verse or break over the verse instrumental after the second chorus. Like gospel, R&B songs often feature three main formal sections, in which the middle section of the three provides an emphatic, often chromatic passage between the more stable, diatonic A & C sections.

Molly Reid (Florida State University), "Choreographing Chaos: A Gestural-Kinesthetic Analysis of Undine Smith Moore's 'Before I'd Be a Slave'"

Undine Smith Moore's "Before I'd Be a Slave" for solo piano (1953) features powerful gestures, dissonant clusters, and rapid dynamic shifts that provide a striking contrast to Moore's earlier piano writing. "Before I'd Be a Slave" was commissioned for the Modern Dance Group at Virginia State College, and Moore played for the performance. It was the first instrumental piece that Moore named after a spiritual (Walker-Hill 2002); Tammy Kernodle has suggested the piece is "one of the first representations of black female anger in classical music" (Ege/Broad 2024). This context invites a gestural-kinesthetic analysis of the piece.

In this paper, I identify and trace several distinct physical gestures required of the pianist, which together comprise the piece's "physical-affective signature" (Ho 2021). Each hand has its own narrative-physical trajectory. The right hand begins in a compact position, gradually opens, and ends with a white note cluster played by the fist—the opposite of the fraught chromatic cluster played with fingers at the beginning. The left hand starts off in an accompanimental role in which it mainly mimics the right hand's gestures, but by the end, the left hand distinguishes itself from the right and freely generates its own gestures and musical material. I connect these findings directly to Moore's program for the piece, arguing that the trajectory from "The frustration and chaos of slaves who wish to be free" to the culminating "Determination—Affirmation" was not only represented by the dancers' movements, but also embodied by the pianist's physical gestures.

Audrey Slote (University of Chicago), "Groove Subjectivity and Black Indie Minimalism in Solange's A Seat at the Table"

Grooves often evoke states of being in sync with ourselves and others. But the elements that constitute grooves can also be configured to sonify being out of sync. Solange's 2016 album, A Seat at the Table, incorporates a variety of grooves to undergird a spectrum of shifting subjectivities—from isolation to interconnectedness—that drives home a message about Black women's need for both community and self-care in the midst of inequity and the reverberations of historical trauma. This paper examines the relationship between groove and subjectivity in A Seat at the Table, focusing on how "Cranes in the Sky," the album's fourth track, plays out a shift from alienation to inner peace imbued with the possibility of community.

First, I analyze qualities that manifest ungroundedness: discrepancies in phrase length between layers and the obscuring of downbeats by syncopation. Then, I highlight features that signal a turn toward equanimity: harmonic shifts toward greater stability, ethereal timbres and mantra-like repetition that reflect the influence of Alice Coltrane's devotional music, and accumulating multitrack vocals that foreshadow textures associated with joyful community later in the album.

Finally, I consider A Seat at the Table in light of what some journalists have identified as Solange's Minimalist turn, exploring how her music both draws upon and challenges Minimalist tropes. Rather than expressing Minimalism's characteristic negation, Solange's groovy repetition channels states of being—including meditation, rest, processing alone and with others—needed to survive and thrive in a world made harder by racism, misogyny, and capitalism.

Stephen Stacks (North Carolina Central University), "Counter Memory and the Freedom Singing of the Civil Rights Movement"

Following the murder of George Floyd, Robert Darden—professor at Baylor University, author of a two-volume history of Black music, and founder of Baylor's Black Gospel Music Restoration Project—wrote, "In the years to come, historians and social scientists will argue over exactly when the 2020 protests about George Floyd transformed from demonstrations into a movement, when sporadic violence and looting by a few individuals gave way to a universal call for justice and equity. I believe it occurred when the righteous anger became augmented with singing." Darden goes on to say that when he heard the traditional freedom songs of the Civil Rights Movement emerge, he knew "everything would—eventually—work out." Darden is not alone in this sentiment. Freedom song has long been pigeonholed as the soundtrack of what Joseph Peniel terms the "good 1960s." Drawing from memory studies, and using musical and historiographical analysis, this paper argues that it need not be. Since 1968, a sanitized memory of the Movement and its music has become the consensus, and contemporary Black uprisings that do not conform to this consensus memory are delegitimized. But when freedom singing creates sonic space for remembering, it sometimes challenges rather than reinforces that consensus memory, revealing new aspects of Movement history, and opening up new possibilities for freedom struggles in the present.

Sarah Tobin (Michigan State University), "'Let the Vagina Have a Monologue': Exploring Persona in Janelle Monáe's Music"

This paper investigates Janelle Monáe's (she/they) transforming music persona to convey how this portrayal delivers overt implications of racialized and gendered injustices. In her first three albums (2007–2010), Monáe portrays a messianic android challenging conformity. In Dirty Computer (2018), Monáe frees herself from the android narrative to prioritize self-expression. What does the android contribute to her musical expression, and what, then, do we gain in its place once the android is gone?

The term "robot" originates from Karl Capek's 1920 play R.U.R. [Rossum's Universal Robots], and this word translates to "slave" (Jordan 2016). Monáe's android—a robot with human appearances—confronts how society pushes underrepresented people towards conformity, and she invites us to consider how this representation reflects both historical and current perceptions of Black, queer individuals (Yates-Richard 2021). I present analyses of two of Monae's music videos: "Tightrope (Feat. Big Boi)" (2010) and "Make Me Feel" (2018). Using Lafrance and Burns' (2017) methodology, I propose a cross-domain analysis of the lyrics, music, and images. In the lyrical domain, I apply BaileyShea's (2014) work on shifting modes of address to convey how Monáe's lyrics become increasingly intimate. Musically, I demonstrate how Monáe draws from James Brown and Prince's performance styles (Maultsby 2015) to amplify her own critiques of societal norms. Visually, I dissect the staging, framework, and gestures. My work demonstrates how Monáe's android grapples with cultural perceptions of Black, queer people, and how shedding this persona allows her to express a more intimate portrayal of her lived experience.

Mikkel Vad (University of Copenhagen), "Moseholm & Pettiford's Jazz Bass Facing (1962): Writing Music Theory Across Transatlantic Colorlines"

The bassist Oscar Pettiford (who identified as mixed-race African American and Cherokee) is widely regarded as a pivotal figure in the development of bebop playing. Furthermore, in the 1950s his experiments with cello playing were pioneering in the field of jazz. In the 1950s, Pettiford also relocated to

Denmark, where he would pass away prematurely at the age of 37 in 1960. While in Denmark he collaborated with the bassist Erik Moseholm, who subsequently published the book Jazz Bass Facing (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 1962) under both their names. In Danish jazz mythology the book has been considered "one of the most important pedagogy books about jazz bass playing." Yet, despite such local assessment, the book remains largely unknown internationally.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to tell the story behind Pettiford's stay in Denmark and his contributions to the Danish jazz scene, not just in terms of his musical collaborations but also regarding his intellectual influence. Secondly, to establish the nature of Moseholm and Pettiford's partnership in writing Jazz Bass Facing. Here, I want to trouble some of the implications indicated in the contemporary reception that positioned Pettiford as an uncultivated performer in need of the guiding hand of Moseholm, who was white, teacher-trained, and "knew" music theory. I suggest that rather than Moseholm bestowing Pettiford with "help," it was Pettiford's African American jazz authenticity that benefitted Moseholm.