**A Historical Perspective on Musical Languages**

## Prof. Enrico Reggiani

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course is open to all LT (three-year degree) and LM (Master’s degree) students, regardless of any musical skills they (may) possess, and is linked to the *Studium Musicale di Ateneo*, directed by Prof. Reggiani with the collaboration of Martino Tosi.

Students NOT from the Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures, which delivers the course may request authorisation from their Faculty Dean for the course to be inserted into their study plan as per the specific criteria of their faculty.

The course aims are as follows, defined according to an inter- and trans-disciplinary approach based on the hermeneutic resources of cultural musicology:

a) to consolidate and expand students’ basic musical skills (theoretical and practical);

(b) develop their capacity to listen to and analyse songs composed in the last three centuries of the Western music tradition (art music, pop music, folk music);

c) to improve their understanding of “musical language” and of the consequent compositional perspective underlying those pieces, contextualising them in the framework of the human and artistic historical experience of the composers.

By the end of the course, students will have also consolidated their musical listening skills (also known as “structural listening”) in a cultural-musicological sense; moreover, they will be able to reflect on the different concepts of “musical language” and understand evolutionary phases, cultural dialectics and compositional consequences, independently furthering their knowledge of the relative implications and communicating the results of this research in both Italian and English.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Semester 1: *Musical languages from a historical perspective (survey course)*

a) consolidation and development of basic musical skills (sound parameters and paradigms of music)

b) starting to listen (including in a “structural” sense) and to analyse cultural-musicological passages: Students will learn the fundamental historical, theoretical and cultural features of selected musical languages that are representative examples of the Western musical experience (art music, pop music, folk music).

c) Is music “a language” or does it “speak a language”? Features of the history of musical languages; linguistic-musical choices and contexts (biographical, institutional, social, economic, etc.); theoretical aspects, their dimensions and cultural implications; communicative logic and rhetoric; analysis of musical languages (approaches and methods).

Semester 2: *Piano culture(s): languages, economies, technologies*

For more than three centuries the piano has been entrusted with the task of articulating languages, developing cultures, managing the economies of the most diverse resources entrusted to it by human experience, be they expressive, spiritual, compositional, technological or entrepreneurial, etc. The piano has fulfilled this task by cultivating with the most unbridled creativity “the significant opposition of *piano* and *forte*”: It has done so, for example, in spite of the opinion of Roland Barthes, who considered this opposition overvalued, because its “historical importance […], at the end of the day, only relates to a small part of the music of the world and corresponds to the invention of an instrument whose name is sufficiently significant, the *piano-forte*” (*Musica Practica*, 1970).

Semester 2 will focus, first and foremost, on the constituent elements and general aspects of piano culture, as well as explore the presence of piano culture in the work of some of its key protagonists. A piece of music by each one will be examined through “cultural-musicological listening” in order to grasp its compositional foundations, connections with the historical and cultural experience of its composer, the extra-textual circumstances of its composition, etc. The objective of semester 2 is to offer students a cross-disciplinary approach to the proposed musical pieces, allowing them to identify and interpret the main components from the perspective of cultural musicology. Students with musical and performance knowledge and skills in disciplines other than piano will also have the chance to apply the approach taken during the course to this knowledge and these skills.

***READING LIST***

Semester 1

A. Copland, *Come ascoltare la musica*, Milano, Garzanti, latest edition (ed. orig.; *What to listen for in music*, New York, Signet Classics, latest edition)

E. Reggiani, *Cultural musicology: an in-progress notebook (edition 2022)* [file WORD in Blackboard/Materiali]

Semester 2

A. Botti Caselli (a cura di), *Il pianoforte*, Torino, EdT, 2018.

E. Reggiani, *Piano Culture: an in-progress notebook* [file WORD in Blackboard/Materiali]

H. Schott, “From Harpsichord to Pianoforte: A Chronology and Commentary”, *Early Music*, 13 (1985), pp. 28-38 [file PdF in Blackboard/Materiali]

P. Avanti, “Captivating Technologies: Reflections on the Equal-Tempered Diatonic Keyboard”, *Technology and Culture*, 56 (2015), pp. 150-183 [file PdF in Blackboard/Materiali]

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course takes the form of weekly three-hour workshop. In semester 1, students will explore the relationship between sound parameters (pitch, duration, intensity, timbre) and music paradigms (melody, harmony, rhythm/meter, timbre) by listening to and analysing, in a cultural-musicological sense, short compositions that are relevant and easy to access. The pieces, examined during the individual workshops and relevant for the end-of-course examination, will be provided during lectures and made available on the course Blackboard page.

In semester 2, students will examine the general aspects and specific examples of so-called piano culture through cultural-musicological analysis and listening exercises intended to highlight what Lawrence Kramer, one of the leading exponents of cultural musicology, has called “musical subjectivity in history”. The ultimate objective of this approach is to offer students a cross-disciplinary approach to music, enabling them to identify and interpret its main cultural-musicological components.

The course can be delivered in Italian and/or English (by prior agreement with the students).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by two alternative and complementary means:

1. Students with this course in their study plan (two semesters for a total of 60 hours of lectures worth 8 ECTS credits) and who are **not** participating in the musical activities of the *Studium Musicale di Ateneo* will take an oral exam on the entire mandatory reading list: this exam will assess their acquired skills in the fields (historical, theoretical and analytical) characterising the study of the musical languages from a historical perspective, in line with the approach of cultural musicology.
2. Students with this course in their study plan and who have **continually and successfully** participated in the musical activities of the *Studium Musicale di Ateneo* in semester 1 2019-2020 can also take the route outlined above in point a) or ask the lecturer **before the exam** to award them the ECTS credits for this participation. If students participate in the musical activity successfully, this can contribute four ECTS (equal to one of the two semesters of the course in question) to the final mark for the skills acquired during the course: these four ECTS credits, combined with the four ECTS credits that students will obtain by passing the exam on the content of one of the two semesters of this course will result in all eight ECTS credits provided by the system.

As regards the syllabus for semester 2, in addition to the mandatory reading list, students are invited to present in the exam a cultural-musicological analysis (conducted according to the criteria applied in lectures and proposed in the course reading list) of general aspects and/or specific examples of piano culture to be agreed with the lecturer: this additional assignment will be suitably assessed and reflected in the final mark; for students who do not complete it, the final mark is unaffected.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Course prerequisites: in terms of merit, students must be willing to recuperate and revise the basic musical skills they acquired on previous courses; in terms of method, they must be willing to experiment with new ways of acquiring and/or enhancing genuine and effective critical autonomy, demonstrate a more mature interpretation of the musical texts analysed and be able to contextualise them accurately on a historical, sociocultural and institutional level.

The information herein is to be considered preliminary and subject to possible changes during the course. Students should base their exam preparation on the syllabus that the lecturer will publish on Blackboard in good time and, in any case, before the end of the course. Students must check all sections on Blackboard regularly and become familiar with its contents.

In order to facilitate educational interaction and the consolidation of critical autonomy, students are encouraged to consult Prof. Enrico Reggiani’s social media accounts and blog (*enricoreggianiblog. A blog on literature, music and other crossings*, <https://enricoreggiani.wordpress.com/>), which contain materials and input for learning the course content, some of which has been contributed by students and graduates from previous academic years.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at <http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG>, or on the Faculty notice board.