Course: Music, theater, ritual: Béla Bartók’s “The Miraculous Mandarin,”
(pantomime, Op. 19, 1919/1924)

1st semester, 2012-2013
Seminar, 4 semester hours

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The course will be held in English

Reception time
By appointment only

Brief description

The course will treat the meeting point between theater, ritual and music. It will explore the
question such as: what makes a text a theatrical text, what is ritual, what are the ritualistic aspects
of theater and music, etc. The main work discussed will be Béla Bartók’s pantomime “The
Miraculous Mandarin” – a work in which aspects of ritual, dance/pantomime, symbolic,
grotesque, and expressionist drama and music are merged in a unique manner. The central unit of
the course will be an in-depth analysis of this work’s musical structure, dramaturgy, including
issues of its mythic and ritualistic content. The discussion will use hitherto unpublished research
concerning Bartók’s creative process. Related topics will be discussed in other units: Western
theater, Sufi ritual, Romantic opera, and modern concert as ritual. These units will be presented
in an integral manner in their connection with one another and with the course’s main work.

Requirements

- preparation for the classes:
  NOTE: all students are required to have their own copy of the orchestral and the piano
  score of Bartók’s Miraculous Mandarin and have to come to the class with the section of
  the piece prepared according to the schedule give below
- participation in class discussion
- independent oral exam = midterm
- independent research discussed during independent meetings with instructor
-on the basis of independent research:
  written project = final work
Grading
-preparation and active participation for classes = 40%
-independent research, and independent exam, written work = 60 %

Overview of course
I. Strategies of theater – Shakespeare (Classes 1-2)
II. The Miraculous Mandarin: in-depth analysis of the musical structure and theatrical
design in connection with the issue of style, meaning and message (Classes 3-7)
III. Music and ritual of the Mevlevi (Sufi) dervishes (Classes 8-9)
IV. Guest lecturer: Ritual and 19th century opera (Class 10)
V. The concert as ritual (Classes 11-12)
II. The Miraculous Mandarin: creative process, choreography and message (Classes 13-14)

Tentative syllabus
I. Strategies of theater – Shakespeare (Classes 1-2)

October 24:
1. Introduction
2. William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice – Scene 1

October 31:
1. Shakespeare, Othello – Scenes 1 and 3
2. Theater and ritual – a theoretical introduction

II. The Miraculous Mandarin: in-depth analysis of the musical structure, theatrical design, style,
meaning and message (Classes 3-7)

November 7:
1. Menyhért Lengyel’s work “The miraculous mandarin, pantomime grotesque”
2. Bartók’s setting of Lengyel’s work – overview of the work’s musical structure

November 14
1. Analysis-1: From the opening scene to the scene with the young student
2. Analysis-2: The third decoy game and the Mandarin’s entry
November 21
1. Analysis -3: The waltz and the chase
2. Analysis-4: The murders

November 28: Independent meetings, exam and discussion

December 5
1. Analysis -5: The choral/viola lament and conclusion
2. Discussion

III. The music and ritual of the Mevlevi (Sufi) dervishes (Classes 8-9)

December 12
1. Introduction of Sufism, sufi ritual and the Mevlevi order
2. The musical form of the Bayati Mevlevi ayin

December 19
1. Musical analysis of selected sections from Bayati ayin
2. Film of the ceremony and discussion

IV. Guest lecturer: Ritual in 19th century opera (Class 10)

December 26 Olga Khavkin, Musorgsky’s Khovakschina as ritual/carnival/folk laughter

V. The concert as ritual (Classes11-12)

January 2
1. The concert as ritual: historical and cultural considerations
2. The framing of the concert: advertisement, introduction, words and music, space, etc.

January 9
1. Analysis of sample creative concert programs
2. Discussion and workshop

VI. The Miraculous Mandarin: the compositional process, choreography, and final message (Classes 13-14)

January 16
1. The deleted scene from the Mandarin – discussion of Bartók’s creative process on the basis of the 1919 draft manuscript
2. The Miraculous Mandarin as myth and ritual – a new conceptualization
January 23
1. Choreographies
2. Discussion and conclusion

REQUIRED STUDY AND READING MATERIAL

I. Strategies of theater – Shakespeare (Classes 1-2)

Readings:
1. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (cca. 1603), in any of these editions:
2. Basic knowledge of the life and oeuvre of William Shakespeare from any encyclopedia article.

II. The Miraculous Mandarin: in-depth analysis of the musical structure, theatrical design, style, meaning and message (Classes 3-7)

Musical score: Thorough knowledge of the musical score of The Miraculous Mandarin

Readings:
2. Basic knowledge of the life and oeuvre of Béla Bartók on the basis of any scholarly encyclopedia article. See also list of bibliography at recommended readings.

III. The music and ritual of the Mevlevi (Sufi) dervishes (Classes 8-9)

Sound: Familiarity with the music of the Beyati Ayin (put on reserve in the library)

Musical score: Knowledge of the musical score (put on reserve in the library)

Reading: Selected sections from the *Candidature File of the Mevlevi Sema Ceremony [known historically as the Mevlevi Sacred Rituals of Sacred Encounter of Whirling] for UNESCO’s proclamation of “Masterpieces of the oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” compiled by Barihuda Tanrikorur and Professor Walter Feldman.*
IV. Guest lecturer: Ritual in 19th century opera (Class 10)

**Reading:** Chapter 2 from Olga Khavkin, “Old Russia in Musorgsky’s Khovanshchina”. P.D. Bar Ilan, 2010

V. The concert as ritual (Classes 11-12)

The classes will have workshop format, no required reading.

VI. The Miraculous Mandarin: the compositional process, choreography, and final message (Classes 13-14)

**Reading:** Frigyesi Judit. “The “girl” in Bartók’s The Miraculous Mandarin – a case study of the deleted scene in Bartók’s draft”, manuscript.

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

I. ARTICLES ABOUT THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN


II. BASIC READINGS ABOUT BARTÓK'S MUSIC

Bartók's and Kodály's writings:


---. *Rumanian Folk Music*, edited Benjamin Suchoff, vol I-III


Recordings of Bartók’s performance of his own music:


On Bartok’s creative process and manuscripts:


Basic books on Bartók’s life and art:


**Essay collections:**


**Pictures:**


**Catalogues:**

László Somfai's catalogue ("BB numbers") in Somfai's *Composition, Concepts*: complete catalogue of compositions with list and location of autographs sources)

András Szöllössy's catalogue ("Sz numbers") in Újfalussy, *Bartók*. 

**Bibliography:**


**Introduction to analysis and source studies:**


**Journals and series with special emphasis on Bartók and Hungarian music:**

Studia Musicologica (SM), Documenta Bartókiana, The New Hungarian Quarterly Hungarian Music Quarterly, Hungaroton complete edition of Bartók's work (accompanying essays)
III. SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS ABOUT RITUAL AND TRANSCENDENCE


