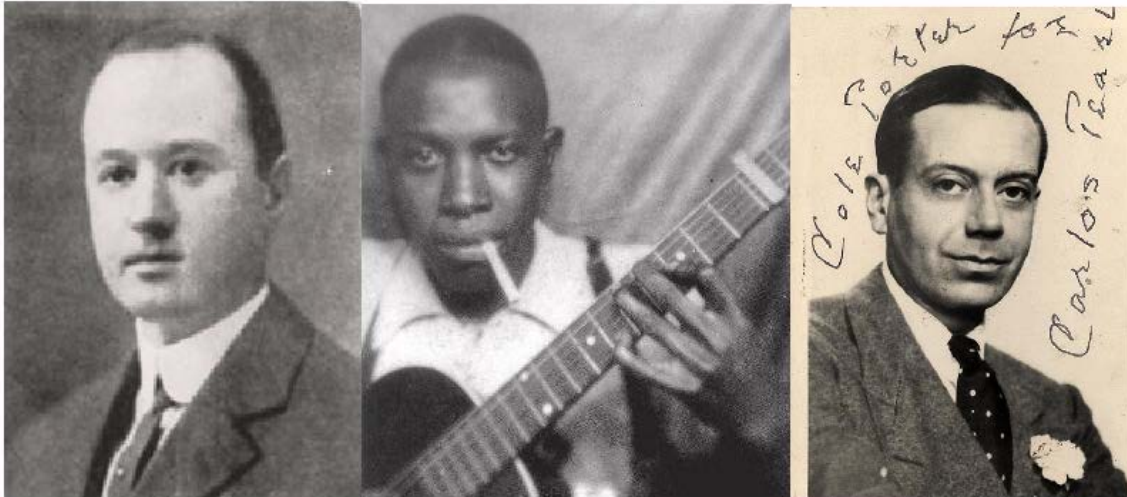


Music 842: American Music Genres



Vocal genres and musical styles as participants in the larger tensions and discourse networks of American culture, with special attention given to the first half of the twentieth century. Music 842 introduces three topic areas as illustrative of some of the competing concepts of musical style and purpose in the United States during these years: Charles Ives (songs) and the challenges of an American art music; recorded blues of the 1920s and 1930s, along with blues adaptations/transformations in 1950s/1960s teen culture and rock; American musical theater and Tin Pan Alley songs in the 1920s through the 1940s, with special attention given to Cole Porter.

The seminar has two aims:

On the one hand, it is a research-oriented seminar that involves individualized work with primary-source materials, including manuscripts, historical sound recordings, and films. We shall also be working with some of Yale's specific resources: The Charles Ives Papers (with a research focus, primarily, on some of the songs and the written essays) and The Cole Porter Collection. From this point of view the seminar is concerned with devising appropriate, primary-source-oriented topics for research and perhaps publication.

On the other hand, through individual case studies it also explores paradigms for music analysis and different registers of interpretation within repertory families that have not often been critically examined from these perspectives: genre recognition, recurring but flexible structural formats, intertextual dialogues. What can a professionalized music scholar contribute to an understanding of these repertories? And how might these discipline-specific contributions be integrated into broader questions of interdisciplinary analysis, popular and elite tensions in America, race and representation, and issues of musical hybridization and cultural appropriation?

Required Purchases

- Charles Ives, *Essays before a Sonata , The Majority, and Other Writings* (ed. Howard Boatwright)
 - Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008).
 - William McBrien, *Cole Porter* (New York: Vintage, 1998).
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Three Topic Areas

- **Weeks 1-4: Charles Ives**
- **Weeks 5-8: 1920s and 1930s blues—and into the teen-culture 1950s**
- **Weeks 9-13: Broadway and Tin Pan Alley (The American Songbook), concluding with a focus on Cole Porter (week 14: “Cole Porter Conference”)**

The initial plan (subject to adjustment for reasons of enrollment or other considerations): For Ives and Porter, we will be pursuing suitable, specific, and workable research topics, each in an area of potentially publishable interest. For each of these two areas you will be expected to write a short research paper—and additionally, for the Cole Porter paper, to give a formal oral presentation of it (see below). Once completed, you will send each of the finished papers to all participants in the seminar.

Your Ives paper will be due in Week 9 (that is, in the week following the blues module). The Porter presentation (to be followed by a subsequent paper)—will be scheduled for week 14 (reading period—sometime in the first week of May). The presentation will probably be c. 20-25 minutes in length and formal in style and tone, part of an imagined but professionalized Cole Porter Conference. You will then recast it into a final paper, to be handed in during exam period (6-11 May).

Weeks 5-8 constitute a blues “interlude.” During this time (when you are also working on your Ives papers) there will be some reading and listening assignments related to 1920s and 1930s blues recordings and some of their later successors—leading eventually into a session (probably week 9) looking at case studies from rock ‘n’ roll teen culture of the 1950s and blues-rock of the 1960s. (Much of this will involve listening to a generous selection of early-blues recordings.) In the seminar itself you will be involved with three or four smaller, *ad hoc* assignments (reactions to and discussions of articles, films, videos, songs, and so on)—brief, more informal presentations—but there will not be a submitted paper. The four weeks will provide an introduction to a handful of pertinent matters: proposed models for analysis and understanding; race records of the 1920s and 1930s; issues in the later history of the blues, early rock ‘n’ roll; and so on. Expect controversies; discussion is crucial.

Reading and Listening Assignments for each of the three topic areas will be individually provided as we approach and enter each topic. For the post-Ives weeks, 5-13, expect to listen to a large number of songs—moving progressively through a substantial list of two- and three-minute recordings in order to become acquainted with a broad panorama of the genre and vocal styles(s) involved. Additional assignments (for seminar preparation) may include several pre-seminar email assignments (responses to articles or questions as a basis for seminar discussion), to be announced during the preceding seminar session. Let’s stay flexible.