

Topic Brainstorm

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Politics of the American Folk Music Revival

The American Folk Revival of the 1960's and 1970's attracted a lot of strong musical and political voices. Among the more interesting (to me) are Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and, though not as well known or as explicitly involved, Frederic Rzewski. These musicians are all known to be very explicit in their political leanings/intentions. I'm interested in analysing the musical and lyrical content - as well as extramusical context - of their musics to better understand the politics of the American Folk Music revival. Some Research Questions are:

- What common political notions are held by musicians involved with the American Folk Music Revival?
- What about the ideological and commercial histories of the American Folk Music Revival lend itself to the predominantly progressive politics associated with the movement?
- What is said about the American Peoples/the American Musical Voice by associating American Folk Music with leftist politics?
- How was the American Folk Music Revival shaped by the anti-war sentiments of the 1960's?

Computer Music and Musical Voice/Intention

Out of the rise of both computing power and availability of Computers during the 20th century is born many types of uniquely computer-powered music. These musics all bring into question the role of the composer and performer in a modern technological context. Adjacent to these conversations is the critical discourse of AI produced musics. I'm interested in tracing the narrative of musical voice as it is transformed and reborn within various computer music paradigms. Some research questions are:

- What is held common in the musics of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Steve Reich, Daft Punk?
- How is the Computer treated - historically and contemporarily - as tool, collaborator, or composer?
- Who is the producer when it comes to AI-generated music? How does the AI-generation of music differ from other computer-based productions of music?

Musical Depictions of Incarceration... + Attica

Much of Frederic Rzewski's music puts the inmate's voice at forefront. Compositions such as "Coming Together" and "Attica" concern themselves with particular depictions of the Attica State Prison Riots, whilst "De Profundis" depicts Oscar Wilde's famous sentence served in Reading Jail, and "It Makes a Long Time Man Feel Bad" from his North American Ballads relates incarceration and labour. More contemporary work "If I Ruled the World" by NAS also brings Attica into cultural discourse, again putting Attica, carceral justice, reform, and abolition, and labour into the spotlight. Some research questions are:

- How is Rzewski's music discoursing incarceration constructed, and how does this depict incarceration?
- What is the relationship between prison and labour, and how can that be depicted musically?
- Why do Attica, Soledad, Folsom, and more prisons, especially during the 1960's and 1970's keep showing up in conversations about incarcerated voices in America?
- How are musics of revolution and musics of incarceration intertwined?