

AMERICAN MUSICOLOGICAL SOCIETY—SOUTHEAST CHAPTER

**FALL MEETING | OCTOBER 1, 2022
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**

9:30-11:00AM

PAPER SESSION A:

Chair, Dr. Kirsten Paige (North Carolina State University)

Molly Barnes, (Independent Scholar) “The American (Non-) Reception of André Rieu”

David Levy, (Wake Forest University) “A Little-Known Nibelung Opera Project”

Emily Sheffield, (UNC-Charlotte) “Hedda Grab-Kernmayer in Theresienstadt (Terezín)”

11:00-11:30AM

CHAPTER BUSINESS MEETING

11:30-1PM

LUNCH

1:00-2:30PM

PAPER SESSION B:

Chair, TBA

Emily Hynes, (UNC-Chapel Hill) “Covering Criminality: Connecting the Musical Personas of Huddie Ledbetter and Kurt Cobain”

Cole Swanson, (Duke) “‘Would you please stop playing Beethoven?’: Classical Music as Postmodern Pastiche in Marie Antoinette, Inglourious Basterds, and Django Unchained”

Mark Katz and Alim Braxton, (UNC-Chapel Hill and Central Prison, Raleigh) “‘I ain’t never huggin’ my Mommy’: Rapping about Home from Death Row”

2:30-3PM

BREAK

3PM-4PM

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Dr. Chris Campo-Bowen (Assistant Professor of Music, Virginia Tech)

4pm

RECEPTION

Appreciation is extended to the following individuals for helping to make this program possible: Kristen Turner, Patricia Sasser, Kirsten Paige, Bonny Miller, North Carolina State University Faculty and Staff.

AMS-SE FALL 2022 CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

The American (Non-) Reception of André Rieu **Molly Barnes (Independent Scholar)**

The Dutch violinist and orchestra leader André Rieu (b. 1949) has established an international reputation as a popular entertainer in the realm of what is often called “classical crossover” music. Along with his Johann Strauss Orchestra, of which he is the founder and leader, this modern-day King of Waltz’s tours, albums, and live concerts—transformed into elaborately produced TV specials broadcast on arts networks around the globe—have garnered him both popular adulation and critical derision, as well as enormous wealth. Surprisingly, Rieu’s presence in the U.S. market has remained relatively weak in comparison with his much warmer reception in Britain, Australia, and continental Europe, and partly for this reason he has attracted limited musicological attention. My inquiry will focus on two main dimensions of this muted American response. First, I explore Rieu’s distinctive appeal to a particular kind of audience as a purveyor of an unapologetically nostalgic, sentimental, old-world brand of entertainment evoking an idealized European past. Second, I argue that Rieu represents a distinctive type of performer, one that has arisen chiefly in Europe and has proven less successful in the U.S. This is a musician who trades in the symbols and status of musical high culture but delivers an emotionally-charged, visually stimulating, and essentially communal experience that tends to disregard generic categorization. I suggest that Rieu’s extravaganzas hold sit uncomfortably in an American landscape in which “classical” performance has remained more resistant to the crossover impulse.

“A Little-Known Nibelung Opera Project” **David Levy (Wake Forest University)**

Wagner was neither the first nor the only composer who had ideas for creating an opera based on the mythology of the German/Austrian "Nibelungenlied." The decade of the 1840s marked the period during which Wagner began developing his plan for "Siegfrieds Tod," the operatic scenario that, after decades of evolution, eventually became *Götterdämmerung*. While in many ways Wagner's subsequent engagement with the Norse Eddas in many ways overshadowed the narrative of the "Nibelungenlied," it is useful to remember the origins of the "Ring" project. With the exception of a few brief comments from Ernest Newman and Elizabeth Magee, the work of two important figures has been under-represented as influences on the young Wagner. These writers were the essayist Friederich Theodor Vischer and feminist leader, Louise Otto-Peters. This paper will explore the relevant essays by both. Vischer's *Kritische Gaenge*, published in 1844, contains an essay entitled "Vorschlag zu einer Oper," in which he proposes the idea that the "Nibelungenlied" would be an ideal choice for a German National Opera. Otto followed up on Vischer's proposal with a series of six articles published in the "Neue Zeitschrift fuer Musik" in 1845, the last of which included a draft of a libretto. A deeper look into Vischer and Otto's writings will reveal that Wagner felt their influence more keenly than previously known, even if his "Ring" cycle far surpasses his predecessor's less ambitious goals.

Hedda Grab-Kernmayer in Theresienstadt (Terezín) **Emily Sheffield (UNC-Charlotte)**

During the Holocaust, operatic mezzo-soprano Hedda Grab-Kernmayer (1899-1990) was one of the most prominent musicians in the Nazi ghetto of Theresienstadt (Terezín). In the earliest days of the ghetto, she organized and starred in various informal performances in the women’s barracks. As the cultural life of the ghetto developed, she became a largely uncredited leader in the Freizeitgestaltung (“Free Time Activities” bureau) that oversaw artistic activities for all prisoners. As Grab-Kernmayer later recalled, she was so in demand as a performer that she “sang every day.” Despite these contributions, Grab-Kernmayer’s role in Theresienstadt’s cultural life was downplayed by the male Jewish leaders who oversaw the ghetto. She was also overlooked because of her ambiguous cultural identity. Born in Prague to a German-speaking family and reared in Vienna, Grab-Kernmayer was disregarded by the predominantly German Jewish leaders because of

her Czech nationality and ostracized by the majority Czech prisoner population for her inability to speak fluent Czech. Grab-Kernmayer's significance has also been undervalued in the histories of Theresienstadt. Such narratives have been written mainly by men, who have tended to diminish women's contributions while also ignoring the frictions between Czech and German prisoners. Drawing on current research and neglected interviews in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, this paper demonstrates how the intersectionality of gender and cultural identity resulted in the marginalization of Hedda Grab-Kernmayer during and after the Holocaust.

Covering Criminality: Connecting the Musical Personas of Huddie Ledbetter and Kurt Cobain **Emily Hynes (UNC-Chapel Hill)**

When Kurt Cobain sat down for his MTV Unplugged special in 1993, he introduced a folk tune, "In the Pines/Where did you Sleep Last Night" as a song by his "favorite performer," Huddie Ledbetter. The popular tune had been covered by more than 159 artists in the past 100 years aside from Ledbetter. Why, then, did Cobain emphatically claim Ledbetter as the author and source of the song? This paper explores how Cobain's covers of Ledbetter's music strategically deployed Ledbetter's public persona—specifically that of a Black, incarcerated person—in order to authenticate Cobain's own public persona and validate his investment in the concept of "realness." Scholars and writers such as Yuval Taylor and M. Kadel have unpacked Kurt Cobain's perceived "realness" and fans' perceptions of Huddie Ledbetter's authenticity as a Blues singer, respectively; yet, the connecting role of Ledbetter's criminality as part of this authenticating strategy for Cobain has not been explored. This analysis of Cobain's cover of "In the Pines/Black Girl," along with close readings of reviews, interviews, and fan publications, builds on detailed studies of American consumption of the carceral experience, particularly through the transmission of so-called "prison songs." Ledbetter's public identity as "Lead Belly," a criminal who paradoxically suffered greatly while enduring his prison sentences, allowed Cobain to mobilize a powerful link between public acceptance of Black emotion and carceral suffering and personal authenticity.

"Would you please stop playing Beethoven?": Classical Music as Postmodern Pastiche in Marie Antoinette, Inglourious Basterds, and Django Unchained **Cole Swanson (Duke)**

I explore a trio of films notable for their use of blatantly anachronistic soundtracks to accompany historical settings: Sofia Coppola's "Marie Antoinette" (2006), which pairs the doomed Dauphine with post-punk and new wave electronica, and Quentin Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds" (2009) and "Django Unchained" (2012), a pair of revenge fantasies that rely on extant film music and popular songs in their depiction of Nazi-occupied France and the Antebellum South, respectively. Musicological approaches to these films have prioritized scrutiny of these popular styles, while less attention has been devoted to the films' deployment of Western art music as a component of their postmodern arsenal. These examples paradoxically challenge classical music's presumed status as a form of universal film music, revealing that primacy as an ideological construct deeply intertwined with the assumed artistic value of historical fidelity writ large. I consider these films' inherently postmodern and deconstructive agendas through the lens of a Derridean "histoire," an understanding of history itself as a specter caught between fixed object and fungible narrative construct. Rather than imposing incongruities onto the film or even negating the notion of historicity, these soundtrack elements challenge the implicit ideological themes that accompany an unquestioned fidelity to historical "truth." My discussion of Coppola and Tarantino's unruly cinematic histories will consider classical music as a key component of this postmodern incongruity, treating the Jamesonian notion of a "crisis of historicity" as an opportunity to engage layers of cinematic and musical history in a meaningful critique.

"I ain't never huggin' my Mommy': Rapping about Home from Death Row" **Mark Katz and Alim Braxton (UNC-Chapel Hill and Central Prison, Raleigh)**

“I’m all alone and I ain’t goin’ home/and I ain’t never huggin’ my Mommy.” These lines come from rapper Rome Alone (artist name of Alim Braxton), who has lived on North Carolina’s Death Row since 1997. Drawing on a three-year correspondence between Braxton and Katz, this paper explores how the rapper uses music to cope with his forced separation from home. (Central Prison sits two miles from where he grew up.) His music celebrates “Ruff Raleigh” and simultaneously explores his identity as a Black man growing up with a white mother in the South. “Bigger Lover,” for example, recounts the taunts he and his mother endured (one epithet rhymes with the title) as well as the experience of living in a segregated city. Another song, “Round My Way,” “shouts out a lot of the well-known Black neighborhoods in Raleigh, many of which no longer exist.” This paper also touches on the important role that NC State’s radio station, WKNC, has played in Rome Alone’s musical development. Although deeply personal, Rome Alone’s music reveals how, for millions of incarcerated people and their families, the U.S. prison system does violence to the very concept of home. Braxton cannot participate in person, but his voice will be represented by recorded excerpts from his songs and letters.

Keynote Lecture, Dr. Chris Campo-Bowen (VA Tech)

“New States, Old Hierarchies: Difference, Citizenship, and the Legacy of Village Opera in Twentieth-Century Czechia”