

Seminar Series

Topics in the Aesthetics of Music and Sound

Thursday, November 13, 2014

3:15-5 p.m. in U67

Franz Liszt and Metal Music - An Aesthetic Affinity?



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Abstract: One of the refreshing aspects of this SDU seminar series is its focus on musical experience itself, which offers the possibility of exploring common ground between musical genres that are customarily considered quite distinct or even far away from each other. For many classically trained musicians like myself, the world of heavy metal, death metal, and related styles has been not only an unfamiliar and

opaque one, but has even seemed somewhat deplorable in its perceived violence and commercialism. However, observing the discerning and sophisticated analysis that metal experts bring to their subject, and acknowledging the widespread popularity of metal among music lovers, my curiosity has grown. Are there affinities between metal and traditional classical music? If so, what can we learn from them?

The presentation will trace some ways in which that affinity appears convincing, and also consider some of the differences between the genres. I will view this comparison through the prism of the unique career of virtuoso pianist/composer Franz Liszt (1811 - 1886) - the so-called "first rock star of music." Among the questions that emerge: What are the implications of what Robert Walser calls the "fetishism of instrumental technique"? What are the links between Romanticism, rock-star charisma, and recurring themes of death? What sort of performer/audience dynamics occur in these two styles? How should pianists approach the written scores of Liszt? Does commercialism taint aesthetic worth?

Integrated into the lecture will be excerpts at the piano as well as sound and video clips.

**All are welcome
- also via Skype**

**William Westney
will also give a
Lunchtime Concert
12 noon to 1 p.m. in
The Winter Garden.**



- Cross-Disciplinary Interplay between the Humanities, Technology and Musical Practice
- Backdrop for the SDU-IKV Research Program