

Contemporary x Renaissance Motet Assignment Guidelines

Visit the sound installation *The Forty Part Motet* by Janet Cardiff. It is on view at MoMA P.S.1, the contemporary wing of Museum of Modern Art in Queens. *The Forty Part Motet* is reworking of a 1575 Renaissance motet (a genre we have studied) by English composer Thomas Tallis for forty spatialized speakers. The work is 14 minutes long – please listen at least two times. “Cardiff created this spatialized adaptation of a sixteenth-century, sacred motet by recording each member of a choir individually and piping each voice into its own speaker.” See <http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/348> for more information.

Admission is free with CUID!

Assignment

Your task is to write *three double-spaced pages* (absolutely no more than 3.5 pages! quality over quantity) about a musical aspect of this work. You may engage some of the following topics and questions:

- your personal listening experience (contemporary ears vs. Renaissance ears)
- the context of the installation (consider the context in which Renaissance motets would have sounded and explore the location and surroundings of Cardiff's installation)
- who is doing the singing and why? (re: “For Whom do the Singers Sing?”)
- the automated looping of the work during opening hours
- the actual music/sound: how are the musical characteristics of a Renaissance motet represented in this contemporary installation? Musically, what is lost and what is gained?
- your particular listening experience: who are you and how do you hear? What is your bodily experience of Cardiff's sound in space?
- How does movement through the space of the installation alter listening?
- more? surprise me!

Grading Criteria

Thesis and Support 10 points

Consider the topics above and address one or two while bearing the rest in mind. Make an insightful case about your experience and the meeting of contemporary and historical musical practices. You may present a traditional thesis supported with paragraphs of evidence or you may follow a looser form as long as it stays focused. Drawing on historical and contemporary musical examples (from class or outside of it) will strengthen your essay.

Flow and Composition 10 points

Your writing should be clear, organized, and coherent. The weight of your argument rests on how clearly you communicate. Proofread. Spell-check. There is no right answer to this assignment: write this piece so it reflects who you are as a scholar, and what interests you about music and music scholarship. Take risks – show confidence in your own argument by acknowledging a counterargument, for example. You don't need any outside research but, again, do use specific musical examples as appropriate to your topic and argument.

- 2-3 pages
- double spaced
- 1 inch margins
- creative title that relates to your focus and hints at your argument
- name on every page
- number your pages

Deadline

Thursday October 4. Bring a hard copy to class. I will not accept late work unless you ask for an extension at least *four* days before a deadline citing a compelling reason.