

# Music At Our House

The Ultimate Music Resource for Homeschoolers

## Music at Our House

### *Music History & Appreciation*

Course for Adults

November 5, 2010

Prepared by Mr. Johnson

## Introduction

This syllabus presents the general objectives and an overview of the content for Music at Our House, Course for Adults.

Attendees learn the history of Western music as a continuous narrative from ancient Greece to the 20th century. Each period of music history is considered from the point of view of the emotional content of its music and the ideas and thinking which created that style and feeling. Attendees become acquainted with the music, the historical context that gave rise to it, and the meaning its creators attached to it.

To delineate the periods, the course emphasizes essential turning points and key developments. This allows a clear characterization and definition of each period, and gives the framework within which the student can remember details.

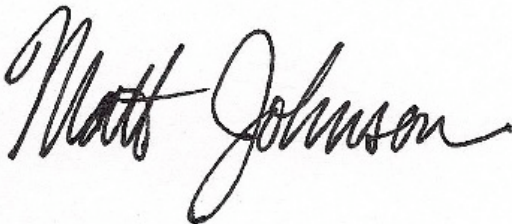
It is important to understand the history of music in the context of the wider historical events and trends. Therefore every effort will be made to connect the musical studies to the developments and historical figures one is familiar with from prior, wider knowledge of history.

The course uses concepts of the structures of music (such as interval, scale, tempo) to clarify the feeling and style of the music. However no prior musical knowledge is assumed. The concepts are explained from the ground up and illustrated in a basic manner to make the meaning clear.

The outline below gives an indication of the topics to be covered. The precise content and progression will be determined by what suits, and is interesting to, the class. Therefore some deviation from the initial plan will be appropriate and necessary. Some topics will require further elaboration, while others may have to be trimmed or even eliminated to allow for more important things.

I look forward to exploring the substance of the West's music over time with you--to learning a lot and enjoying the passions and sentiments mankind has expressed in this form of art.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".

Matthew Zachary Johnson

## Course Outline

### The Periods of Western Music History

**Greece:** what kind of music expresses manliness? (weeks 1-3)

- Pythagoras
- The concept of *ethos*
- Apollo vs. Dionysus
- Plato's Mind-Body Dichotomy
- Aristoxenus: summary of Greek musical thought
- Roman Music

**Medieval Europe:** duty of self-denial in service to Heaven (week 4)

- Christ
- Augustine
- Pope Gregory the Great
- Gregorian Chant

**Renaissance:** the rediscovery of sensuality (weeks 5-8)

- The birth of polyphony:
  - Charlemagne
  - *Musica Enchiriadis*
  - Guido of Arezzo: solfege, the development of music notation
- Further development of polyphony:
  - The Notre Dame School
  - The Ars Nova
  - The Burgundian School
- Tonality:
  - Gioseffo Zarlino
  - Composers of the 1500s, especially Palestrina

**The High Renaissance & Baroque:** appeal to the common man, inspire awe (wks 9-11)

- The harmonic way of thinking:
  - The homophonic ideal replaces the polyphonic
  - Monteverdi
  - Basso Continuo
  - The Florentine Camerata & the birth of opera
  - Martin Luther & congregational chorales
  - The Council of Trent--homophony in the Catholic Church
- The rise of instrumental technique:
  - Bach

- Handel
- Vivaldi

**Enlightenment/the “Classical” Period:** formal elegance and rational clarity (wks 12-14)

- “Primacy of Chord” overtakes “Primacy of Line”:
  - Sauveur & the overtone series
  - Jean Pilippe Rameau’s *Treatise on Harmony*
- Fux systematizes the art of counterpoint
- Haydn settles the large-scale musical forms:
  - Sonata Form
  - Rondo Form
- Mozart

**Romanticism:** enlightenment infused with passion (weeks 15-17)

- The Development of Romanticism:
  - Beethoven - revolutionary expansion of the scope of self-expression
  - Schubert - melodic lyricism
  - Chopin - richness of harmony
  - Brahms - the “classical romantic”
  - Schumann, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff
- Subjective Romanticism:
  - Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, Debussy & Impressionism
- Heinrich Schenker - understanding musical cognition

**Modern Era:** the destruction of civilized values (weeks 18-20)

- Formalism:
    - Kant
    - Hanslick
  - Primitivism & Madness:
    - Stravinsky
    - Schoenberg (atonality, the “liberation of the dissonance”)
    - Berg’s *Wozzeck*
  - African Influences mix with European:
    - Ragtime (& syncopation)
    - Jazz (& swing rhythm)
    - Blues
    - Gershwin
  - Lowbrow Rebellion
    - Chuck Berry “Roll over Beethoven”
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**Course Resources:**

*Naxos Library of Recorded Music* -- online database of audio recordings

*Dancing with the Muses: A Historical Approach to Basic Concepts of Music*

by M. Zachary Johnson (to be available in print and e-book formats)

Various other internet resources

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Composer **M. Zachary Johnson** teaches in the Preparatory Division of Mannes College the New School for Music. His new book, *Dancing with the Muses: A Historical Approach to Basic Concepts of Music*, grows out of teaching materials he created. It uses stories from history to show the origin and meaning of elementary concepts such as interval, scale and tempo. Johnson has also lectured frequently at colleges and universities, and for community groups, on topics in the history and philosophy of music.

Johnson is the founder and director of the MZJ Ensemble, a hybrid wind-ensemble and chamber orchestra based in New York which performs his compositions. The Ensemble is funded by its listeners through the New York Foundation for the Arts. Its concerts are lecture-performances in which the composer discusses the music and players provide examples.

Johnson's music has received ASCAPPlus awards for several years. His music has been described as "the first serious Romantic music to be produced by a composer who is part, not of the 19th-century past, but of the 21st-century future." According to About.com classical guide Aaron Green, "If this is the direction classical music is heading, well, I'd say the future will be full of wonderful music."

[www.MZacharyJohnson.com](http://www.MZacharyJohnson.com)