

Thoughts on Summer Listening Excerpts

It is my hope that these pieces bring some combination of fulfillment, enjoyment, and discomfort, and that the succeeding notes enhance your experience should you wish to read them. Please note that this list is not intended to be representative; far from it, for I, nor anyone else could not hope to cover all of western music with only twelve selections. I am also aware that this list betrays some of my own biases as a listener, known and unknown. However, I hope that these pieces will introduce you to new works or artists, or will be new recordings of pieces that you might know quite well. I look forward to reading your thoughts on these pieces throughout the summer, and discussing them in depth this autumn.

Yours in the summer spirit,

Mr. Uhl

1. Bedrich Smetana: "The Moldau" from *Ma Vlast* (My Country). This is the second of Smetana's six symphonic poems that depict different legends and geographical features of the Czech Republic. The Moldau is a river that flows through the countryside and ends in the city of Prague. The river emerges from two separate springs which later converge. Multiple dance rhythms punctuate the second main section of the piece, followed by a more serene section that evokes a nocturnal feeling. Intense dissonance represents the river going through the St. John's Rapids. Thereafter, the river passes through hunting country before reaching Prague. The rollicking 6/8 eventually turns into a regal hymn reminiscent of Czech royalty.
2. Run DMC: "It's Like That". This cut is the group's debut single, released in 1983. Run DMC inspired much of the next generations' hip-hop artists. "It's Like That" addresses many socio-economic themes featuring a very direct tone with which the group addresses the listener. The call to abandon prejudice is directly linked to the aforementioned problems. Musically, the ends of phrases are punctuated by synth and drum hits which is in contrast to the bulk of the song, which is performed over a steady groove.
3. John Coltrane Quartet: "Psalm" from *A Love Supreme*. *A Love Supreme* marks an important part of Coltrane's career; it is his response to the Divine Presence to which he attributes aiding him in overcoming his addiction to narcotics. He is joined on this album by McCoy Tyner, Percy Heath, and Elvin

Jones on piano, bass, and drums respectively. The melodic arc of the song follows the trajectory of a poem that Coltrane wrote in the albums' liner notes:

I will do all I can to be worthy of Thee, O Lord. It all has to do with it. Thank You God.

Peace. There is none other. God is. It is so beautiful. Thank You God.

God is all. Help us to resolve our fears and weaknesses. In you all things are possible. Thank you God.

We know. God made us so. Keep your eye on God. God is. He always was. He always will be.

No matter what... it is God. He is gracious and merciful. It is most important that I know Thee.

Words, sounds, speech, men, memory, thoughts, fears and emotions--time--all related...all made from one... all made in one.

Blessed be his name. Thought waves--heat waves--all vibrations--all paths lead to God. Thank you God.

His way... it is so lovely... it is gracious. It is merciful--Thank you God. One thought can produce millions of vibrations and they all go back to God... everything does.

Thank you God. Have no fear... believe... Thank you God. The universe has many wonders. God is all.

His way... it is so wonderful. Thoughts--deeds--vibrations, all go back to God and He cleanses all.

He is gracious and merciful... Thank you God. Glory to God... God is so alive. God is. God loves.

May I be acceptable in Thy sight.

We are all one in His grace. The fact that we do exist is acknowledgement of Thee, O Lord. Thank you God.

God will wash away all our tears... He always has... He always will.

Seek him everyday. In all ways seek God everyday. Let us sing all songs to God.

To whom all praise is due... praise God.

No road is an easy one, but they all go back to God.

With all we share God. It is all with God. It is all with Thee.

Obey the Lord. Blessed is He.

We are all from one thing... the will of God... Thank you God.

--I have seen ungodly--none can be greater--none can compare Thank you God.

He will remake... He always has and He always will. It's true--blessed be His name--Thank you God.

God breathes through us so completely... so gently we hardly feel it... yet ,it is our everything.

Thank you God.

ELATION--ELEGANCE--EXALTATION--All from God.

Thank you God. Amen.

John William Coltrane (1923-1967)

4. Herbert Howells: Te Deum. Howells is arguably the epitome of Anglican choral music. His music draws from his predecessors, including Stanford, Warlock, Finzi, and Vaughan Williams. These composers developed an extensive harmonic vocabulary. Note how musical changes reflect the changes in the text:

We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee; the Father everlasting.
To thee all angels cry aloud' the Heavens and all the powers therein.
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy; Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee;
The Father of an infinite Majesty;
Thing honourable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory: O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou took'st upon thee to deliver man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin's
womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: thou didst open the
Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the Glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants: whom thou hast redeemed with thy
precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy Saints: in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine heritage.
Govern them: and lift them up for e'er.
Day by day we magnify thee;
And we worship thy Name ever, world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

5. Macklemore: "White Privilege" from The Language of My World. This is one of many examples in which Macklemore grapples with issues of race and cultural identity. From the onset of the song, his discomfort is reflected in the descending chromatic horn ostinato. Inevitably, one needs to address the

existence of cultural appropriation, as well as the relationship of one's ethnicity to the music that they write, perform, or produce.

6. Benjamin Britten: "Sanctus" from War Requiem Op. 66. In 1961, The British government commissioned Britten to write a work for the consecration of Coventry Cathedral which was scheduled for July 1963. The Cathedral had been bombed to ashes by German forces during World War II before being reconstructed by the English. This was a challenging task for Britten, who identified as a pacifist. In this work, he juxtaposes poetry written by World War I soldier Wilfred Owen with the Latin Mass for the Dead. The sections from the Latin Mass are sung by the soprano, full chorus, and full orchestra, while Owen's poetry is set to tenor and baritone soloists, boys choir, organ, and chamber orchestra. The interval of a tritone unifies the work, appearing at key points throughout the piece. Musically, this is indicative of instability and conflict.
7. Miles Davis Quintet: "Airegin" from Cookin' with the Miles Davis Quintet. "Airegin", or "Nigeria" spelled backwards, is a jazz standard composed by Sonny Rollins, one of the great tenor players. In be-bop tunes such as "Airegin", melodic angularity is one of the features, both during the head, and during the solos. Both Rollins and Davis were inspired by alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, one of the first be-bop players. In fact, early in his career, Davis did collaborate with Charlie Parker, who was in his twilight years. After the head is played, each member improvises over the harmonic structure of the tune. Then, the song concludes with a final restatement of the melody. This is, if you will, the jazz version of the classical "theme and variations" formula.
8. Giuseppe Verdi: "Si, pel ciel marmoreo guiro" from Othello. Verdi, one of the great composers of Italian grand opera, intended to retire after the successful premiere of Aida. However, he entered in a deep depression before a friend recommended that he read Shakespeare. He then decided to set Othello. In this scene, Othello, prompted by the villainous Iago, swears vengeance on Cassio and Desdemona.
9. Jimi Hendrix: "Hear My Train a 'Comin". This cut features Hendrix' virtuosic guitar playing and his earthy, direct voice. The song serves as a platform to display the incredible musicianship in Hendrix' group. Thanks to musicological research, previously unissued studio recordings, such as this excerpt, are becoming more readily available. He was obsessed with Elvis and other early rock and roll musicians, but could not afford a guitar until he was fifteen. After being discharged from the military, he played in clubs while working minimum-wage jobs until he got his break. His commercial career lasted only four years, and was truncated because of the drug overdose that ended his life.
10. Count Basie Orchestra: "Moten Swing" from Chairman of the Board. Basie is one of those players that have a very natural sense of groove. After getting their start playing in clubs in Kansas City, Missouri, his orchestra toured United States, and eventually, the world. Part of the aforementioned groove is the sense of swing that feels as if it is on the back end of the beat. It is an elusively subtle trait. Part of the Count's subtlety is the sparseness of his playing; it never feels too busy. This coupled with intricate writing for his horn section.

11. Ludwig van Beethoven: I. Allegro con brio from String Quartet No. 1 in F Major Op. 18 No. 1. This work is Beethoven's first foray into a genre with which he would make earth-shattering marks. Early in his career, he studied with Haydn, the first composer to write for what we identify as the standard string quartet (2 violins, 1 viola, and 1 cello). This movement is in Sonata-form, meaning that there is a section in which the main body of musical material is introduced (exposition) followed by a section where it is developed (development) ending with a restatement of the first section (recapitulation). In the recapitulation, the music is adjusted so that the piece ends in the key in which it started. Each of these three larger sections has subsections which define it and serve as structural points. Beethoven developed the ability to develop a small motif and turn it on its head. One of the most incredible aspects of this piece is that the opening statement is so muscular, and is followed so shortly thereafter by some of the most gentle and flowing music that Beethoven composed.
12. Billie Holliday: Strange Fruit. Anything that I would write about this piece is paltry and insufficient, so I will let it speak for itself.