

Music, Pandemics, and History

Taught by Cynthia Cyrus, musicandpandemics@gmail.com
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)

Winter Term, 2022
Mondays, 10:00-11:15

February 7:

MUSIC OF LOSS, CONFLICT, AND RAGE

Remaining classes: February 14, 21



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CAVEAT:

Inclusion does not mean endorsement.

Messages can be for good or for ill.



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Loss... “Tera Mujhse Hai Pehle Ka Naata Koi”

We probably knew
each other
before this life.
You don't just like a
person for no
reason.
Whether you are
aware of it or not.
Whether you believe
it or not.
Look, don't get lost
now
Don't ever get
separated from
me...
Whether I live or
die.
At least you lived a
happy life.



**"This is for
you mom"**



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Loss...

An assessment of 125 Concert cancellations

Blame: THEY cancelled

Concerns about wellbeing

Financial losses

blame



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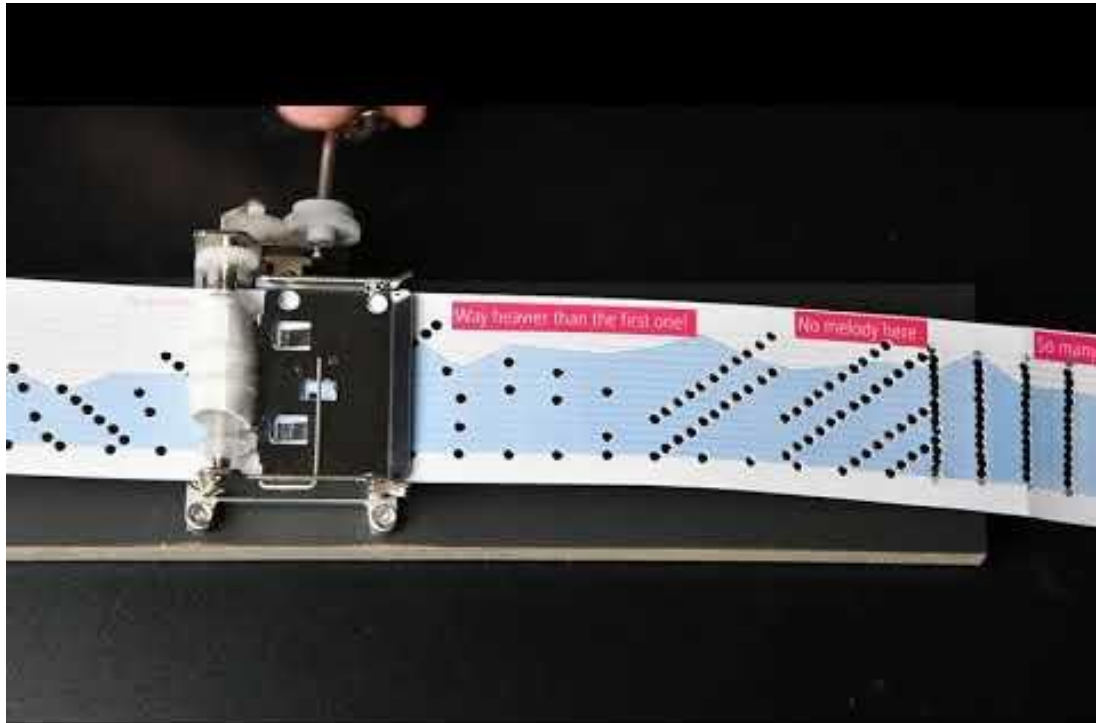


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Loss: “A song of crown and tears” – visualizing deaths in Switzerland

Swiss
Journalist
Simon
Huweiler:

“It’s an instrument for children, so it’s very innocent in some way... when you combine this innocent instrument and the heavy



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3 Million dead... (April 17, 2021)

South China Morning Post report – instrumentals only, first 1/3 of report



**GLOBAL COVID-19 DEATHS
HIT THREE MILLION**

“There are
no words”



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Now?

28-Day Deaths
243,178

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

2/5/2022



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Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, “A Crack in the Hourglass,” (anti-monument, Brooklyn Museum)

How do we memorialize and visualize the immense losses of Covid?
How do we account for the way this pandemic has halted rituals of mourning and emptied public spaces around the world?

participatory

transitory

ongoing



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interlude for mourning

...slows down the flow
of information by
methodically translating
a digital image into
grains of sand...

...gravity slowly wipes the
image away



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Ebola tribute (2015)



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Trailing off into conspiracy-thinking: PutnamPig, “Swine Flu Song,” April 30, 2009

1918:
Spanish flu

1957:
Asian flu

1968:
Hong Kong
flu

1976:
Swine flu

2009:
Swine flu



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Contradicting public health messaging

< Oscar Nowak, July 30, 2020



^ Media Bear, Aug 4, 2020



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Eric Clapton, "This Has Gotta Stop," Aug 2021



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SECTIONS

CITIES



InsideHook

MUSIC | AUGUST 27, 2021 4:52 PM

Eric Clapton Debuted “This Has Gotta Stop.” Yes, It’s About Vaccines.

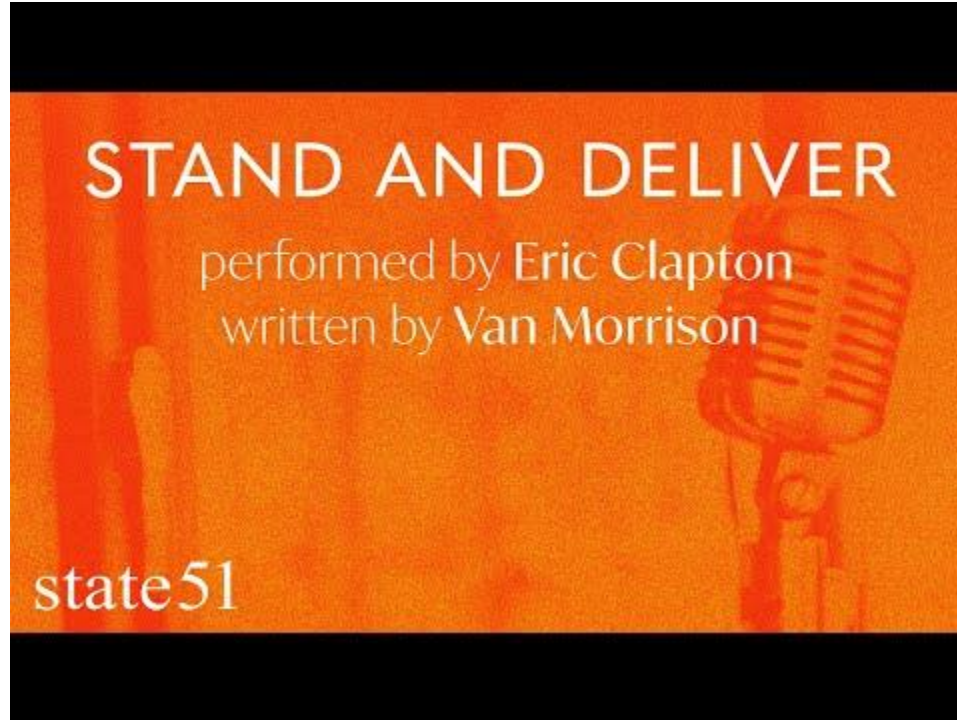
It also has something to do with climate change



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Or “Stand and Deliver” (Dec 2020)

“Do you wanna
be a free man /
Or do you wanna
be a slave? / Do
you wanna wear
these chains /
Until you’re lying
in the grave?”



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Spotify Is Removing Neil Young Songs After He Complains of ‘Misinformation’



Joni Mitchell joins Neil Young in protest against Spotify

January 29, 2022 · 11:45 AM ET



Failure

Beyond the moral issues raised by Spotify’s COVID decision, the issue of vaccine misinformation and how it directly affects the current situation in the live music space is simply untenable. Right now, Failure have a 31-date US tour booked for June. The last tour we had booked in 2019 was canceled because of COVID, which was a massive financial blow to the band. The



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Plague as narrative: “The Great Mortality” by the Apocalypse Orchestra, Dec 2017



THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
PYRE
FLAGELLANTS' SONG
EXHALE
THEATRE OF WAR
THE GREAT MORTALITY
TO EMBARK
HERE BE MONSTERS



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APOCALYPSE ORCHESTRA



THE END IS NIGH



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Plague as narrative: “Pestarzt” (Dec 2019)



Or the role-creating multi-author collaborative

SCP-049 (PLAGUE DOCTOR) SONG



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Or take “Evisceration Plague...”

Experimental pathogens, a devils design
The dark side of science breeds a weapon of war
Contagious killing and internal distress
Homicide or suicide will be the cause of death...



(And those are the
cheery bits of the lyrics)



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Cathartic disaffection: The Residents with Black Francis: “Die! Die! Die!” (May 2020)

“You know, it’s been a while since I’ve recorded something so frantic and angry-sounding.”

– Black Francis



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Corigliano, Symphony No. 1

I. Apologue. Of Rage and
*Remembrance**

II. Tarantella

III. Chaconne. Giulio's Song

IV. Epilogue



** I tried, but "remembrance" wouldn't balance – too quiet to hear – I recommend the recording!*

Rage, pt 1



Rage, pt 2



A bit of "tarantella"



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Diamanda Galás



“Sometimes people say,
“Your work is so angry; it’s
not sentimental. And your
own brother -- “ and I say,
“My brother *despised*
cheap sentiment.”



Galás - excerpts from *Plague Mass*

Mvt 1: There are no more tickets to the funeral

Mvt 2: This Is The Law Of The Plague



- *Ululation*
- *Glossolalia*
- *3 ½ octave voice*



Diamanda Galás interview (.44 to 3.21)

<https://youtu.be/G24qNvaUI2I?t=44>



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Diamanda Galás

“Rock music... was supposed to be incendiary... if we cannot be part of this activism, then rock music is completely worthless...”



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Bibliography

Music Box data visualization (supplemental interview): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etypk4mP1NQ>

Kilbourne, “Influenza Pandemics of the 20th c”: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3291411/>

Eric Clapton / Van Morrison:

- https://www.insidehook.com/daily_brief/music/eric-clapton-song-has-gotta-stop
- <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/eric-clapton-new-song-this-has-gotta-stop-1217935/>
- <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/eric-clapton-covid-19-song-this-has-gotta-stop-video-9621610/>
- <https://www.billboard.com/music/rock/van-morrison-eric-clapton-stand-and-deliver-9503027/>

Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Graham Nash, Failure and Nils Lofgren

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/26/arts/music/spotify-neil-young-joe-rogan.html>
- <https://www.billboard.com/lists/musicians-who-left-spotify-neil-young-removed-music/>
- <https://fortune.com/2022/02/03/spotify-boycott-neil-young-joni-mitchell-nils-lofgren-india-arie-mary-trump-joe-rogan-experience-vaccines-race/>

Corigliano:

- Elizabeth Bergmann, “Of Rage and Remembrance, Music and Memory: The Work of Mourning in John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 and Choral Chaconne,” *American Music* 31 (2013): 340-361
- Composers in Crisis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fwx7ojuQwKc>

Diamanda Galas

- Andrea Juno and V. Vale, “Diamanda Galas,” in *Angry Women* (San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, 1991), pp. 7-22.
- Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope, “Screaming Divas: Collaboration as Feminist Practice,” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 259-270



Questions,
Observations,
Discussion?



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