



Rencontres

Brittany J. Green

Classroom Listening Module

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Let's begin by defining our terms:

What comes to mind when you hear the word “contemporary?”

Can our knowledge of music help us to figure out its meaning?

con-tempo-rary we know that **tempo** means “time.”

Webster's Dictionary says it can be an **adjective** meaning “happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time,” or a **noun** meaning “a person of the same or nearly the same age as another.”

DISCUSSION



What is YOUR definition of a contemporary composer?

Use this space to write your ensemble's definition
of a contemporary composer:

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

A contemporary composer is someone *living* who is *writing music today*.



Can you name any contemporary composers?

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

One great example is **Brittany J. Green**, our featured composer. We'll be learning a piece of her music titled, *Rencontres*.



WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Where are some of the places you're likely to encounter the music of a living composer? Let's hear your ideas, then click to see examples!



THE COMPOSER of RENCONTRES

is Brittany J. Green



Finding a creative spark:

Brittany J. Green draws inspiration from a number of musical genres, especially as they relate to her experiences as a Black woman. She grew up listening to Gospel, R&B, and Western classical music. She finds particular inspiration in other Black genres like Afrobeat, Dancehall, and Soca.



What's a type of music that reminds you of who you are? What's a genre from your culture?

THE COMPOSER of

RENCONTRES

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In the words of our composer:

*“How do we find inspiration when every interaction is planned? When the space to crash into new ideas feels so small? What does it mean to reimagine that which surrounds us and feels familiar? I found myself returning to these questions both in life and in music, which inspired me to write the orchestral version of Rencontres. Rencontres draws influence from the feelings chance encounters evoke- **questioning, wonder, intrigue, and openness.**”*

THE IDEA

behind the composition of RENCONTRES



Remembering the past:

One of Brittany's favorite elements of genres like R&B, Rap, and Dancehall is the use of **sampling**-the practice of taking a **pre-existing** musical idea — a melody, a rhythm, a chord progression, a sound — and reimagining it in multiple ways in a new piece of music. Brittany loves the way that sampling and remixing can be used as a callback to evoke a memory or experience of the past.



Can you think of a sound that has been reimagined through sampling?

THE IDEA behind the composition of RENCONTRES

Sampling creates the opportunity to explore new ways of developing material using the same musical idea. Let's look at an example:

"Didn't I" — Darondo (1:26-1:50)

Released in 1972 as part of his album "Let My People Go." Darondo was a singer-songwriter known for his unique blend of soul, funk, and R&B. "Didn't I" reflects the soul music scene of the 1970's, characterized smooth vocals, lush instrumentation, and emotionally resonant lyrics.



"Doo Wop (That Thing) Instrumental — Lauryn Hill (1:25-1:36)

"Doo Wop (That Thing)" by Lauryn Hill is a landmark hip-hop and R&B track released in 1998 as part of her debut solo album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill." The song blends doo-wop, rap, and soul, showcasing Hill's versatile talents as a singer, rapper, and lyricist.



THE IDEA

behind the composition of RENCONTRES

How was *Didn't I* reimagined in *Doo Wop*?

These samples may sound completely different, but they actually are using the **same musical material**, just altering and adapting it to make something different. In the first clip *Didn't I* there is a repeated guitar part, starting from a high chord and moving down two times. We could imagine that it looks like this:



Notice how *Doo Wop* increases the speed of this guitar line, adds rich brass instruments to accompany the guitar, and changes the rhythm to be punchier and faster. Now, it looks something like this:



The lines are **larger** to represent more instruments on a part, and first part of the phrase moves faster, which is why it is represented as shorter than the first light pink line. Below is how the rhythm is notated from *Didn't I* to *Do Wop*.

A musical notation diagram enclosed in a box. On the left, under the label 'Original', is a 4/4 time signature and a musical staff with a treble clef. The staff contains a half note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note. A red arrow points from this staff to the right. On the right, under the label 'Sample', is a 4/4 time signature and a musical staff with a treble clef. The staff contains a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note. The 'Sample' staff is shorter than the 'Original' staff, indicating a faster tempo.

THE IDEA

behind the composition of RENCONTRES

In the words of our composer:

“Sampling can be used to evoke memory, but also to reimagine musical material by developing it in new ways, like changing the tempo, pitch, or instrumentation, making slight rhythmic and melodic changes, or playing with foreground and background”

DISCUSSION



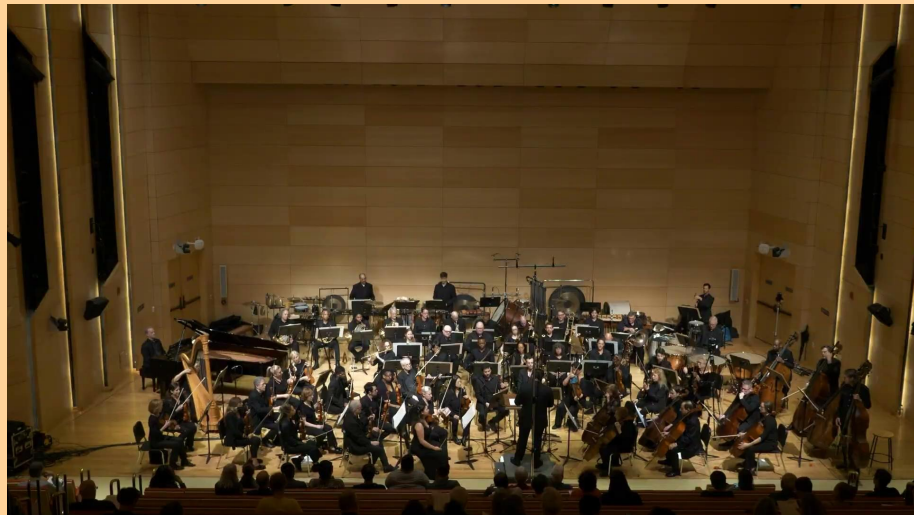
Why might a *sample* evoke memory? Do you have music that brings up memories for you. What would happen if you changed the sound ever so slightly. Would your memories change?

Turning the **IDEA** into **SOUND**

Sampling? With an Orchestra?

Typically, we think of sampling as a process that is done **digitally** - something created on the computer or using a recording device. But in *Rencontres* the 'sample' is performed **live**, passed around from instrument to instrument.

Can you hear the sample passed around in this clip?



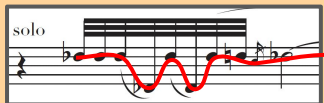
Turning the **SOUND** into **MUSIC**

Where does a sample go?

In this section you heard this musical idea passed around by different instruments to create a **sampled effect**. Let's take a moment to map out how that works, to see how Brittany Green created music out of an idea!



For now, let's look at the **contour** of the musical line. Don't feel pressure to know what the musical idea means, just focus on the contour as shown by the red squiggle



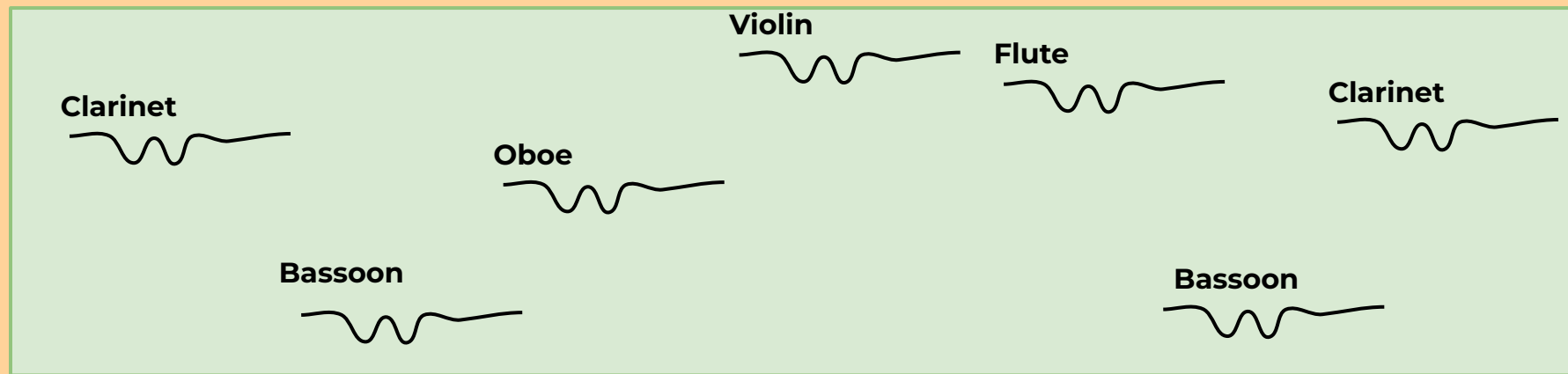
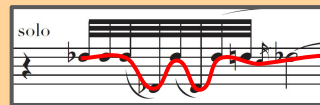
Now we can use this shape to map out the piece!



Turning the **SOUND** into **MUSIC**

Mapping the sample

Let's follow the sample to see where it goes!



DISCUSSION



Now [listen](#) to the same section again while looking at your sampling map. Observe the supporting instruments as well as the sampled gestures while considering our composers words:

*“Rencontres plays with **brevity**, **tension**, and **euphoria** to evoke the feelings of chance encounters. The piece juxtaposes expressive **ornamental** gestures, and **lush**, resonant chords with **disjunct rhythms**, **dissonant harmonies**, and **aggressive textures**. These contrasting elements often find themselves giving in to and growing out of each other, representing a constant state of uncertainty.”*

Identify and describe all of the elements you heard or experienced. Say why you think these musical moments evoked these feelings.

ACTIVITY

Finding meaning in musical definitions:

Let's explore how the way we think about certain words might translate into a musical idea. Then we can create a **library** of musical ideas that are unique to your class.

The following list is a group of words, intentionally chosen by our composer to describe feelings evoked in her piece. Let's play with them.

Separate into 8 small groups, and have each group pick a word:

Brief, Tense, Euphoric, Ornamental, Lush, Disjunct, Dissonant, Aggressive

Take 2 minutes to see if your group can come up with a short sound that represents your chosen word. This sound could be hummed, spoken, whispered, sung, clapped, stomped or created in any way that is easy and replicable. If you need to, look up the definition of that word. When two minutes is up, share your musical ideas with the class. Have one student in the class write down each word and describe its corresponding sound, and how it was made, to develop your class's **library**.

ACTIVITY

Using the 6 boxes on the next page, **draw** a shape, image or line, that represents the sound for each sample. It doesn't need to look perfect, but needs to help us remember what that sound is like. Once you have all the boxes filled in with a drawing, choose a student leader to play conductor. The conductor will decide which sound happens first, and lead the rest of the class through making each sound in whatever order they choose! Conductors should have fun playing with how long or short each sound is or how many times a sound is repeated. Students should listen deeply to each other, trying to sound like one big orchestra rather than many different voices!

Once you've tried this process through with one **student conductor**, pick a new student to try out a completely different order and feel! See what cool combinations your classmates come up with. Try pointing to more than one box at a time!

ACTIVITY



Brief

Tense

Euphoric

Ornamental

Disjunct

Lush

Dissonant

Aggressive

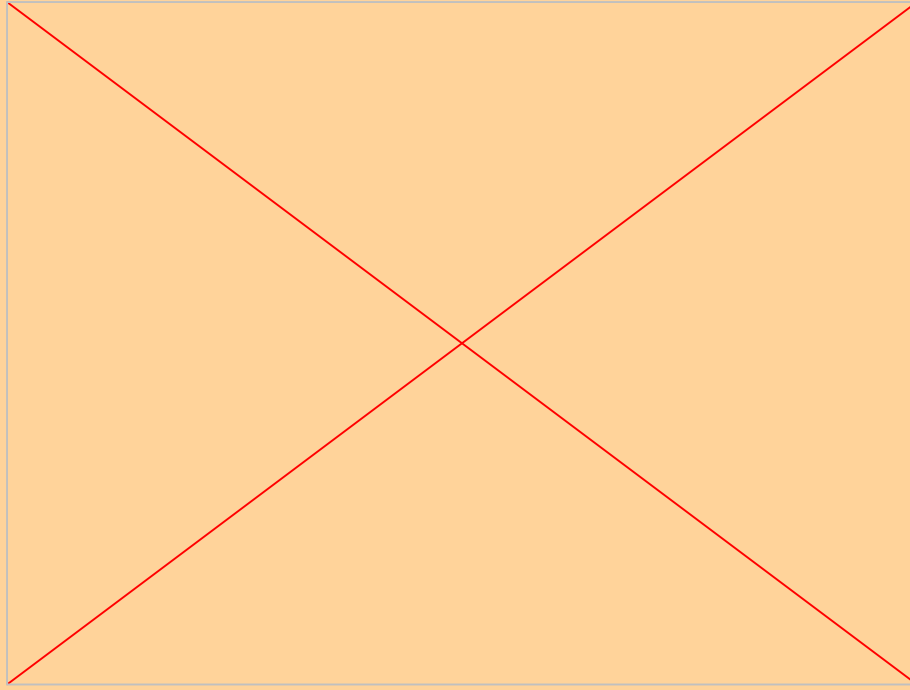
LET'S LISTEN

As *Rencontres* progresses, Green writes style, or expression, markings at certain times in the music. Composers choose these markings (like *furioso* - *with fury*, or *dolce* - *sweetly*) to convey how they would like the musicians to play their piece. As you watch the video on the next slide, listen to see if you can identify where the music changes to reflect these style markings. Can you describe what happened in the music to clue you in to these changes?

Pensive and swelling
Meticulously
A little faster
Mystical
Elusive

As you are listening, put your detective hat on to find moments of **brevity, tension, euphoria**, and music which feels **ornamental, lush, disjunct, dissonant, or aggressive**. How did the composer create these musical moments?

LET'S LISTEN



Thank you for taking this musical
journey with Brittany Green and
Rencontres!



CREDITS

This educational module is produced by the American Composers Orchestra on behalf of and in coordination with EarShot Publishing.

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