

WHAT'S IN A SONG? - MUSIC AND MEMORY

Coordinators: Greg McCaslin, assisted by Howard Seeman

Songs are part of the fabric of life; they shape our moods and trigger memories. In this study group we revel in songs, share them, celebrate them, analyze them and, although singing is not required, sing them. We consider the parts of a song, the different types of songs, the significance of song throughout history, the importance of arrangements, the role/significance of songwriting teams, the power of interpretation, the influence of context, and the musical structure of the songs we discover along the way as well as the songs we already know and love.

Readings and other Materials:

Although the songs comprise the text of the class, the following books, available through the New York Public Library, may be of interest to study group members.

American Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950 by Alec Wilder

Love Songs: The Hidden History by Ted Gioia

Musicophilia by Oliver Sacks

Greg McCaslin was born to a musical family and was a theatre major in college. He spent 15 years as a musical theatre performer and director before getting into arts education as a teacher and administrator. From 2008-2013 Greg was the Education Director at the Roundabout Theatre Company. From 1995-2005, he was an Instructor in the Non-Profit Management Masters Program at Milano here at the New School. **Howard Seeman** is Prof. Emeritus of Educational Psychology, C.U.N.Y. He has played piano since 1947, sometimes professionally. He has been the music counselor in camps, taught elementary music theory and piano lessons privately, and accompanist to singers.

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Group members are asked to submit a list of 10 favorite songs in advance of the first session. With each session, two members are designated to present two songs for consideration as examples of the

session's topic. Songs can be sung (accompaniment available if sheet music is provided) and/or offered on CD, but very extensive use of YouTube during session presentations is expected by group members and coordinators.

Week 1: Course Overview - setting up format of classes which include a brief vocal warmup, song presentation, topic presentation (by coordinator(s) and group members), group discussion and windup.

Week 2: Parts of a Song - presentation and discussion of the characteristics of the week's songs including themes, choruses, refrains, bridges, etc., and how they are employed in various types of song.

Week 3: Music - presentation and discussion of musical forms used in the submissions of the week and how these examples lead naturally to other examples of the same forms.

Week 4: Lyrics

Week 5: Song and Dance

Week 6: Love Songs

Week 7: War/Anti-War Songs

Week 8: Children's Songs/Lullabies

Week 9: Duets

Week 10: Novelty Songs

Week 11: Religious Songs/Spirituals

Week 12: Songs and Memory/Emotion