

# Preproduction & Critical Listening



Technology for Performers

# Review of the Production Process

- Pre-Production
- Recording (Production)
- Post-Production
- Mastering

# Review of the Production Process

- Pre-Production
- Recording (Production)
- Post-Production
- Mastering

# Preproduction

- Maximizing R.O.I.
- Session planning:
  - What material is to be recorded?
  - What are the stylistic/aesthetic goals for the project?
  - Who will the players be?
  - What studio facility or facilities will be used?
  - What is the timeline for the project? Are there deadlines to meet?
  - What is the budget?

# Producer's Role:

- A lot of logistics (both musical and non-musical)
- Budgeting for cost of musicians -> Governed by union agreement
  - This can inform session planning to some degree
- Checking availability of personnel, studio facilities
- Helping to select/evaluate potential repertoire
- Helping to setting aesthetic/stylistic goals
  - Performance approach
  - Recording approach

# Producer's Role:

- A lot of logistics (both musical and non-musical)
- Budgeting for cost of musicians -> Governed by union agreement
  - This can inform session planning to some degree
- Checking availability of personnel, studio facilities
- Helping to select/evaluate potential repertoire
- Helping to setting aesthetic/stylistic goals
  - Performance approach
  - Recording approach

# Recording Approaches

- **Realistic (hands-off)**
  - Minimalist approach
  - Capture a performance as ‘honestly’ as possible
  - Tries to place the listener in the best seat in the house
    - Relies mostly on main mics to capture perspective and natural acoustic
- Classical, some jazz, live recordings



# Recording Approaches

- **Realistic (hands-on)**
  - An *enhanced* version of reality: real enough to fool you until you really start to pick it apart
  - Enhancement can come in the form of EQ, creative use of spot mics, samples, automation
  - Sounds 'expensive'
- Classical, Film Music, Sound Design, Video Games, Nashville Pop



# Recording Approaches

- **Creative**
  - Creating an aesthetic or perspective which is not based on a potential concertgoers experience
  - Elements that may never co-exist in nature or on stage
  - Example: totally different ambiances for different instruments sharing the same stage (Vocal is completely 'dry', snare drum sounds like it's in a cave)
- Less common in classical, very typical in pop

# Mic Placement

- In classical, the norm would be to use a main system to capture most of the sound
  - Usually 2-3 mics (stereo pair or Decca Tree)
  - Based on one of the stereo mic techniques we discussed last semester (or a slight variation of it)
  - For orchestral work, the mains are sometimes supplemented by '**outriggers**', a wider spaced pair placed on either side of the mains to get better coverage on the sides of the orchestra (especially deep in the string sections)

# Mic Placement

- Spot mics are typically set up, but the hope is to only use them as much as needed
- Room mics may be set up further away for ambience, but likely blended in later at a low level
- All of this is to say that when we think about planning ‘the sound’ of a recording we are largely talking about where we will place the main mics - this is what will provide most of the *perspective*
  - Of course this decision will vary from ensemble to ensemble and from room to room, but we can usually come up with a pretty good starting point based on the discussions in preproduction

# Reference Recordings

- It can be useful to have a reference recording (or more than one) going into preproduction
- The reference can be an example of a sound you want to pursue, or one you want to avoid
- Many classical recordings have great liner notes explaining how a project was recorded

# Critical Listening

- Let's listen to some recordings of the same repertoire under different circumstances
- Things to listen for:
  - Distance/Listeners Perspective (how close/far are we? where are we sitting?)
  - Imaging (point source vs. spread - can you 'see' the ensemble?)
  - Environment/ambience (what kind of space are we in?)
  - Reverb (does it sound natural/acoustic?)
  - Spots (can you hear them?)
  - Timbre (overall, or per instrument/section)

Listening time!