025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I
Fall 2010
Gestures

1. Consider the following properties or characteristics of a gesture:
   a. Its duration tends to be between short and long.
   b. A phrase is longer than a gesture and is often initiated by a gesture.
   c. It has clearly projected contour of pitch, density, speed, and rhythm.
   d. Pitch contour often ascends briefly, sits at the apex briefly, then rapidly falls, sometimes hovering around a pitch before falling again; reaching the lowest pitch, sometimes the gesture rise briefly. This pitch contour is invertible and retrogradable.
   e. Density, speed, and rhythm have contours similar to Item 1d, above. But rarely do these parameters move in precise synchronization.
   f. Gestures can use as their models such human motions as using the hands to aid the verbal expression of ideas.
   g. In music, single gestures are often followed by silence. Jazz and blue improvisors used often begin a solo with a gesture followed by silence.
   h. A motive or theme can sometimes be thought of as single gesture, or two or more combined gestures.

2. Consider music that is largely non-gestural:
   a. Minimalism.
   b. Total serialism.
   c. Sound-mass works.
   d. Spectralism.
   e. Baroque and early Classical, as opposed to late Classical and Romantic.
   f. Sometimes Cage, sometimes not.

3. Consider the use of gestures in electronic music:
   a. Since much electronic music does not have a beat, meter, or tempo, nor a harmonic or other pitch-structured language, gesture can be an important way of marking time and phrases, as well as organizing pitch, albeit at the local level.
   b. Gestures can be used to create a sense of life in the music, since they are often associated by the human gestures in Item 1f, above.