

## Writing Assignment - Historical Listening Guide

Music of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Juilliard – Fall 2013

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The purpose of this assignment is to explore a single piece of music in its historical context. You may select any piece of music composed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Your final paper will guide the reader through a single piece, using salient historical, aesthetic, and analytical points in order to inform the way that the reader hears (or performs) your selection. This can take the form of a comprehensive program note, a historically informed musical analysis, or a more abstract argument about your selection.

This listening guide should not be a broad argument about style, genres, or composers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although you may touch on these issues. Rather you will make an argument for a certain way of *listening* to, and potentially performing, a piece of music, informed by your research into the history of the composer, genre, audience, geographical location, etc...

Your final paper may include detailed musical analysis (including score examples/harmonic analysis, etc...) if you find it useful in making your argument, but you should not simply provide a blow by blow account of the music.

### Grading:

This assignment is worth 15% of your total course grade for the semester. However, on the day when you turn in your abstract and bibliography, you may select to increase the weight of the listening guide it up to 25% of your total course grade, thereby reducing the weight of the final examination from 35% to 25%. Students who choose this option will briefly present the findings their paper to the class at the end of the semester (5-10 minutes).

Length: ~1500 words (about six double-spaced pages)

Times New Roman, Double-Spaced, 1" Margins

**Due November 12:** Abstract (150 words) and Bibliography (at least 6 total sources)

**Due December 10:** Final Paper

### Required Sources:

**At least one** non-musical written source contemporaneous with your piece. This could be a novel, a book of poetry, a piece of philosophical or political writing, a newspaper or magazine article, etc...

**At least one** example of contemporaneous music writing relevant to your piece.

**At least one** earlier piece of music that is in some way related to your piece. This could be an important musical precursor, a typical example of a relevant genre, or a piece that exemplifies the complete opposite values of the music you are writing about.

**At least one** piece of non-musical art (painting, sculpture, architecture, set design) contemporaneous with, or otherwise relevant to your piece.

**At least two** secondary sources related to your piece (biographies, academic articles, notes in editions of scores, etc...). Of these, at least one must be a physical rather than an electronic source.

**Some questions to get you started:**

*(By the time you have completed your abstract and bibliography, you should be able to answer most of these questions, whether or not they are significant to the paper that you end up writing.)*

When was my piece composed?

Where was my piece composed?

If there is a text, who wrote it?

What was the composer's living/economic situation at that time?

What was the composer's city like at that time?

What kind was the political situation in (*some place*)?

Who was the probable audience for the piece?

Who were the probable performers?

Where does the piece fall in the composer's output? (*His first lied? Her last character piece for piano? A symphony written directly following an opera?*)

What other music would the composer have been hearing around this time?

What were audiences in (*some place*) listening to around this time?

What is the form of the piece?

What aspects are typical for the style and genre of the period? What aspects are atypical?

What non-musical artists, writers, or artistic movements might have been significant to the composition or reception of this piece?

What is the form of the piece?

Where are the significant musical moments, climaxes, or narrative turns?

**Evaluation:** In grading these assignments I will be looking at the following criteria: thesis, support, use of sources, musical analysis, flow and composition.

**Thesis:** You are guiding the listener through a piece, making an argument that certain information or historically informed ways of thinking, can enhance our listening experience, or the way that we perform a piece.

**Support:** Your argument should be backed up by musical and historical examples reinforcing your ideas.

**Use of Sources:** Your invocation of sources should shed some light on an aspect of the piece, or provide a unique way of thinking about the music, rather than simply providing citations of facts (though you will need some of those as well). All sources must be cited following the guidelines given in chapter 14 of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

**Musical Analysis:** While this assignment is not necessarily a detailed music-theoretical analysis, I expect everyone to bring sophisticated ears to their selections.

**Flow and Composition:** Your listening guide should be clear, organized, and coherent. Not everyone is a poet, but the weight of your argument rests on how clearly you communicate. I am more than happy to look over rough drafts at any point in the process.