

Concert Report #2

DUE Monday, May 5th

Music Humanities Spring 2014

Instructor: Beau Bothwell

The purpose of this assignment is to have you describe a live musical event. You should analyze the music you hear using the themes and concepts discussed in class, focusing on fundamental musical elements and utilizing key terminology.

You can attend any live performance of “classical” music, jazz, new or experimental concert music. If you have a question about whether a certain performance fits the criteria, ask me *before* you go.

Please check the listings to and links of NYC concert venues for ideas of which concert to attend:

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/concert.html>

<http://www.nycjazzrecord.com/> (Download the present month’s PDF, listings are towards the back.)

Also check the “Calendar” link on the course web page.

Keep in mind, a performance is not the same as a recording. I want to hear your description of the music, but I also want to know what was specific about the concert as a performance or event. How many performers were there? What did they do? What kind of choices were they making? I should be able to tell from reading your paper that you were physically in the concert hall or performance space, and not at home listening to something on headphones. The experiences are not the same.

Length: 1000 words (about 4 typed, double-spaced pages).

Due: In class, May 5th. You can turn it in (hard copy) either in class or in my box in Dodge hall room 606. A ticket stub or concert program should be attached to your report.

Grading: In grading these I will be looking at the following criteria: thesis, support, use of musical concepts and terms, flow and composition.

Thesis: Don’t simply list what happened at the concert; you aren’t writing a program. Have an argument and use your description to support that argument. For example: You might trace the thread of an idea as it relates to the series of pieces in a program, you might try to describe exactly how and why a particular few seconds of music were expressive, you might discuss how the concert changed a certain idea you had about some type of music.

Support: If your argument is that the piano accompaniment of a piece at your concert was used to reinforce the meaning of the text, give specific examples of ways that it did so. If your

argument is that the performance was an utter travesty and the performers completely misunderstood the piece, give specific examples of what went wrong.

Musical Terminology: This assignment should be a chance to use musical terminology and concepts from class. Your use of musical terminology should be in the service of your ideas. You don't necessarily have to use every term, or even every term that might correctly apply to the piece, but you should think about things like form, rhythm, melody, harmony, texture etc... Describe the music as closely as you can, but remember that the point of musical analysis is to help you say something *about* the music and what it does, not just to say what it is made of.

For example, this is an accurate, but useless description of a painting: "This painting by Vermeer uses a little bit of yellow, some brown, and a lot of burnt sienna. It is painted on a rectangular canvass about 3' by 6'. It employs perspective, shading, and signification. It is very old, and the style it employs is correspondingly old."

Don't do this to a piece of music. I want to hear all about the color, size and shape of a piece, but tell me why that stuff means something.

Flow and Composition: Your report should be clear, organized, and coherent. Not everyone is a poet, but the weight of your argument rests on how clearly you communicate. Rite gud pleez.

One Caveat: Do not, do not, do not rely on websites or reviews for ideas and interpretations (even if you cite them). If you want to find out a little bit about a piece beforehand, I would encourage doing some listening before you attend a concert, but I really don't care what people outside the class think or wrote about a piece—I want to hear your ideas. I.e., this is not a research paper; it's a music 'n' you paper.

One Last Thing: While it is perfectly alright if you don't like a performance, and everyone can't (and shouldn't) like everything, you should *try* to enjoy yourself at this concert. One good exercise is to look around the audience, find someone who is enjoying the music, and ask yourself "What are they hearing that I'm not? What are they listening for that I'm not listening for?" If the music isn't immediately pleasing to you, can you understand intellectually what someone else might value in it?

Hopefully you guys will have a good time though. After all, we get to listen to music for homework. Life ain't too bad.