

Concert Report Guidelines

You are encouraged to take a small steno or other some sort of pad of paper and a pencil to the concert to make brief notes. Do not write your report during the concert or become so consumed with making notes that you don't listen to or enjoy the concert.

Your name

The name of the ensemble and/or soloist(s) performing

Date & Location of the concert

List of pieces performed (composer, title, opus number or other identifying number where applicable)

Your report will contain three sections for each piece: (1) an Identification of the work and Historical Context; (2) an Objective Description; (3) a Subjective Reaction. The report will conclude with an Overall Reaction of the entire concert.

Identification and Historical Context

Identify the work in detail. Include a list of the movements if appropriate (these may be appear as tempo markings such as “allegro con brio,” a title, such as “Morning” or the first line of a vocal work, such as “Credo in unum Deum.”). Give the composer’s dates (in the case of living composers, include his/her year of birth or the date of the composition; in the case of dead composers, the year of the composer’s birth and death); if not already included, include the date of composition (usually given in the program notes). Write a brief description of the composer and the specific piece in the context of the composer’s overall output. This description does not need to be more than a few sentences. You may refer to the program notes for this material or, if no program notes are supplied, check the text, the New Grove Dictionary of Music, or various online sources.

Objective Description

Describe the first piece, as objectively as you can. Describe what you heard. Provide a paragraph for each movement of multi-movement works. Your description should include elements such as melody, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, instrumentation, texture, form, etc. Describe the major musical characteristics of the piece and any moments that were particularly noteworthy. Was there anything unusual about the size of the ensemble (smaller or larger than other pieces)? If there was a soloist or soloists, what was her/his/their interaction with the ensemble like?

Write about each piece and each movement of multi-movement pieces. Devote one paragraph to each movement of multi-movement pieces.

Subjective Reaction

After your description, include a subjective reaction. Your subjective reaction should be one paragraph for the entire piece, regardless of the length or number of movements. Did you like it or not, why? Was there anything that particularly moved you or turned you off? Why? You aren't expected to like everything. There are no deductions for saying you hated a piece of music, soloist, conductor, whatever.

Repeat the process for each piece on the program.

Overall Reaction

At the end of the report, summarize your overall reaction to the concert. Did the performers do a good job? Did they seem to be enjoying what they were doing? In the case of orchestral concerts, who did you perceive the relationship between the conductor and the players to be? Were they communicating with one another or were the players ignoring the conductor (or visa versa)? Which of the pieces did you like the best/least? What did you think about the hall in which the concert was heard? How were the acoustics? What did you perceive the demographics of the audience to be? Did anything surprise you about the concert or the circumstances of your hearing it?

Reports should be 3-5 double-spaced, word-processed, grammar- and spell-checked pages. Please attach the ticket stub. Except for your paragraph identifying the piece and giving a brief historical context, do not refer to the program notes unless you find something in them particularly helpful and applicable – then you may quote a sentence or two to make your own point.

Sample Identification and Historical Context (Beethoven 1st Symphony)

The first piece on the program was the Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). It has four movements:

- I. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
- II. Andante cantabile con moto
- III. Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace
- IV. Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

The symphony was composed in Vienna in 1799-1800 when Beethoven was still a relatively young, unknown composer. Some people refer to the fact that it is modeled on the symphonies of Mozart and Haydn, both important composers to Beethoven, because it is so “Classical” (as opposed to “Romantic”) in nature. Beethoven was known primarily as a virtuoso pianist when he first moved to Vienna but, with pieces like the First Symphony, he became better known as a composer. Later, Beethoven would go on to write much longer and more dramatic symphonies.

Sample Objective Description (1st movement)

The first movement begins with a slow introduction featuring pizzicato strings with the woodwinds having the melody at first. After a while the strings take over and there are countermelodies in the woodwinds. The strings and woodwinds (with brass and timpani) echo one another for a while and then the faster section begins. There’s a lot of dialog between strings and winds leading up to a loud and full section. This section ends and a more lyrical section begins with a lot of solos in the woodwinds. This mood alternates with the more hectic, fuller section. (The following material I would expect from a student in Mu21 or Mu32-36 but not necessarily students in other classes which deal less with musical form). I presume that since this is a symphony, this is the exposition and that it is repeated. It seems like the same large section was repeated (without, of course, the slow introduction). What I think was the development featured a lot of going back and forth between various solo sections. There were a lot of places where the flute played an idea and the same idea was repeated by the bassoon or the oboe. The music seemed unstable and unsettled. Finally, the piece settled back into the couple of main moods of the beginning which I took to be the recapitulation. Near the end, the trumpets and timpani get very excited and loud and bring the piece to a crashing conclusion.

Your notes, taken at the concert, might look as follows. Each entry would only take a few seconds to write down, thus you are not distracted from listening to the music as it progresses.

Beethoven 1st mov’t

slow intro
pizz strings, ww melody
string melody, ww countermelody
dialog, ww/str/brass/timp → faster section (expo?)
fast, lots of str/ww dialog -→ lyrical contrasting section; alternation
repeat?
development? Unstable; bouncing ideas (flute, bassoon etc.)
return to 1st mood (recap?)
big ending w/ trumpets, timp.

Sample Subjective Reaction (1st Symphony)

I thought the symphony was very enjoyable and interesting to listen to. It has a lot of light, sparkling melodies and quite a bit of drama. Compared to other pieces by Beethoven I have heard, I think it is one of the more energetic and interesting maybe because it is less somber or plodding. I was surprised by the slow, kind of strange introduction to the last movement but it made sense once it got going – I think Beethoven was trying to surprise or shock people. I thought the second movement was kind of boring and repetitive. The wind players seemed really enthusiastic about their part but I thought the strings played kind of sloppy sometimes and looked a little bored. Maybe they've played this piece too many times.

Sample Overall Reaction

Overall, I enjoyed the concert. I think the Beethoven Symphony No. 1 was the piece I liked best. As noted above, I really hated the Four Etudes by Evtuhovarimskikhov. The Ravel work had the most interesting use of colors and textures. I found the conductor's gyrations and bouncing around to be distracting. I got the feeling some members of the orchestra were ignoring him. I liked the variety of pieces (the modern piece notwithstanding) and was surprised that I wasn't totally bored by the concert. I was interested in seeing how the players looked at each other and seemed to react to one another (sometimes more than to the conductor). The brass players (which surprisingly included a number of women because I usually think of brass players as men) played very powerfully though sometimes – especially in the Etudes – too loud. The lady behind me with the candy wrapper and older gentleman who occasionally snored were very annoying. It seemed like everyone knew when to applaud. Only two people walked out during the Etudes which surprised me. I probably would have left except I would have had to walk back to campus. I was glad I stayed for the Ravel.