

Concert Report Guidelines

Concert reports are **due no later than 1 week after the concert**. It is important that you write your report within days if not hours of attending the concert so that your memory is fresh and your reactions to the pieces are accurate. Do not delay. Serious penalties will be assigned to reports turned in more than 1 week after the concert.

Note that part 1a under Identification and Historical Context is to be done if at all possible before attending the concert. You should write a brief paragraph for each work on the program.

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 - part 1a. should be done prior to the concert; (2) an Objective Description; (3) a Subjective Reaction. The report will conclude with an Overall Reaction of the entire concert.

Identification and Historical Context

1a. Write a paragraph of about 100 – 200 words describing the composer and the specific piece in the context of the composer's overall output (this will be easier to do with standard repertoire pieces than works by very young or contemporary composers; do your best to understand the context of the piece you are hearing). **Do this part of the assignment before going to the concert.** The LA Phil has online program notes for most pieces. You can also use The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Oxford History of Music in the library, as well as any online source.

1b. 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) and an opus number or some other identifier if one exists.

Objective Description

While you are listening to the music, make note of whether: the music seems logical and in some ways predictable or random; the music is harsh and dissonant or sweet and pleasing; there is a soloist (or soloists) and if so, what he/she/they play; the full orchestra is used a smaller group; the music seems difficult or easy (to play/to understand/to listen to); there are any particularly

interesting or unusual things you notice about the piece. After the concert, transform your notes into complete sentences. This section need only be 75 – 100 words.

Subjective Reaction

After your description, include a subjective reaction. Your subjective reaction should be one paragraph (about 75 – 100 words) 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. **Write this part of your report after not during the concert.** You might want to make a couple of notes during the interval between pieces to aid your memory later.

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 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)

1a. 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

1b. 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 born in Bonn, but as a young man he moved to Vienna, the imperial capital. His childhood was difficult: his mother died when he was a relatively young man and he had an abusive alcoholic father. In Vienna Beethoven was known primarily as a virtuoso pianist when he first moved there, 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 including the “Eroica” and 5th symphonies, both of which are credited with changing the course of music and a great deal of other music. He is considered one of the 2 or 3 greatest composers in the history of music.

Sample Objective Reaction (1st Symphony)

The piece begins very strangely. It stops and starts and seems sort of random for about 30 seconds or so but then settles into a fairly fast-paced first movement. There are a lot of sudden louds and softs. The slow movement isn't really slow; it's sort of dancy and the oboe has a lot of solo lines. The last movement also features a lot of sudden louds and softs. It is very fast. The violins are constantly playing a fast, rising scale that seems to be one of the main ideas of the piece.

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.