

ESSAYS #2 AND 4: CONCERT REPORTS

Essay #2 (4 pp.) is **due** in the second recitation of Week VI (**Mar. 16/17**).

Describe what you saw, heard, and learned in attending two concerts of classical music the first five weeks of the semester. This essay may be revised for a higher grade within ten days of the return of the original essay from your instructor. **The original graded paper must be handed in with the revision.**

Essay #4 (4-6 pp.) is **due** in the second recitation of Week XIII (**May 11/12**).

The topic is similar to that of Essay #2, the discussion of two concerts attended between the midterm and the weekend following Week XII. This essay should show an increase in your ability to handle the components of musical analysis. You are permitted, but not required, to include the concerts from Essay #2 as part of your discussion. For one of the concerts, try to listen in the Music Library to one of the pieces to be performed in advance of the event, to gain familiarity with it; otherwise, choose a piece from the concert and listen to a recording after hearing it live. Could you hear or feel important differences between the live performance and the recording? This essay may **not** be revised.

Keep in mind that right after you attend a program is the best time to write about it.

Types of concerts. The four concerts you attend should vary, but, in general, should reflect the repertory to which you are being introduced in 21M011: e.g., a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert, a string quartet, a choral concert, a piano or vocal recital, a new-music group, etc. You must attend the complete concert and discuss, at least briefly, every piece on the program. At least two concerts should be performances by professionals. One concert of jazz, rock, musical theater, folk, ethnic, or pop may be included **with advance permission from your instructor**. You may **not** write about a concert in which you are performing.

Form and style. The essays should be structured like others for the class, but the tone may be less formal. Write in a descriptive manner, but **do not try to be a music critic**—your “mission” is to shape ideas about these concert experiences into a thoughtful personal essay. Arrange your thoughts in coherent paragraphs (with topic sentences); there should, as always, be a theme and logical argument developed throughout.

Some questions to consider. Three topics and sets of questions are given below. You can use these questions to help you collect your thoughts. In Essay #2, you may concentrate on topics a and b; Essay #4 should emphasize topic c. Again, write some notes about each concert you attend very soon after the event, while it is still fresh in your mind.

- a. Personal experience: How did the concert compare to your other musical experiences? Was the music new to you? Did it make sense? What fascinated you, moved you, or surprised you? Why?
- b. The performance: Where did the concert take place? How did that affect your experience? How many players were there? Were they in close communication with one another? Were they directed by someone? What struck you about the way they represented themselves and the music? Did you like or understand their approaches to the music?
- c. Style and character: Discuss the music that you hear using the vocabulary introduced in class: texture, harmony, rhythm/meter, melody, and form. In what ways did the music compare to pieces studied or performed in 011? Could you detect the style characteristics of the music’s time period, genre, or form? Did the program notes help? What were the music’s most expressive, exciting, or difficult qualities?

BOTH ESSAY #2 AND ESSAY #4 MUST BE SUBMITTED with concert programs and ticket stubs: reports will not be accepted without them. These materials should be enclosed in a pocket folder. Completed Essay #2 must be resubmitted with Essay #4.

TWO ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS: (1) Take notes during the concert on a piece of paper or on the program—but NOT during the actual performance! This is very disturbing to those around you and prevents you from learning by watching and listening. Wait until breaks between pieces or movements to jot down ideas. Then try to write down further ideas within a day or two of the concert, while your memories are still fresh. (2) Use the concerts to learn how various instruments sound and are played. If you don't know what the instruments are, ask a friend or neighbor in the audience.

