



LAFAYETTE CHORAL DEPARTMENT

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Choral Department Portfolio Assignment – Grades 11 and 12

Choose ONE of the following prompts to submit for your portfolio piece this semester. This assignment will be forwarded to your English teacher for inclusion in your portfolio. Please keep this in mind when preparing your assignment.

For each of the following, consider your audience, development of your ideas, organization, appropriate sentence structure, grammar, word choice, and punctuation. Please do more than one draft of this paper. We do not want to see “draft” quality work. Please refine this work prior to turning it in.

Each writing assignment must be turned in with the completed Portfolio Appropriate Writing Cover Sheet attached. (See attached)

This writing assignment is worth 100 points (a significant portion of your grade). Your writing will be scored based upon the Kentucky Holistic Scoring Guide. (See Attached).

Your writing assignment **MUST** be typed, double spaced, in a 12 point, traditional font. This assignment is due: _____.

Option 1:

Write a critical review of a classical music concert you have attended for the choral department newsletter. Include such details as performers, repertoire, venue, quality of performance, descriptor words, memorable moments of the performance. (Hint: You must go to this concert in order to write the review) (Include the printed program from the concert you went to).

Option 2:

Write program notes that could be included in a concert program. Discuss **three** pieces you are singing. Follow the format given. Research the piece, composer, music, text, etc. Include what your sources are on an additional piece of paper. You must use the New Grove Dictionary of music and musicians (available online), <http://www.grovemusic.com> - username: lafayettehs password: music. You may also use other internet resources or books.

Option 3:

Write an article for the choral department newsletter detailing a profession in the arts. Your article should include discussion of important aspects of the job, aptitudes one should have to succeed in this profession, training, salary, places one could become employed, is it competitive, etc? Include a personal reflective paragraph regarding whether you would be well-suited for this career. (Include at least 3 sources and be sure to list them. (In correct bibliographic format)

Good starting points are: <http://www.menc.org/information/infoserv/careersinmusic.htm>
<http://www.berklee.edu/careers/default.html>

Writing Concert Program Notes:

A Guide for UWW Students

by Prof. J. Michael Allsen

January 2004 (revised September 2004)

I've been a program annotator for over twenty years now--primarily for the Madison Symphony Orchestra, but also for many other orchestras and festivals. Nobody told me how to do this, and I have more or less learned "on the gig."

What does a performer get out of writing program notes?

While the main "consumer" of program notes is the concert audience, I have found that writing notes for the works I perform deeply enriches my playing experience. (Though it doesn't necessarily help you play the right notes...) Knowing the historical background certainly affects my "hearing" of the piece, but it is especially important to have studied and written about the musical form of the works I play.

What are program notes?

A good set of program notes will do two essential things:

1) **Give the audience a sense of the work's history.** Traditionally, notes include the facts of a work's creation: the dates of composition and first performance, and where and by whom it was first performed. Some details of composer biography are usually appropriate. If you're dealing with a "big name" composer, you probably don't need to deal with who they are, but rather focus on the composition of that particular piece. If it is a composer who is likely to be unfamiliar to most of the audience, however, it is perfectly appropriate to include a brief biography.

2) **Give the audience a sense of what to expect while hearing the piece.**

As an annotator, I generally try to experience the piece as an interested audience member would: thus I am much more likely to listen to a recording a few times than to study a score. Like a good "tour guide," you point out the overall form of the piece, describe the character of various parts, and point out interesting features along the way

Format, Length, and Style

Actually the two elements given above are a nice general outline for most program notes: start with information on the composer and the history of the piece, and work your way towards the piece itself.

(Mr. Marsh says each note should be two good paragraphs in length.)

It is not necessary to cite authors unless you are using a direct quote, though if I am summarizing a great deal of material from a single book or article, I tend to give the author an informal citation. Keep in mind that you're writing for a group of interested and generally well-educated people (who may not know much about musical terminology) rather than for a bunch of musicians.

Plagiarism

It's just as reprehensible in program annotation as it is in any other form of writing. In this age of endless stuff available on line, there is a real temptation to simply cut and paste material from several online sources, or worse yet, to simply lift someone's program notes and present them as your own. I have caught a few occasions where someone did this to me, and I shudder to think of how many times it's happened without my knowledge. Bear in mind that anytime you do this, you are stealing -- intellectual theft is no different than any other kind. It is taken for granted, however, that program notes are going to be a summary of information from elsewhere in your own words, unless you're using a direct quote. This kind of writing is obviously not held to the same standard of "showing your work" as a research paper, but that doesn't excuse simply ripping off someone else's text and passing it off as your own.

Texts and Translations

I'm pretty fussy about translations of vocal texts. "Singing" translations (i.e., those translations often included under the original text in vocal scores) are generally worthless to an audience member who really wants to make sense of what's being sung. I try to find idiomatic English translations -- that is, translations that convey the sense of the original language without worrying about rhyme or singability. If you're lucky, you'll find a suitable translation in the score, on a liner note, online, or in a reference book. I think that, especially if you will be singing the work you are writing about, you should look very closely at translations, and not be afraid to puzzle out something that is idiomatic, even if it is a language you don't know well. Having the text always enriches my experience as an audience member, even if a singer's English diction is flawless!

Sources

Here are a few suggested sources of information...

The *New Grove* – (LHS Library has this) Your source of first resort. For more obscure composers, this is probably the easiest and most complete source of information. For well-known composers (Mozart, Brahms, etc.) it can be a quick check on dates of composition and first performance, as well as a valuable source for the biographical background on a piece.

Composer biographies Just cruise the ML410's in the Andersen Library! In general, the newer the better. There are also books specifically on the works of major composers. I like the old BBC pocket-size guides and there are the more substantial Cambridge guides to specific works.

Liner notes - You'll of course want to listen to the piece, so take a look at the CD liner notes -- generally somewhat more authoritative than notes you may find at random in an online search.

Notes on the score - Some scores will include quite bit of information about the piece: sometimes a program note by the composer, or an indication of who commissioned the work and when it was first performed. Concert Band repertoire is particularly generous in this respect--with the educational market in mind, band composers often provide quite extensive descriptions.

Online searches - Many orchestras or annotators make program notes available online. Finding them can be hit-or-miss, but I usually have good luck with a [Google](#) search for "Composer - Significant Word from the Title - notes" You may also run across extensive sites devoted to a single composer. Some of these are "fan" sites -- fun reading, but not particularly useful stuff. In other cases, you can find information that is generally authoritative. Important: Though I do quite a bit of my program notes research online these days, I always consult *New Grove* or another authoritative paper source whenever possible as a "fact check."

How to Write A Concert Review

A Student's Guide to Writing a Concert Review

courtesy of Middle Tennessee State University <http://www.mtsu.edu/~sshearon/161crg.html>

The following is an outline of information and writing style that is usually part of a standard concert review:

1. Basic Information

Who, What, Where, and When (and Why, if applicable). Who was performing? What was the event, and (especially) What were the performing media? When and Where was the event held? Why was the event held (any special reason)?

2. Critical Narrative

The review should deal with aspects of the concert that are considered most important or striking. Be sure--always--to concentrate on musical matters, although brief discussions of other aspects of the concert may be included. In the process, talk about the works performed, how they were presented, how well the performers presented the music, and what made the performances effective or ineffective.

The use of first-person narrative is fine. When writing about events that occurred at the concert, use the past tense. (Example: "Although the trombonist was quite good, I thought that she was far too loud to blend well with the others in her section.")

But when writing about a particular musical composition or work of art, use the present tense. (Example: "In Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the fourth movement in C Major seems to serve as a triumphal conclusion to the struggle of the preceding three movements in C Minor.")

Finally, Be Objective! Comparisons of pieces and performers should be avoided unless it is to make an argument regarding Music History or Analysis. Reviews are most effective when they are honest and show that you seriously engaged the music and performance.

3. Style

Compose your review on scrap paper. Feel free to take notes during the performance. The final version should be done on a computer.

4. Length

At least one full page in length, 12 point font, double spaced.

Prepared by Frank Horvat, ORMTA Central Toronto Branch Member.

For more information, please contact us at info@ormtatoronto.org

PORTFOLIO-APPROPRIATE WRITING

(Please have students complete this form and attach it to any portfolio-appropriate writing. Then collect the pieces and deliver them to the students' English teachers. The English teachers will keep the work on file in the students' working folders. All pieces submitted for this purpose should have been evaluated by the content area teacher as part of the students' grades for that course.)

Date _____

Student's Name _____

English Teacher _____

Content Area Class in which this piece was written _____ **Chorus** _____

Content Area Teacher _____ **Marsh/Graham** _____

Title of Piece _____

Type of Writing (Check One.)

_____ Personal Expressive (Personal narrative, personal essay, memoir)

_____ Literary (Short story, Poem, Play)

_____ Transactive (Various authentic genres)

Audience for this writing (specify) _____

Purpose for this writing (specify) _____

_____ This assignment was not turned in to the content area teacher.
(If a student does not submit the assignment, please check this space and send this sheet to the students' English teacher to be kept on file)