

**Tarantino: Music Humanities
Spring 2013
“Concert Report” Assignment
Due Date: March 24**

Please write a two-three page report comparing and contrasting two similar concert experiences. In your response you should engage with what it means to “curate” an evening of music.

A concert is, after all, an experience of music – generally performed live – whose individual components have been selected and juxtaposed for one reason or the other. Concerts are programmed by people: people who live and work within a certain cultural surround and who have certain sensibilities and viewpoints as to what constitutes a proper concert event. Your goal in this paper is to engage with the idea of the concert as organized by the presenter; not with the individual works presented per se. Is the concert presenter taking a particular aesthetic stance in the selection of work? Is it a single sheltered expression of a particular sensibility? If so, what sensibility? How does the selected work reflect that sensibility? Is it an accurate map of our shared musical territory? What forces contributed to the juxtaposition and ordering of musical works? Why was piece *x* selected to be performed from the thousands of equally valid compositions?

Please have an opinion. Be polemical.

Please also remember to present your evidence before making judgments. As Hayakawa writes in “Language in Thought and Action”

“A judgment (“He is a fine boy,” “It was a beautiful service,” “Baseball is a healthful sport,” “She is an awful bore”) is a conclusion, summing up a large number of previously observed facts. The reader is probably familiar with the fact that students almost always have difficulty in writing themes of the required length because their ideas give out after a paragraph or two. The reason for this is that those early paragraphs contain so many judgments that there is little left to be said. When the conclusions are carefully excluded, however, and observed facts are given instead, there is never any trouble about the length of papers; in fact, they tend to become too long, since inexperienced writers, when told to give facts, often give far more than are necessary, because they lack discrimination between the important and the trivial.”

Guidelines for Concert Selection

- A concert, as defined by Music Humanities legend Ian Bent, is “an occasion at which Western classical music is performed in public by professional musicians. The definition ... excludes ballet, musical shows, or other theatrical presentations in which music plays a subordinate role.” No opera, sorry.
- Both concerts should be of similar musical genres. That is, do not attempt to compare a classical string quartet concert with a jazz trio.
- One event should be devoted to music of living composers.
- You must leave campus, although Miller Theater and Casa Italiana are acceptable for one of the concerts. Please no student recitals, even if you go to Juilliard.

- You must document your attendance with a ticket stub, program or photograph of yourself recognizably within the venue.
- Please no commercial music.

The purposes of this paper include:

- 1) Having you attend and share your experience of a live "serious" musical event.
- 2) Participating in the cultural life of this great metropolis.
- 3) Engaging with ideas about music that may or may not reflect your own.

Some observations and suggestions on the paper in no general order:

- a. Don't put off going to a concert until the night before the paper is due: there may not be anything worthwhile to see.
- b. Write notes for your report shortly after you attend the concert, while the music is still fresh in your mind. Don't try to pull it all together as it is happening, reflect on the experience afterwards.
- c. Read the program notes. You can also attend Q&A sessions with the composer which tend to be scheduled for before the concert.
- d. Try to enjoy yourself; don't take notes during the pieces. Be an attentive listener, but don't torture yourself. You won't like everything; you may hate everything.
- e. Contemporary music concerts tend to be more polemical in style and content.
- f. Try to be discerning in your judgments and assess the success or failure of the concert as a whole.
- g. Have a sense of humor and personality. But remember this is also a paper.
- h. Organize your paper in a narrative format somehow, not a laundry list, i.e. trying to do everything I tell you to do in order,
- i. It is *not* a suitable thesis to say: "I didn't think I would like the concert, but after seeing it I realize that modern music is great!" The paper is not about you, it is about the concert as a whole as mediated by your experience.
- j. If you have other questions, please ask me. I will try to recommend concerts when I can. If you are uncertain about whether a specific concert is appropriate, please ask.

Papers are due, in physical format, in my mailbox (in Dodge 619) or in class. I can not accept emailed papers.

While this is *not* a research paper, you do need to cite any sources you use in the standard format. Please don't play games with fonts and margins. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.