



## Exploring Music (Introduction to Music) | Collected Blog Prompts, Spring 21

Blogs are assigned periodically throughout the semester; students are given prompts related to the content of the week that ask them to synthesize course content or apply course concepts to music outside of their assigned listening. Full credit is earned if the student: writes around 200 words; uses musical and/or textual evidence to back up their observations; and leaves a *substantive* comment (2-3 sentences) on a classmate's blog. These prompts reference passages and assigned listening from Cornelius and Natvig, *Music: A Social Experience* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed).

### **Blog 1: Our Musical Backgrounds**

Please introduce yourself to your classmates! In this blog post, please share your name, year, and major and answer the following questions:

- What types of music do you listen to most often? Favorite genres or artists?
- For what reasons do you usually listen to that music? For example, enjoyment, studying, to help you sleep, background noise, etc.
- Do you sing or play an instrument? If so, what types of music do you play and why?
- What motivated you to take this class? Is there any musical topic you'd like to learn more about?

### **Blog 2: Applying the Musical Elements**

Pick a song or a piece of music that you're familiar with. Give us some background information on the artist, genre, and your relationship to the piece of music. Next, choose two of the musical elements we discussed in class: one from Week 3 (melody, rhythm, or harmony) and one from Week 4 (timbre, texture, or form). Using some of the vocabulary featured on your Musical Elements Assignment and in the textbook, describe how you hear your chosen elements at work in the piece of music. Don't only focus on which categories the music falls into (*e.g.*, major or minor, polyphonic, consonant, etc.)—make sure to tell us how the music fits or doesn't fit those categories. Please include in your blog either a YouTube or Spotify link to the music you choose.

### **Blog 3: Music Technology**

Select a piece of music technology such as a musical format, a streaming platform, an instrument, a mode of instruction, software, etc. This can be anything related to music that fits our definition of technology:

"Knowledge, techniques, and tools that help humans achieve certain goals."

Referring to your textbook, notes, and any online sources you find useful, describe this technology and answer the following questions. What is its purpose? How does it work to achieve that purpose? Are there any people that use this technology in a way that it wasn't designed for? Do you have any experience with this technology?



#### **Blog 4: Music and Film**

Find a piece of music that uses the technology that you've chosen. How did the technology influence the music it helped to produce? Please include in your blog either a YouTube or Spotify link to the music you choose.

Pick one of the following film clips:

1. [Opening Scene from \*Get Out\* \(2017\)](#)
2. [Ride of the Valkyries/Helicopter Attack from \*Apocalypse Now\* \(1979\)](#)
3. [1.21 Gigawatts from \*Back to the Future\* \(1985\)](#)
4. [Peach Fuzz Ploy from \*Parasite\* \(2019\)](#)

If you aren't already aware of the story for the scene you picked, look it up online; in a few sentences, tell us what's going on in your clip and the movie as a whole. Remember to use quote marks and share the source you're citing if necessary.

Next, identify some of the diegetic sounds (including music) from the clip; are there any nondiegetic sounds?

Recalling the discussions in this week's video lectures, what does the music add to the clip? Does it tell the audience something about the story, characters, or plot? Does it establish an emotion or mood for the audience? If you aren't sure, try watching the clip without sound to compare. Be as specific as possible, naming at least one musical characteristic that you think is important.

Refer to this week's video lectures, textbook chapter, and slides if you aren't sure how to talk about the music in your example.

#### **Blog 5: Audiences and Performers**

In our Music in Concert video lectures, we discussed different concert traditions: the jazz club, the chamber music recital, and the symphony orchestra concert. You can see performance videos for each setting in our video lectures or separately at these links:

1. [Jazz club](#)
2. [Chamber music recital](#)
3. [Symphony orchestra concert](#)

Referring to these examples, our video lectures, and/or the textbook (relevant pages shared below), which type of performance would you be most comfortable at as an audience member? Which would you be the least comfortable at? Why? What kind of behavior, playing style, clothing, etc. would you expect to see or hear from the performers, and how would you be expected to act as a listener? Connect your discussion with any of your previous experiences with live concert music, whether in-person, online, or through TV/film.



### **Blog 6: Social Meaning, Movement, and Music**

For this blog, you can either choose to write about one of the listening examples discussed in our Music and Dance video lectures (“Libertango,” capoeira, “Baamaaya,” “Branle des lavandieres,” and “The Augurs of Spring”) or find your own example of a song accompanied by a dance. Make sure to include a link to a *performance video* in your blog if you choose your own option.

Referring to the dance recording, video lectures, and/or textbook chapter, please answer the prompts below. As always, if you quote or take information from any source, make sure to tell us where it came from!

- Describe the social background of the dance: is there a single choreographer/creator, or does it come from a cultural tradition? Do we know who created the music? What social role does the dance play (for example, mourning, celebrating, telling a story, romantic attraction, etc.)? Please add any information you think is useful for understanding why this dance is important to some people.
- Describe several of the movements you see in the dance. Listening to the rhythm (beat, meter, tempo) of the music, what connects these movements to the music in your opinion? For full credit, make sure to use some of the textbook vocabulary we learned to describe the musical elements (Chapter Two).

### **Blog 7: Music and Ethnicity**

Our theme this week was “Music and Ethnicity,” where ethnicity was defined as “a group of people bound by shared culture, including social customs, values and beliefs, and perhaps common language, religion, and ancestry.” To complete this blog, first do a little background research and tell us about a genre of music associated with either your own ethnicity or an ethnicity that you feel a personal connection with. (Remember to quote or include links if you’re using someone else’s thoughts or words!) For example, my mother’s side of the family originally came from Poland, so I might write about a Polish dance called the mazurka.

In your description of the genre, you can answer questions like what instruments does it use, when/how did it originate, who performs it today, what are its unique musical characteristics, etc. Specifically, I want you to consider whether the genre is still mostly exclusive to a specific ethnic group, or if it has become a part of popular culture that many kinds of people enjoy. Does the music have a unique social function outside of entertainment? Lastly, find a musical example of your genre from Youtube that shows musicians or dancers (so not just audio, please) and include it at the bottom of your post.

### **Blog 8: Breaking or Strengthening Gender Roles**

As we discussed in this week’s video lectures, gender roles and gender expectations often play a role in the creation of a piece of music or how people respond to it. Carmen’s aria, for example, broke all the rules for how a woman should behave in front of a man she’s just met, which excited audiences through controversy. Cherubino’s aria, on the other hand, depicted a young



boy obsessed with women—a behavior appropriate for a male teenager, even if he was played by an adult woman.

Along these same lines, for this blog I want you to find a piece of music from any genre in which the musician or group act in ways that seem appropriate for their gender **or** one in which the musician or group breaks away from traditional gender roles.

First, describe the music you chose by telling us about the artist/composer, genre, and time period. Next, tell us the gender roles that you want to discuss in relation to the music—for example, that boys don't cry—and some examples of that gender role that you've seen in media or everyday life. Lastly, consider how the musical example either confirms or rejects that gender role, making sure to talk about a musical characteristic of the piece along with any other aspects of the performance that you find relevant, like the music video, lyrics, social context. Include a Youtube video or Spotify link to the piece you selected. If you aren't sure how to go about this, look to the discussions of musical examples in Chapter 6 of the textbook.

### **Blog 9: National Anthems**

Select a national anthem from a country besides the US. I recommend visiting the website <http://www.nationalanthems.info>, which features lyrics, recordings, and a small amount of information for most national anthems from around the world. Next, find a **video** of your anthem being performed live, such as at a concert, military ceremony, sports match, etc. and include the link in your blog.

Answer the following questions about your chosen anthem; if you need more information to do so, you can find sources about your anthem by using the OneSearch function at <https://library.qc.cuny.edu/> or a Google search. Make sure to use quotation marks when necessary and cite any websites/books you used to write this blog.

1. Describe how and when your national anthem originated: was it based on an older song or newly composed? Is there a story behind when it was written? When was it chosen for the country?
2. Summarize the message of the lyrics and include a few lines that seem especially interesting to you.
3. In your opinion, how does this anthem represent the people and history of its country? **Discuss at least one musical characteristic.** Are there any sounds or lyrical references that connect the anthem to the country?