

The First Concert Report: Modified for Life in the Time of COVID-19

If you attended a concert before the blood-dimmed tide struck, and have written up a report on that, you do not need to do this; this is a make-up assignment for those who were unable to do so.

In lieu of attending an actual concert, I would like you to report on **one** of the Young People's Concerts which the conductor Leonard Bernstein led with the New York Philharmonic in the 1960s. These were televised at the time, and many may now be found on YouTube.

Here are some suggestions, any of which will be fine:

- "Humor in Music" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMI1GZ7u_Zw
- "What is a melody?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCSv0YcqWow>
- "The Sound of a Hall" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6M16bNcfbg>
- "Fantastic Variations" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOG1KXvJ1oM>
- "What Makes Music Symphonic" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5cskyBN3Wc>
- "What is American Music?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dgxapg91azM>

There are a few dozen others available; however, if you wish to choose another one, please email me to make sure it is acceptable.

The report should be approximately 3–4 pages (900–1100 words), formatted as following: twelve-point Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double spaced. Note the genre(s) of music performed, give analyses of it using the technical language we've learned in class, give some commentary on the concert setting and the behaviors of both audience and performers, and reflect on how listening to music live differs from listening to a recording. Try to connect what you see to issues and music we have discussed in class. Also, try to reflect on the presence and use of the television camera and any editing you notice.

The first concert report is due by the start of class on **Thursday, April 30**. If this poses any problems for you with regard to the current situation (if you have trouble getting internet access, if you get sick, etc.) please let me know and I will try to work with you.

Grading will be based on the following:

- 50%: Thoughtful attempt to critically engage with the music and the concert experience; use of concrete detail in description of events, environs, and behavior.
- 30%: Correct usage of technical vocabulary used in class and making connections back to issues discussed in class.
- 20%: Clear organization of ideas and correct formal English usage: grammar, syntax, diction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.

Here are some guiding questions to think about during the concert that might help shape your report (there is no need to comprehensively deal with all of these, or to limit yourself to them; these are just suggestions to give you ideas).

- Is there some sort of overall theme to the concert? How do the different pieces performed fit into this theme? Can you think of any reasons why these specific pieces were chosen and/or why they were performed in the order they were in?
- How does the music relate to the venue and environment it is performed in? How would the experience be different if the venue were larger or smaller, or differently shaped? Do you notice anything special about the acoustics of the venue? How is it different from listening to a recording by yourself?
- Try to describe the actual pieces of music in as much detail as you can: What sort of textures did they use? Were there prominent contrasts of dynamics, tempo, register, instrumentation, mode, etc.? Were there broader continuities? If there are words, does the music convey the meaning of those words in any way?
- Think about the behavior of the audience. What do you think they expect to get out of the experience? What sort of demographic do they occupy? How do they show appreciation for the performance? What sort of etiquette is at play? How is this similar to or different from other types of performances (like a play, or a concert of a different tradition)? Is there anyone breaking that etiquette?
- Was it a worthwhile experience? Are there changes that, in your opinion, would make it better? If so, why do you think things are the way they are?
- What do you think of Bernstein as a music educator? How does he communicate information to his audience? How does what he says compare with what we have been learning in class?
- What is the effect of televising these concerts? How does the presence of cameras and microphones affect what is said and performed? How does the editing of the video and audio contribute to the final product? How does the experience of seeing this on a television or computer screen compare to what it might have been like live?