

Project #1: Audio Program Note

For Music History III, Music since 1900
(Fall 2022)



Hi all,

As noted, instead of one giant project in here, we're doing 4 smaller ones, each focused around a theme or skill connected to our course. This is the first of the 4, directions follow—hope you enjoy the process!

What do you need to do?

1. Choose **ONE** piece of music from a concert you played last spring or will play this fall—this could be from a recital, a small ensemble, or large ensemble concert
2. This piece **MUST** have been composed after 1900
3. This piece of music should probably be at least 2-3 minutes long, just in order to help you out.
4. After doing some research and planning (see page 2), **record an audio program note on your piece**
5. Submit your project #1 sometime **before 11:59pm on Friday, October 14 on Brightspace**—gentle reminder that this writing assignment is worth 10% of your grade in this course
6. Questions? Feel free to bring them as you have them!

General Guidelines

1. **Your audio program note should be about 8-10 minutes long.** I'll deduct points for under 7 minutes or over 12 minutes (not because I want to be a jerk, but because constraints are usually things we have to operate under for conferences and contests, and this is good practice).
2. You can include some music snippets if you want! But it shouldn't be more than 1-2 minutes worth of music at absolute maximum—short snippets are better, not long excerpts.
3. I don't care how you record this; you may use any recording medium—I'm not judging on quality of sound. Many cell phones have apps for recording. You could also try web-based services such as Vocaroo (vocaroo.com) or Audacity (audacityteam.org). Let me know if you have questions about this and I may be able to guide you to some resources.
4. Typically program notes don't include footnotes or citations. Because of this, I'll ask you to submit to me a separate bibliography page listing the sources you consulted when putting together your program note. You should have at least 3 sources, one should be "scholarly" (which typically means it was peer reviewed or published by a university publisher).
ASK ME IF YOU'RE HAVING ISSUES WITH THIS! Super happy to help you figure it out :)
5. Feel free to have fun with this—include a friend, do a mock interview, invent a radio DJ persona.....whatever makes you feel good when doing the assignment.

What might be included in an audio program note?

You should include some mixture of the following—please balance it carefully (you don't want to spend 6 minutes in minute detail about biography).

- **Composer biography** (or maybe even famous performer biography or famous ensemble biography)
- **How/when** the piece was composed or commissioned
- **Performance history**: when was it first done, or who has famously performed it?
- **Reception history**: did people always like this piece, or did it have ups and downs in its popularity?
- **Subject matter of the piece**, if relevant. Is it programmatic?
- **Lyrical meaning**, if relevant
- **Some things to listen for in the piece of music**—please note, this should **not** be a blow-by-blow “then this happened, then this happens, etc.” Pick a couple things to point out to your listener.
- **Anything interesting connected to the piece**—has it been used in a movie or video game? Did someone make a really famous recording of it? etc etc
- **Any large-scale issues** that are connected to the piece—much like we've been discussing as our “big picture questions” in class.
- **Things YOU like** or find intriguing about the piece. Is there a passage that's been particularly hard to figure out? A section that you just swoon over? A personal touch is fabulous here!

Where do I look up stuff to include?

So we all need to learn how to pull together various sources to do this kind of stuff, and it's okay (even important) to understand the roles that various sources play. TLDR: of course we can use things like Wikipedia to launch ourselves, but WHAT ELSE?

- Composer webpages
- Interviews with the composer or other performers of the work
- Program notes written by other people: note these can be super helpful, but tread carefully here and **DO NOT JUST COPY THE WORDS OF OTHERS**—plagiarism isn't just a college grade downer, it can actually lose anyone their job!
- Newspaper coverage

Scholarly articles:

- **This step is required—make sure you check a couple of the databases below.**
- go to <https://library.potsdam.edu/music> You'll notice there are search engines for “Music Periodicals Database,” “Music Index,” “RILM Abstracts,” and “JSTOR.” Look your piece up in one or more of these databases and see if anything pops up.

Books:

- Try Bearcat (our local library): <https://library.potsdam.edu/home>
- Try Worldcat (libraries worldwide): <https://library.potsdam.edu/home>
- Google Books
- Drawing a blank? Make an appointment with me next week and I will help you! I love research (it's nerdy fabulous fun) and love learning about your pieces :)