

# Listening Report Guidelines

There are three listening report assignments; these is the list of the materials you need for each:

1. Recording of Lil Hardin Armstrong's *Struttin' With Some Barbecue*, recorded by Louis Armstrong and the Hot Five in 1927.
2. Text, score, and recording of *Dies irae, dies illa* as performed by Choir des Moines de L'Abbaye St. Pierre de Solesmes [*the score and translation are at the end of this reader*].
3. Text, score and **two** recordings of "Der Leiermann" from Schubert's *Winterreise* [*the score and translation are at the end of this reader*].
  - a. Max von Egmond, baritone; Jos van Immerseel, fortepiano
  - b. Håkan Hagegard, baritone; Thomas Schuback, piano

The recordings are all included on the MU 320 class CD, and also via the streaming server (<http://cla.calpoly.edu/music/classes>). You will find the scores you need at the end of this reader.

## Checklist

1. Each report is a well-argued **discussion** of what you heard and analyzed in the piece under consideration. (Be sure to figure out the **form**!) At the end of this assignment sheet is a list of suggested musical elements that you could think about while you listen (and while you follow the score); take notes. (Remember: you can always listen a second, third, or twentieth time to double-check things!) In the weakest reports, students simply haven't listened carefully to the piece.
  - Organize your listening notes and thoughts into an **outline** for your discussion (See Hacker, Section C). Use a computer, so you can adjust the order and contents of your discussion easily. (**You will turn in your outline along with your report**, but you don't need to proofread typos, etc., in the outline.)
  - Decide on a **thesis**—an opinion that you feel you can "prove" with the observations and information you're going to include in your report. (A thesis is different from a "hypothesis;" a hypothesis is a tentative assumption.) If you're *really* stuck for ideas, consider developing a thesis that answers one of the following questions:
    - 1) Do the musical elements (or other aspects) in this piece suit its purpose or title? How so?
    - 2) What is it about this work that has made it "last" beyond its composer's lifetime, so that we would still be listening to it today?
  - Include the thesis in your report's **introduction**; the introductory paragraph should also have some kind of "hook," and of course it should also name your piece, its composer (if applicable), and the performer(s). (Normally you would include the publisher as well, but I have not provided you with that information.)
2. Although these listening reports are not research projects *per se*, it might be a very good idea to check a music appreciation textbook or *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* to see what it has to say about this kind of piece, or about the work's composer. (However, if you choose to quote—or paraphrase—

anything you learned from an outside source in the course of your report, be sure to provide a footnote and a bibliography.)

3. The **length** of the report is up to you; I suspect it will generally be about 2 pages long. If it takes you longer to say what you want to say, you should think carefully about ways to make your report more concise. No matter how long or short the report, you will still need—at the minimum—an introductory paragraph to establish your thesis, and you will need to wrap up with a concluding paragraph that ends your report "in a tidy, memorable way."<sup>1</sup>

- Avoid writing a rambling "this happens, and then this happens" narrative. This kind of description is a great step to take—in your notes. The final report, however, should step back and present a well-organized discussion of the piece from an "overview" perspective. You should review the suggestions under "Style" in the *Advice on Writing* guidelines included in this reader.
- Since the 19th century, audiences have been subtly conditioned to listen to all instrumental music in a programmatic way, meaning that we tend to imagine "storylines" that the music could illustrate. However, when you include such descriptions in a report, you have stopped telling the reader about what you heard in the piece; you have switched to talking about what you imagined while you listened. Please keep this sort of "creative writing" to a minimum in the course of these reports; there is definitely a place in life for this kind of imaginative speculation, but, generally speaking, this assignment is not it! Of course, an exception would be a piece that the composer intended to be programmatic (e.g., Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture*).
- I don't want to discourage you from using adjectives in your writing—if you find a harmonic passage beautiful, say so! If an accelerando built excitement, say that, too! But always try to explain what you think triggered that response. There's a world of difference in saying, "The piece is melancholy" and "The *largo* tempo, "sigh" motives in the strings, and gradually descending bass line evoke a melancholy atmosphere."

4. The report should have a separate **cover page** with

A title for your essay (an engaging title is always appealing and can launch your report effectively)  
your name  
the report number  
the title of the piece (and composer if appropriate)

5. Your discussion should be typed, double-spaced, single-sided, **PAGINATED**, and stapled. No fancy bindings or covers, please! Margins are up to you; an inch is fairly standard. Attach your **outline** and **cover page** to the report.

6. Note that you will make **extra copies** of the 2nd and 3rd report; check the syllabus course outline. **REPORTS 2 and 3 ARE DUE TO MY OFFICE at 11 A.M.** Points will be subtracted for late reports!!

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Wingell, *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*. 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 2002), 42.  
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## Grading

The point distribution for each listening report is:

### Mechanics (10)

Appropriate use of citations (2)

Style (voice, transitions, etc.) (2)

Outline reflected in report (2)

Logical organization (2)

Presentation (margins, pagination, general appearance, [quality of ink, etc.]) (2)

**Point Scale:** A 22+ points

B 20

C 18

D 16

### Content (15)

Effective introduction (2)

Clear / convincing thesis (2)

Thesis "proven" in course of report (2)

Effective conclusion (1)

Accuracy of observations / analysis (4)

Breadth of observations / analysis (4)

### Score Busters

Errors in grammar, punctuation, proofreading = -.10 pt. each

No title page = -2 pts

No outline = -5 pts

No thesis = -10 pts

Turned in late = -2 pts each half-hour (for Reports 2 & 3); -2 pts each day (for Report 1)

Plagiarism or other forms of cheating = F in course and a visit to Judicial Affairs

## Musical Elements to Consider While Listening

### Structural Elements

Form (and what makes the sections distinct?)

Medium

Genre

Style

Musical Era

Mood(s)

Meanings of score indications (if available)

### Rhythmic Elements

Tempo(s)

Meter(s)

Subdivision(s)

Syncopation?

Ostinato?

Special devices (*i.e.*, Scotch snap, dotted rhythms, swing)

Articulation (staccato, legato)

### Melodic and Harmonic Elements

Mode(s) / Key(s)

Texture(s) (monophony, etc.)

Melody type(s) (conjunct vs. disjunct)

Consonance/Dissonance

'Simple' or 'complex' harmony?

Special devices (*i.e.*, sigh motive, suspensions, sequence)

How would you describe the phrasing?

Dynamic range

### For Vocal Pieces

Text setting (syllabic neumatic, etc.)

What's it about?

Word painting

Voice type(s)

Is there an accompaniment?

What is the role of the accompaniment?

### For Instrumental Works

Is it programmatic? What's it about?

Is there an accompaniment?

What is the role of the accompaniment?

How are the instruments used?

### Other Musical Features of Interest?

Highlight of the Piece?