

What Is the Discipline of Music Appreciation? Reconsidering the Concert Report

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In “Teaching Music History: Principles, Problems, and Proposals,” Douglass Seaton summarizes his approaches to music history pedagogy, naming a variety of issues facing instructors today and suggesting paths of inquiry and exploration for the future. While he directs the specific proposals to music history courses in particular, the two core principles referred to in the article’s title offer the music appreciation instructor food for thought: “Music history ought to investigate musical experience,” and “Music history students must not merely imbibe and regurgitate music-historical information but engage actively in the discipline.”¹

Listening is the primary musical experience investigated in music appreciation courses, most of which begin with a study of musical elements through recorded examples for the purpose of enhancing the listening of music for the remainder of the course. This musical experience may often be extended to live performance (most often a classical music concert), for which students write and submit a concert report. The particular questions students address may be different from instructor to instructor, but traditionally the purpose of the report is to apply listening skills and course information to the concert repertoire. Students are often encouraged to prepare for the performance by listening to the works in advance and then to provide a description of the music, sometimes with a review at the end summarizing what they liked or did not like about it.

In recent years, a new type of concert report has developed, in which the performance experience extends beyond the music itself and includes behavior, dress, and venue, among other non-music particulars. The concert report has been a mainstay in music appreciation curricula over the years, and the fact that some instructors have chosen to set different goals for this assignment suggests that it is not just the assignment that has changed over the years, but

1. Douglass Seaton, “Teaching Music History: Principles, Problems, and Proposals,” in *Vitalizing Music History Teaching*, ed. James R. Briscoe, Monographs & Bibliographies in American Music 20 (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2010), 60.

music appreciation as a discipline. If the goal of this basic writing assignment moves beyond what is heard at a performance to include what is seen, felt, and enacted, then students are expected to be learning about more than just listening.

That brings us to Seaton's second principle: "Music history students must not merely imbibe and regurgitate music-historical information but engage actively in the discipline." With the pedagogical focus of courses not only in music but in a variety of other fields moving towards more and more active learning strategies and developing modes of disciplinary thinking, it seems at first blush that part of this principle to engage actively is well on its way to being enacted.² Yet, as an instructor of music appreciation, I cannot help but mull over the last part of this principle: What is the discipline being studied in a music appreciation course?

Music appreciation has suffered from identity crises not only in the growing pains of its earliest years, but throughout the twentieth century. Unlike the specialized fields of musicology and music theory, music appreciation has always been concerned with teaching general audiences both informally and in structured educational programs ranging from elementary schools through universities. Its audience has been as wide and diverse as its goals, which accounts for the continual debates within the field. Yet for decades, music appreciation has closely shadowed music theory and musicology, both of which have provided the disciplinary approaches for its study today.³

2. The concept of disciplinary thinking (teaching students to think like a professional) has gone by several names, including "scaffolding" and "signature pedagogies." David Pace and Joan Middendorf, eds., *Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking*, New Directions for Teaching and Learning 98 (San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass, 2004); J. Peter Burkholder, "Decoding the Discipline of Music History for Our Students," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 1, no. 2 (2011): 93–111, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/22/46>; Barak Rosenshine and Carla Meister, "Scaffolds for Teaching Higher-Order Cognitive Strategies," in *Teaching: Theory into Practice*, ed. A. C. Ornstein (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1995); and Regan A. R. Gurung, Nancy L. Chick, and Aeron Haynie, eds., *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009).

3. Jeremy Yudkin, *Understanding Music*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2013); Jeremy Yudkin, *Discover Music* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004); Kristine Forney and Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 11th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Charles R. Hoffer, *Music Listening Today*, 5th ed. (Boston: Schirmer/Cengage Learning, 2013); D. Kern Holoman, *Masterworks: A Musical Discovery*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004); Roger Kamien, *Music: An Appreciation*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011); and Mark Evan Bonds, Jocelyn R. Neal, Joseph S. Kaminski, N. Scott Robinson, and William Gibbons, *Listen to This*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2013). A few notable exceptions include Arthur Komar, *Music and Human Experience* (New York: Schirmer, 1980); David C. Nichols, *Musical Encounters* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001); Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Soundscapes Classical* (New

In this paper, I look to the history of music appreciation in the United States not only to understand the position in which the discipline finds itself but also to tease out its own identity. Two defining features of the discipline are its focus on listening and its response to social and cultural changes experienced by its students—the general public. In the past sixty years, only the former feature has been explored and reinforced in textbooks, while the latter has been largely overlooked. In this paper, I discuss an alternative concert report assignment, one that opens the discipline of music appreciation beyond the models provided by music theory and musicology and is more in line with the two predominant features of the discipline as described in the literature.

Music Appreciation Pedagogy in the United States: A Brief Survey

In the United States, the course which has come to be known as “Music Appreciation” has at its foundations an interest in educating general audiences of all ages.⁴ And because its study takes place not only in schools but also in homes and in the public arena, a survey of its pedagogical history looks like a cultural history of America. The concerns, the methods, and the goals of teaching general audiences run in tandem with issues of technology, business, politics, education, and the social good.

In the late-nineteenth century, music educators were only just beginning to implement curricula in public schools, developing a system of study that revolved around performance, especially singing.⁵ Adults also had opportunities for being involved in music education as students by joining singing schools, attending lectures and performances, and reading publications. This instruction focused on understanding how music was put together for the purpose of getting more out of performing. The repertoire studied was, naturally, influenced by what performing ensembles or soloists were available and what music could be sung or played by the students or the instructor.

The goals and techniques of teaching general audiences forever changed as technological developments like the player piano, phonograph, and radio introduced in the early twentieth century allowed people to hear music without

York: W. W. Norton, 2001); and Steven Cornelius and Mary Natvig, *Music: A Social Experience* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012).

4. Music appreciation originated under the auspices of music education. James A. Keene provides a short overview of the history of music appreciation in his book *A History of Music Education in the United States* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1982), 227–63.

5. Edward B. Birge points to the success of children’s choirs at the 1892 Columbian Exposition as the point of origin for a passionate interest in teaching children about music through choral singing. “Music Appreciation: The Education of the Listener,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 10, no. 4 (1924): 14.

producing the sounds themselves, listening to not only great works but also great performers from the comfort of home. Playback technologies eased repertoire limitations; the types, quality, and number of musical examples used in class increased exponentially. Technology also fixed music in time, giving teachers the opportunity to isolate excerpts, to give repeated hearings, and to compare different performances, which addressed the problems inherent in teaching music, an aural and transient art form. Without the aid of recordings, music existed for a fleeting moment for general audiences who could not read and hear scores in their minds. In literature and visual art, students had access to creative artifacts that allowed for repeated interaction and deep study of the great works of Western civilization. Recordings became that physical object, enabling listeners to experience and learn the great masterworks of Western European art music.⁶

The full impact of any new technological venture takes time, and within a few years the unbridled enthusiasm for machines that provided high-quality music in classrooms and homes, became tinted with concern for the sheer amount of music available. Communities that did not have access to “serious” music and people who did not have financial means to attend live performances could experience the beauty and power of music in their own homes and schools. Within a few years, the marketplace was flooded with all sorts of music in radio broadcasts and record sales.

The educational goal changed from introducing general audiences to concert music of the Western European tradition to cultivating discriminating taste for that music, to understand why it was good and other types of music were bad.⁷ One pedagogical method was focused on exposure: many students had no

6. Records functioned as teaching tools equivalent to those in literature and art, as a physical artifact that offered the opportunity for repeated study. Willys P. Kent, “The Need of More Music Study,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 2, no. 3 (January 1916): 30. Many teachers worked with local performing ensembles and taught students the repertoire on concert programs well in advance of the performance to build audiences. Frances Kessler, “Music Appreciation in Bloomington,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 16, no. 2 (1929): 43. The Victor Talking Machine Company even went so far as to create a special label, the Red Seal, for its classical recordings, which sold at a price four- to eight-times more than comedy and popular recordings. David L. Morton, Jr., *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 39 and 57. In her 1934 survey of instructors and students of music appreciation courses at high school and college levels, Johanna Anderson only asked about classical works from the Western European concert tradition. “Music Appreciation for College Students,” *Music Educators Journal* 21, no. 3 (1934): 21–22.

7. Frances E. Clark, “An Appreciation,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 11, no. 5 (1925): 18 and “Radio and Music Appreciation,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 17, no. 3 (1931): 34. There was also a fear that a music culture centered on listening would destroy active, live music-making. William C. Mayfarth, “The Inclusion of Musical Studies in the Liberal Arts College Course,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 17, no. 2 (1930): 25, 52–53; Percy A. Scholes, “Good and Bad in Music: An Attempt to Solve One of the Educationist’s Biggest Problems,” *Music Supervisors’*

experience with art music, but instructors believed that by repeatedly listening to recordings, students would become more familiar with great music leading to greater enjoyment of it. Memory contests were organized to encourage kids, their families, and their communities to become familiar with recordings of masterworks, and prizes and recognition provided the incentive to participate.⁸

However, many pedagogues viewed the memory contest as an end in itself, not a means for further learning. These instructors wanted students to have a greater understanding of what they heard and to want to choose to listen to masterworks because they were great works of art, not because they could win a prize.⁹ Such a venture had at its core a principle of providing all people with the opportunity to experience, understand, and ultimately benefit from the aesthetic experience gained from earnest and concentrated study of the Western European canon, a principle which would later be questioned. Popular trade books and radio programs circulated information, listening excerpts, colorful descriptions, explanations, and conclusions necessary for “enlightening” the mind.¹⁰

Journal 16, no. 1 (1929): 13–25; and Paul J. Weaver, “The Cultivation of Discrimination,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 15, no. 5 (1929): 41–49.

8. Birge, “Music Appreciation: The Education of the Listener,” 16 and 18.

9. Frances E. Clark, an influential music educator in the early part of the twentieth century, insisted that all children, not a special few, be taught to appreciate music, in “Music Appreciation: Leaven or Garnish,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 14, no. 2 (1927): 21. In “Music Appreciation and the New Day,” Clark wrote that appreciation “involves not only passive listening which brought the music memory phase of the development, but in addition the rich experience of purposeful listening, which brings the cultivating choice, love for, and taste in beautiful music, the definite acquaintance with the moods, thought content, rhythmic and melodic patterns, the harmonic and form structures which spell ‘Music Understanding.’” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 19, no. 3 (1933): 13. Edward B. Birge, Mabelle Glenn, Fowler Smith, Karl W. Gehrken, Grace Van Dyke More, Anne E. Pierce, Jacob Kwalwasser, Osbourne McConathy, and Peter W. Dykema, “What Is Music Appreciation? A Symposium,” *Music Educators Journal* 22, no. 4 (1936): 15–17; Percy A. Scholes, *Music Appreciation: Its History and Technics* (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1935); and Percy A. Scholes, “Appreciation of Music,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, 10th ed., ed. John Owen Ward (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 46–47.

10. Megan Prictor, “appreciation of music,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford Music Online (Oxford University Press, accessed July 23, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e348>); Percy A. Scholes, *The Listener’s History of Music. A Book for any Concert-goer, Pianolist, Gramophonist, or Radio Listener. Providing Also a Course of Study for Adult Classes in the Appreciation of Music*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1929). School public address systems were also brought into the educational fold. The ubiquity of technology also increased the need for more interesting teaching methods that took into account the unique nature of recording and radio. Max T. Krone, “Teachers’ Training in Appreciation,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 15, no. 4 (1929): 59, 61, 88. Arthur Stenius and Homer La Gassey, “Developing Music Appreciation,” *Music Educators Journal* 24, no. 5 (1938): 36–37. Morton J. Keston compared two methods of teaching listening: playing music with no verbal descriptions offered, and playing music after giving a verbal description to students. Keston concluded that verbal descriptions changed students’ personal listening preferences, making it more likely that they would choose to listen to classical music.

Corporations were also involved in this educational blitz. Record companies released collections of music specifically designed for use in the classroom and at home.¹¹ Compilations changed over the twentieth century from concert masterworks exclusively to the same sprinkled with folk and traditional music from the United States and around the world.¹² To give a sense of gravitas to their involvement in education, companies such as Victor Records hired respected pedagogues as educational directors.¹³ These teachers assisted corporations in backing up their business ventures with tried and true methods as well as more innovative approaches.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, music appreciation became more specialized as formal courses were incorporated into curricula at primary and secondary schools as well as institutions of higher learning and correspondence courses. In April 1906, the College Entrance Examination Board unanimously approved a list of entrance requirements (including knowledge and skills in “Musical Appreciation, Harmony, Counterpoint, Pianoforte, Voice, and Violin”)¹⁴ for students interested in pursuing a degree in music.

According to educators in the first half of the twentieth century, teaching all people about “good” music was of utmost importance during times of war and financial crises.¹⁵ Building good taste in music was a reflection of an educated

Morton J. Keston, “An Experimental Evaluation of the Efficacy of Two Methods of Teaching Music Appreciation,” *The Journal of Experimental Education* 22, no. 3 (1954): 215–26.

11. Olin Downes thanks the Columbia Gramophone Company for providing recordings that he refers to repeatedly in his book *The Lure of Music: Depicting the Human Side of Great Composers, with Stories of Their Inspired Creations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918).

12. In the 8th revised edition of *What We Hear in Music* (1931), Anne Shaw Faulkner included examples of folk music and discussed issues like politics and nationalism, styles and subjects that did not appear in the first edition (1913). Faulkner, *What We Hear in Music: A Course of Study in Music History and Appreciation for Use In the Home, High Schools, Normal Schools, Colleges, and Universities. Also for Special Courses in Conservatories and Music Clubs*, 8th rev. ed. (Camden, NJ: RCA Victor Co., Inc., Educational Division, 1931).

13. Michael L. Mark and Charles L. Gary, *A History of American Music Education*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2007), 293 and Educational Department of RCA Victor, *Music Appreciation and History of Music. A Lecture-Laboratory Course in the Art of Listening for University, College, Clubs, Home Groups or Individual Study With or Without a Teacher* (Camden, NJ: RCA Victor, 1935).

14. Leonard B. McWhood, “Music in College and Secondary School,” in *Studies in Musical Education History and Aesthetics: Papers and Proceedings of the Music Teachers’ National Association at Its Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting* (1906), 72. The appreciation component of the exam included knowledge of musical forms, biography, historical context, and a specific list of repertoire. *Ibid.*, 73.

15. During war time, communities rely on music for building a sense of unity, raising morale, and joining the rest of the nation in expressing patriotic sentiments. After World War I, Arthur L. Manchester, fearing a return to “pre-war apathy regarding music,” stressed the important role of small colleges in serving their communities by providing a site for regular musical performances and learning opportunities. Arthur L. Manchester, “The Small College as a Factor in the Development of a Musical Nation,” *The Musical Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1922): 595.

and cultured society, which was also a strong society, one that could not be rocked to its foundations by political evils and destructive war.¹⁶ Music could provide moral uplift, an aesthetic experience that could raise one out of the everyday, out of pain and loss, and fill one with a sense of hope.¹⁷ Within the context of a liberal arts education, it could also help soldiers returning from war to make sense of their own experiences and of the world around them.¹⁸

During the first half of the twentieth century, teachers of general students and the general public struggled to determine their roles in society, and it became even more pronounced at mid-century with the increasing availability of new technologies, the ubiquity of popular music and culture, and the diverse and uneven pedagogical methods and materials for teaching general students. These factors raised questions about repertoire and the Western European canon. Some educators were interested in increasing the level of enjoyment experienced while listening to classical music, impressing on listeners the weight and importance of what they were hearing as an individual work of art. Others believed that listeners should have more information than music only, supplementing the aural study with biographical information about composers and contextual information about the style period in which they worked. Nonetheless, these two groups had two things in common: an emphasis on listening, and of listening predominantly to great works of the Western European canon.¹⁹

16. A. Duncan Yocum, "Appreciation of Music, Literature and Art as a Social Aim," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 67, New Possibilities in Education (Sept. 1916): 1–12. Willys P. Kent described the purpose of music appreciation as the development of good taste in "Why Study Music Appreciation? A Talk to High School Pupils," *Music Supervisors' Journal* 4, no. 1 (Sept. 1917): 20. Alice L. Dement conducted a survey of the top 55 male students in Stanford University's graduating class of 1942. She found that while their specialized education in fields like medicine and business prepared them for their professional lives, they wished they had taken more liberal arts courses like music appreciation to enhance their personal and social lives. "Professional Men Look at General Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 27, no. 8 (1956): 409–12.

17. Will Earhart, "The Roots of Music Appreciation: Seeking a Fundamental Basis for a Subject Which Many Teachers Find Difficult to Approach," *Music Educators Journal* 35, no. 2 (1948), 57 and Max Schoen, "The Teaching of Appreciation in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1927): 39–58. Along with these lofty goals were more practical ones: music was also a key component in a liberal arts education that could help young women receive a general education appropriate for being a public school teacher, a librarian, or an administrative assistant. Robert B. Eckles, "Liberal Science at Purdue: An Experiment," *The Journal of General Education* 3, no. 4 (1949): 313–16.

18. *Ibid.*, 314; Howard D. McKinney, "The Real Aims of Music Appreciation," *Music Educators Journal* 35, no. 3 (1949): 9–10, 42–45.

19. James Bakst, "The Teaching of Music Appreciation," *Improving College and University Teaching* 7, no. 4 (1959): 119–23; Jeanne Bamberger, "The Appreciation of Music," *College Music Symposium* 8 (1968): 53–66; Robert K. Beckwith, "Music Appreciation," *College Music Symposium* 8 (1968): 67–75; Jacob Kwalwasser, "Music Appreciation: Is It Vital?" *Music*

Others chose to move the study of music appreciation along with the sea changes in society and culture by incorporating popular music in the classroom experience.²⁰ Technological innovations continued to be welcomed with courses taught successfully over television through educational broadcasting services. Like the player piano, phonograph, and radio before it, television reached larger audiences in new ways, providing not only a course by also a teacher to students who are unable to participate in a traditional classroom course, such as students in rural areas and those with unconventional schedules.²¹

Many pedagogues revealed their concern about the state of music education, expressed the need for instructors who were both good musicians and good teachers, and questioned the need for music appreciation.²² The tenure system at institutions of higher learning valued scholarship and specialization over teaching non-majors, and music appreciation courses were often given to junior faculty who made do until they could teach more narrowly-focused

Supervisors' Journal 16, no. 4 (1930): 13–17; and Hans Tischler, “The Teaching of Music Appreciation,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 7, no. 2 (1959): 169–73.

20. When listening to popular music in class, R. William Graham uses a comparative approach to help make the “classics” more relevant to a generation of students who are more familiar with popular music. R. William Graham, “Teach the Classics through Popular Music,” *Music Educators Journal* 41, no. 4 (1955): 67–70.

21. Edward G. Evans, Jr. evaluates the method, style, and success of his “telecourse” in music appreciation aired through the assistance of the University Broadcasting Council of Cleveland in “Music Appreciation by Television,” *Music Educators Journal* 41, no. 2 (1954): 28–29, 31.

22. Esther L. Gatewood, “The Business of Teaching Music,” *Music Supervisors' Journal* 11, no. 5 (1925): 46, 48; Kate Hevner Mueller, “Studies in Music Appreciation,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 4, no. 1 (1956): 3–25; Linda Pohly, “Teaching Teachers of Music Appreciation—What We Can Learn from MGS Pedagogy,” *College Music Symposium* 47 (2007): 127–38; Arthur R. Tollefson, “Enhancing Music Appreciation with Scholarship,” *College Music Symposium* 10 (1970): 31–34; and David Willoughby, “Wingspread Conference on Music in General Studies: Music Programs Exist for Everyone,” *Music Educators Journal* 69, no. 1 (1982): 54–56.

Some vocal critics questioned the purpose and efficacy of music appreciation courses. Charles Rosen wrote, “Courses in enjoyment or Music Appreciation should not be called teaching at all, but are a benevolent—and sometimes sinister—effort of public relations: a gigantic advance publicity to persuade people to go to more concerts and buy more records, and a hope that by exposing the ‘students’ to music and persuading them that they like it, they will eventually acquire the taste for it. But whose taste?” Charles Rosen, “The Proper Study of Music,” *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 1 (1962), 81. Virgil Thomson famously coined the term “appreciation racket,” writing “It is uncritical, in its acceptance of imposed repertory as a criterion of musical excellence. It is formalist, in its insistence on preaching principles of sonata-form that every musician knows to be either non-existent or extremely inaccurate. It is obscurantist, because it pretends that a small section of music is either all of music or at least the heart of it, which is not true. It is dogmatic, because it pontificates about musical ‘taste.’ Whose taste?” Virgil Thomson, *The State of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 118.

courses to upper-level music majors.²³ To remedy the lack of good course materials, textbook publishers enlisted the help of respected musicologists and music theorists to provide ready-made courses of study, complete with readings, recordings, and materials for the instructor.²⁴ Theory and history offered a language to general students interested in being more knowledgeable about fine arts and high culture, and these fields could achieve more immediate results than composition or performance, which required more specialized knowledge and skills.²⁵

This method continues today. Most textbooks begin with a quick dive into aural skills: students learn general terms related to musical elements, the building blocks of sound, including melody, harmony, texture, form, instrumentation, and articulation. This overview is followed by a chronological survey of the development of musical style in the Western European classical tradition, beginning with chant and ending roughly around the present day. Elementary analysis plays a vital role in textbooks' requisite listening guides, narrative descriptions of what to listen for while studying the recording. This goal—to gain a greater understanding of musical sound through listening—sits at the origin of music appreciation as a discipline and was pursued in an unprecedented way only after the development of recording technology. The goal of learning how to appreciate music through repeated listening, to treat music as a text to be read, contemplated, re-read, and understood was made possible with recorded music.²⁶ This was the goal when music appreciation was in its infancy,

23. Bruce Benward, "Music Appreciation Goes to College," *Music Educators Journal* 35, no. 6 (1949): 43 and Arthur L. Manchester, "The Small College as a Factor in the Development of a Musical Nation," *The Musical Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1922): 59–604.

24. Pauline Alderman, "Musicology for the Music Educator," *Music Educators Journal* 44, no. 1 (1957), 27 and Claude V. Palisca, "A Curriculum for Understanding Music through Discovery and Discussion: The Yale Music Curriculum Project," *College Music Symposium* 9 (1969): 36–47.

25. Lloyd Hibberd defines music appreciation as "a mixture of elementary theory, history, and aesthetics" in "Musicology Reconsidered," *Acta musicologica* 31, no. 1 (1959): 25–31. Analysis and historical context not only provide a language for students, but according to some experimental research, actually improves students' ability to effectively identify, apply, and describe elements of musical style. Lewis W. Gordon, "College Music Appreciation: Pedagogical Approaches and Preliminary Findings," *College Music Symposium* 36 (1996): 103–113.

26. Alternative models for teaching music appreciation have been proposed. Elise Kuhl Kirk puts less emphasis on analysis and historical models and instead "places prime emphasis upon opening doors to music's multifaceted vistas . . . [By doing so,] the student is encouraged to become a vital critic, continually seeking and challenging the universal roots of all creative expression." Elise Kuhl Kirk, "Music, Myth and Man: A New Concept in Teaching Music Appreciation," *College Music Symposium* 19, no. 1 (1979), 208. Phil Ford places listening at the heart of musical experience, but also revels in pleasure, in the accumulation of "a-ha" moments. These moments are experienced by students, not told to them by an instructor or passed down as knowledge, as often happens in textbooks. Instructors should let their own excitement be seen and students' excitement be encouraged. Phil Ford, "Appreciation without

when recording technology was new and was a tool to study and ultimately enhance the live music experience.

Today, listening to recorded music is the norm, the most common way to hear music on a daily basis, while experiencing music in live performance has become the alternative.²⁷ The pedagogical emphasis in music appreciation focuses on studying recordings as texts and uncovering objective meaning in them. Music does not exist only as recordings, but also as lived performance experience. This is the aspect of music that is weakened in the discipline's reigning pedagogical method and preserved in most textbooks.

The Concert Report

Why is the concert report such a common part of the music appreciation curriculum when that curriculum focuses on music as a recorded idiom? Is it simply to build a future audience for Western European classical music? Is it to raise attendance at concerts and recitals in our music departments? Is it to support creative enterprise? Is it to encourage students to break out of isolated, everyday recorded listening experiences and connect to a communal, social, live musical performance?

In his reference guide *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*, Richard J. Wingell describes the concert report as an assignment in which students “[apply] acquired conceptual information and insight to new experiences.”²⁸ He emphasizes to students that instructors are not interested in dress, space, or audience behavior, and that to complete the assignment successfully, students should do research by listening to the repertoire repeatedly and knowing something about the music's history. Clearly, for Wingell and many other instructors, the “conceptual information” that forms the basis of the discipline is what is known as the musical elements, the building blocks of sound. This type of report often concludes with students giving a review of the music, why they did or didn't like it. This type of report treats music as a text to be read/heard and described, leading to a greater understanding and comprehension/

Apologies,” *College Music Symposium* 46 (2006): 31–44. Martha Snead Holloway suggests guiding students in a music appreciation course through basic composition exercises to connect them to an activity that they learn about mainly through listening. Martha Snead Holloway, “The Use of Cooperative Action Learning to Increase Music Appreciation Students' Listening Skills,” *College Music Symposium* 44 (2004): 83–93.

27. The sale of iPods (only one of many brands of personal listening devices) increased from roughly 125,000 in December 2001 to around 350 million in September 2012. Sam Costello, “Total Number of iPods Sold All-Time” (accessed November 18, 2013, <http://ipod.about.com/od/glossary/qt/number-of-ipods-sold.htm>).

28. Richard J. Wingell, *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 89.

appreciation of it. And the fact that the music is heard live is inconsequential to the ultimate goal and purpose of this report.

Although the concert report assigned in my course is in a constant state of modification from semester to semester, it follows the trends of other instructors who require students to describe not only what they hear but also what they see and experience.²⁹ These reports allow for visual and behavioral observations: how the performance space is designed, lit, and decorated; how performers and audience members are dressed; how musicians interact with each other and their audience within that space; how people behave, with observations about actions that seem odd or strange (perhaps they are ritual behaviors); how comfortable or uncomfortable the student feels and why; what the purpose of the performance is; how the music is planned or programmed in a certain way to achieve a certain effect. In these reports, therefore, music is part of a holistic experience, involving sounds, behaviors, location, intentions, and interactions.³⁰

I call my assignment a Performance Response (see Appendix: Performance Response Form), and students write descriptions of their observations and experiences at a musical performance. They answer specific questions about the performance space, the musical style of three works, and the interaction between performers and between performers and audience. Students are asked questions that require them to give factual information, write vivid descriptions, and propose conclusions (“Why do you think . . . ?”). At the end, they reflect on their personal experience using their observations. In other words, students are given a template for building an argument based on observation using specific and detailed language. One goal is to create a greater understanding of musical experience as an audience member or performer and the roles performance space, musical style, and interaction play in that experience. Another goal is to improve the quality of writing by allowing students to write about more familiar social and cultural ideas instead of asking them to wrestle exclusively with

29. As just one example, Gavin Douglas notes that music is not static or frozen in time, but rather “the way it is performed, what the piece does, how it fits into a particular society, who uses it, why they use it, where it is played, who pays for it, the ideology that it represents, reinforces, or challenges, all have fluctuated quite significantly over the years.” And the concert report he suggests in one that isn’t about music or sound. See, “Some Thoughts on Teaching Music History from an Ethnomusicological Perspective,” in *Vitalizing Music History Teaching*, ed. James R. Briscoe, Monographs & Bibliographies in American Music 20 (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2010), 38.

30. Music students who are part of the music school or conservatory system realize that it has its own unique culture. My concert report assignment takes into account how a student who is not part of that culture views it or experiences it. For more on the conservatory culture, see Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and Bruno Nettl, *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

musical terms that are new or that have different meanings in regard to the Western European canon than they do in common usage. Students may also earn extra credit by interviewing someone afterwards: if students are audience members, they interview a performer; if students are performers, they interview an audience member. This Performance Response is a rudimentary type of fieldwork, based solely on real-time observations.³¹

The project begins, however, with preparation. As in most music appreciation courses, students learn musical elements, a general foundation for describing sound. To write an effective response, students describe in writing what they hear as they hear it. Over the course of the first few weeks of the semester, students are taught musical elements in isolation, learning how to listen specifically for one thing or another. Along the way, short in-class listening quizzes (four to five multiple-choice questions) give students the chance to practice listening for more than one element while receiving immediate feedback. These guided questions about texture, dynamics, tempo, instrumentation, and the like are repeated for several listening examples with the intention of getting students in the habit both of describing what they hear in real-time and of being able to provide correct terms immediately. After several weeks of guided quizzes, students are required to analyze a song and make connections between musical sound, compositional choice, and musical meaning.³²

To prepare students for the type of listening required for the Performance Response, they participate in a demonstration in modeling, not only on the specific day on which the skill is taught, but also in every class period that follows. The specific modeling involves watching a 5-minute performance video and guiding students through the process of listening, watching, and writing. The first time they watch the video, students are given prompts related to space, musical style, and interaction. They share their ideas for each prompt in an open discussion, and we compile a list of their contributions in a file projected

31. As Jeff Todd Titon notes, "Fieldwork is no longer viewed principally as observing and collecting (although it surely involves that) but as experiencing and understanding music. The new fieldwork leads us to ask what it is like for a person (ourselves included) to make and to know music as lived experience." In "Knowing Fieldwork," in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, 2nd ed., eds. Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25. Harris M. Berger describes a type of fieldwork for popular music that takes into account the total experience in "Phenomenology and the Ethnography of Popular Music: Ethnomusicology at the Juncture of Cultural Studies and Folklore," in *Shadows in the Field*, 62–75.

32. This assignment requires students to engage in close, focused, repeated listening. Jennifer L. Hund, "Writing about Music in Large Music Appreciation Classrooms Using Active Learning, Discipline Specific Skills, and Peer Review," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 2, no. 2 (2012): 117–132, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/41/88>.

on the screen.³³ As we talk through the observations, students are asked to clarify their observations and use more specific language, especially terms we have learned in class. Slowly, we build an ideal response that is uploaded to our course web page as a model for students to refer to later as they write up their own observations at concerts and recitals.

Each remaining class period involves a lecture introduction for the day's topic with content and questions that are explored through musical works. Students are asked specific questions about musical style to prompt thought before listening and to spur discussion about what they hear. We use the content of the conversation to lead back to the introductory contextual questions. This lecture-discussion format provides additional real-time listening models.

In my large-enrollment course (220 people), students are required to attend only two performances during the semester, one from a list of traditional performance venues for Western European classical music (concert venues with seating facing a raised stage) and one from a list of venues with spaces that are more interactive (restaurant, art gallery, or outdoor venue with no prescribed seating). The first response is due shortly before mid-term, and the second must be submitted two weeks before the end of the semester. Students must, however, submit their individual response forms within 48 hours of the start time of the performance they've attended to make sure the experience is fresh in their minds, resulting in more thorough, interesting, and successful responses. The second response contains additional questions asking students to compare their second performance experience with the first. Some students are involved in the performances approved for this assignment, and they are given alternative questions to answer from their own perspective as performers.

Reflection

This assignment is far from revolutionary or particularly new: my cursory Internet search for concert report assignment descriptions showed many instructors exploring goals that capture the entire live music experience as well as applying musical terms in a new situation.³⁴ What this assignment and others like it offers, however, is a glimpse of ways in which they show some change in the discipline of music appreciation or, at the very least, reveal where the tensions

33. While I collect responses on a Word file, some instructors use other means to collect such data, including social networking devices like Twitter. Christine Greenhow, Beth Robelia, and Joan E. Hughes, "Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship in a Digital Age: Web 2.0 and Classroom Research: What Path Should We Take Now?" *Educational Researcher* 38, no. 4 (2009): 246–59.

34. My initial Internet search in Spring 2013 resulted in roughly 30 websites for courses at both the university- and the high school-level. Unfortunately, the links to the courses were made inactive at the end of the semester.

lie between traditional and alternative methods of teaching music appreciation courses today.

The political, cultural, religious, and social contexts for music appreciation courses have changed dramatically since the middle of the twentieth century, and for such courses not only to simply exist but also to continue to be meaningful for students, it is essential for the discipline to reflect those changes. Many alternative types of concert reports, like the Performance Response, continue the essential skill of listening and also require students to place their musical observations within larger cultural and social contexts and to make connections and draw conclusions about those connections. This achieves a level of higher-order learning that instructors routinely seek to reach with students. By incorporating observations of social, behavioral, and visual aspects of performances, these assignments are also expanding the model of music appreciation to include the discipline of ethnomusicology, albeit in a crudely basic way. And this inclusion is not merely at the level of subject—of incorporating the study of “world music.” It is also at the level of discipline—of engaging in the sorts of activities (fieldwork) and questions dealt with by scholars of ethnomusicology (behavior, interaction, function, ritual, to name a few).

Changing the focus of the concert report to include cultural and social contexts calls into question what it means to “appreciate music.” At its earliest inception, students were taught to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of music with the goal that it would impact their own social behavior, generating, like the Great Books model, a well-formed society. Another purpose for such a course might be the building of a future audience for Western European classical music. With funding for art on the decline in recent years, it is no wonder that this might become a priority in teaching general students. If the goal is to bolster the sheer enjoyment of listening to music, then this course is unnecessary. Students already enjoy listening to music. If we hope to teach how to listen in a more discerning manner, we must then choose the music to discern, opening wide the issue of Western European classical canon.

Perhaps the discipline of music appreciation is an introduction to the world of what professionals in music do. The concert report itself is an opportunity for encapsulating the inquiries, priorities, and concerns of many different music fields. In the Performance Response, students are asked to make sense of why the music selections were programmed in a particular way, why a certain performance venue was chosen, why the performers and audience behaved the way they did (and how they know it either was or wasn't appropriate), and to suggest a purpose for the performance. Answering such questions borrows modes of inquiry from music fields such as arts management, music business, conducting, composing, as well as theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology. With additional information and preparation, students could learn to think

like specialists in these fields and provide knowledgeable, informed, and even nuanced responses to open-ended questions facing professionals.

One of the reasons early practitioners of music appreciation focused on theory and history was the belief that these two fields offered information as well as general music skills that could be learned with greater ease and in less time than learning how to play an instrument or compose a piece. New technologies and their ready availability and easy use allow a rethinking of the models for a music appreciation discipline, models such as therapy, education, sound engineering and design, arts management, criticism, librarianship, conducting, instrument design, building, maintenance, and care, as well as ethnomusicology, historical musicology, and theory. This type of rethinking generates the possibilities for a variety of creative projects incorporating a basic level of disciplinary thinking from many music fields. Students become acquainted with traditional questions along with newer issues that press against these fields through relevant readings, guest speakers, and listening. They also get a taste of what these professionals experience, the types of questions they need to answer to do what they do, by engaging in creative hands-on projects.

The concert report gives students the opportunity to enter the musical experience in a new way, one that looks a little like an ethnomusicologist. Perhaps other projects throughout a semester could be created to give students an idea of what it's like to be a professional in another music specialty. Students could use recent research in music therapy and brain science to create playlists or musical activities for residents of dementia or Alzheimer's facilities, helping them to access memories. Composition software allows students to create original sound files without the conventional training in composition. With guidance, students can apply their knowledge of musical elements in the creation of sound design for a short scene from a film, TV show, or play. Using educational research, students can develop a lesson plan to use music concepts to teach a non-music topic, such as math, science, or history. Students could develop an advertising campaign for a new CD release by incorporating research, design techniques, and business models found in today's world of arts management and music business. Modeling historical instrument manuals and treatises, students could design and build an instrument, write a description of how to play it, and provide a demonstration of what that instrument sounds like. Using their knowledge of basic music theory, students can analyze a work, providing an untraditional descriptive paper or graphic representation of that analysis. Students interested in history could create a documentary film that preserves factual accuracy but is put into conversation with current fashion trends and slang as well as contemporary music issues.

By opening the discipline of music appreciation in this way, the musical experiences also change, combining listening experiences with creative

experiences. In some small way, students get to engage actively in professions of music. And general students, who pursue degrees outside of music, are encouraged to bring their knowledge and expertise from a variety of other fields to bear on their learning about music. Their own musical experiences are enhanced by their contact with professionals, and their understanding of creative processes will undoubtedly change as they participate in them personally. A music appreciation course with this sort of focus gives students the chance to investigate musical experiences as a professional might, as well as the opportunity to engage actively in the discipline(s).

Appendix: Performance Response Questions

Basic Information (2 points)

1. What is the name of the group who performed? If there is no name for the group, list the names of the individuals who performed. (Did you perform?)
2. What was the date, time, and location of the performance?

Description of the Performance Space (24 points)

3. What is the approximate size of the performance space in relation to our classroom?
4. Where are the performers located in the space? (Please draw a simple diagram if you think that would help you better answer this question.)
5. How many audience members are there, and where is the audience located in the space?
6. Where are you located in the space? Did you stand? Did you sit?
7. Describe the design and decoration of the space. Be specific. Look around and give a vivid description of what you see with the assumption that your reader has never been to this location.
8. Why do you think the concert organizers chose this space for the performance?

[Question for the second Performance Response] How is this performance space similar to or different from the space for Performance Response #1?

Description of Musical Style (30 points)

9. Choose three pieces/movements from the performance—you must write about the first and last piece, and then choose one other from the middle of the performance. For each piece, give a detailed description of the musical style as you listen to it using terms from class, including tempo,

dynamics, melody, rhythm, and so on. In other words, you will provide a running commentary of what you are hearing.

- If you use information from another source (i.e., Wikipedia or other Internet site, program notes, friend's assignments), you will earn 0 points on the assignment and will be reported to the Office of Dean of Students for plagiarism.

10. Why do you think they played this particular music and played it in the order they did?

Description of Interaction (24 points)

You must provide specific examples in your answers to each of the following questions to receive full credit.

11. How did the musicians interact with one another during the performance? (If you performed, be sure to give an example of how you interacted with other musicians.)
12. How did the musicians interact with the audience during the performance? (If you performed, be sure to give an example of how you interacted with the audience.)
13. How did the audience interact with the performers during the performance? (If you were in the audience, be sure to give an example of how you interacted with the performers.)
14. Do you think the type of interaction between musicians and between musicians and audience was appropriate? How did you know it was or wasn't appropriate?

[Question for the second Performance Response] Explain how the level of interaction was similar to or different from Performance Response #1.

Reflection on Your Observations (20 points):

15. Based on all your observations, what do you think the concert organizers were trying to accomplish with this performance? What was the purpose of the performance? (If you performed, what were the goals of your performance and how did you know what they were?)
16. As a member of the audience, do you think the performers successfully achieved their goal? Use your observations about space, musical style, and interaction from this Performance Response to explain your answer. (As a performer, do you think you achieved your goal? Use your observations about space, musical style, and interaction from this Performance Response to explain your answer.)

Extra Credit (10 points)

If you were in the audience, speak with a performer after the performance. Musicians love to talk about their work, so don't be shy! Instead of telling a performer what you did or didn't like about the performance, ask him/her a question that connects with our discussions about music and musicians in class.

Suggested questions: What did he/she find most meaningful about the performance? What was challenging about the program? How was the music for the program chosen? What information about the composer or historical context was particularly helpful in understanding and interpreting the work? What is his/her favorite aspect of performing this program in general?

If you performed, speak with an audience member after the performance.

Suggested questions: Why did you choose to attend this performance? What did you find most meaningful about the performance? What was challenging as a listener about the program? What was your favorite aspect of attending this performance in general?

Name of the person you spoke with: _____

[You must obtain a signature from this person and scan it to this form.]

Questions and answers from the interview: