

# Concert Reviews / Discussion Guidelines

Sampled from Darren Hunter

There will be two live performances in this class—in addition to the concert there will be a **post-concert discussion** with the artists. Each student is responsible for creating a series of questions that informs the audience (ie. the class) about the music, the performers and their journey up to the present—don't be shy! This discussion will provide you with first hand information to utilize in writing your reviews. Your reviews are due on the following dates: **Jazz Trio Review (7/16); Classical Duo Review (7/23)**.

**The required length of each review is 3–5 pages (double spaced)**

Concert reviews require more than just listening to the performance.

Writing a music review on a concert requires going beyond the listening experience. You'll be more than a spectator as you document everything from the energy of the performers to the reaction of the class to the emotions that the show presented. You should also include background information on the performers and how they got to this point.

## Things You'll Need

- A Concert
- Notebook and pens

## Instructions

- A review should tell a story
- A review should be written in simple, everyday language

1. Record comprehensive notes before, during and even after the show. Capture in writing, moments during the concert that were particularly notable such as audience interaction or poignant statements by the performers. Items to consider while taking notes:

- **Musical details**
  - Describe your experience listening to the music—listening to each piece. Did any compositions stand out? What was most interesting about what you've experienced? How did the band sound? How is the musical experience different from what you are used to listening to (if at all)? What did the music specifically sound "like"? Describe as much as you can remember. What will you remember most about the music in a year from now. Explain.
- **Point of view**
  - The point of the review isn't whether the music was good or bad. It's much more important to say what the music was *like*, both objectively (what went on in purely musical terms), and subjectively (what the music felt like, what it mean to you not just as a musician, but as a human being).
  - Does the concert present any issues? What was your strongest impression of it? What was your opinion?
  - Did you like it, hate it, feel indifferent to it? The review should be built around your discussion of all this. If you're not sure what you think, then that can be your point of view -- as long as you make clear why you don't have a conclusion, and how you feel about that.

2. Pull together and expound on your bullet points and observations as quickly as possible after the concert. Think about the emotions you felt as well as the effect the show had on the class and if, for example, they seemed to leave upbeat or disappointed.

- **Evocative impressions (writing style)**

- Try to find a personal, even poetic way of talking about music. Instead of saying "Franco Corelli has a loud, rough voice," you might say, "He sounds like a teenager with raging hormones." Comments like this help readers without a technical knowledge of music. They also bring your point of view alive. Maybe the articulation of the flute playing was remarkable, but why do we care about that?
- Elaborate on the genre of music you are reviewing. Note how this concert may or may not have been groundbreaking or relevant. Include anything interesting about the dynamic during the show of the individual band members.
- If you ask questions about the concert, or about issues it seems to raise, make sure you answer them, or at least find things about the concert that illustrate what you're talking about. Don't let important thoughts or opinions just hang there. Don't just state your opinion once, and spend the rest of the review describing things that happened.