

## Asking questions

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The strongest step in the right direction in any educational experience is asking the right questions—meaning, questions that expand your knowledge, build upon what you know, and take your learning in unexpected directions. Below are some of the excellent questions you came up with to guide any encounter with a new piece of music.

### **Some basics**

Who made this piece of music? How many people were involved?

What does it sound like?

Where was it made?

When was it made?

How was it made?

### **Power**

What was the musician's status (e.g., rich or poor)?

Who was in power at this time?

Who paid this person to write the piece?

Who decided that the music is "good", or who gave permission to make it?

Who preserved this piece of music?

What influences the people in higher power to be in the position they're in?

Were there any crises going on at the time?

Does the piece reflect the power issues we are facing at the moment or during the time period it was made?

### **Social structures**

What audience was the piece intended for (e.g. upper or lower classes)?

What type of environmental setting were they in?

What culture influenced or inspired this piece?

What else was going on in this time period?

What contributions did the popularity of the period make to the sound?

What kind of response was expected from the audience?

What was the intended use of this piece of music?

Was it sacred or secular?

### **Personal bias**

Can all types of people hear this piece?

Why do I not appreciate this new kind of music?

Can I relate this unfamiliar piece of music to any other kind of music?

**Basic questions can hold deeper implications, if you use them that way:**

You could ask “During what time period was this piece created?”, and by doing so you’d be able to analyze what influences at this period in time were determining how music was created, what determined if a piece became popular or remained in obscurity, and why the piece was composed the way it was (spacing, melody, instruments used, etc.).

What’s the time period? By looking at the time period you can see the popular topics and understand the angle the artist had on it, based on their biases.