

Analysis Essay – due W May 8 / F May 10

Online reference: <https://drjonesmusic.me/analysis-essay-spring-2019/>

This essay will be started in class on W May 1 / F May 3, revised at home, and handed in on W May 8 / F May 10 with a process letter. Late essays will be accepted up to W May 22, losing one point per day.

Overview

Musical analysis, like all analysis, is made up of two things:

Analysis = Description + “So what”

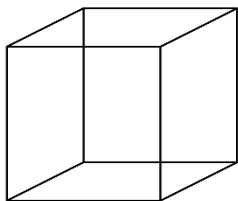
As with all analysis, there are multiple ways to look at and describe a topic—different perspectives yield different interpretations and different insights. The goal with this in-class essay is to flex and strengthen your ability to regard the same idea from multiple perspectives.

In this class, you’ve learned several ways that people think about and understand music:

- Musical elements
- Being an attentive listener of the soundscape
- Music history (style and trends in various periods of music history)
- How music affects the brains of people who play it, create it, and listen to it (physiology and musicking)
- How music is learned and taught (education)
- The skills of executing music (auditions, ensemble skills, singing)
- How music is funded (economics)
- How music is consumed
- How music is used (dance, religion, violence)
- Listener bias (age, gender, background)
- Music criticism
- Careers of musicians, especially composers
- Issues of authenticity in various genres
- Ethnomusicology and social context
- Arts administration and teamwork skills

In-class process

For this writing, you’re going to explore different ways of thinking about a piece of music: György Ligeti, *Mysteries of the Macabre* (1992), performed by soprano/conductor Barbara Hannigan (b. 1971) and the Gothenberg Symphony Orchestra, using a brainstorming technique called “cubing” to get you started.



We often think about a topic in only one or two ways—when our brain feels like it has landed on the “right” answer, it stops searching. The more we think about it from those perspectives, the more focused our brain becomes, and we blind ourselves to other ideas because it’s difficult to break out of that rut.

However, one of our tasks as writers and thinkers is to go beyond our typical limits of thought. That’s where a cube comes in. A cube has *six* sides—that’s how many distinct ways you’re going to think about this piece of music today. Draw upon the different ideas you’ve learned in this class to add depth and variety to your work.

The cubing process for this essay:

First, watch the video for this piece of music.

- (1) Describe. Use your five senses. Adjectives. What do you see and hear?
- (2) Compare and Contrast. What is it similar to? What is it dissimilar to?
- (3) Associate. What memories or thoughts come to mind as you think about the piece?
- (4) Analyze. Ask (open-ended) questions. How do the parts of the piece work together?
- (5) Apply. How could this piece be used or applied? In what contexts?
- (6) Argue for and against. What are the piece’s strong suits? What are its weaknesses? Who would see something positive in this piece? What would they react to positively? Who would interpret this piece negatively? What would they react to?

Thesis statement. Distill your ideas into a single sentence. A thesis statement is an interesting opinion that you can defend and support using your brainstorming ideas.

At-home revision

Using your thesis statement as a guide, turn your brainstorming into a polished essay about Ligeti’s piece. This essay may take any format or point of view that you choose, as long as it demonstrates meaningful insight and analytical interpretation of Ligeti’s work. The end result should consider Ligeti’s piece from multiple angles, drawing upon the range of brainstorming ideas you came up with in class.

You’ll be graded on your ability to come up with as many meaningful and varied ideas about this piece and your ability to turn those varied ideas into a coherent essay about the work.

Analysis Essay – Rubric (staple to the front of your first draft)

Student: _____ Section: _____

Title	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good title is engaging, accurate, avoids clichés, and is not too long.					
Introduction	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good introduction frames the essay’s topic in a clear and focused manner. A strong/good essay contains a thesis statement, which is clearly stated and interesting.					
Musical descriptions and use of technical vocabulary	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/20
A strong/good essay prioritizes specific musical details to describe that are interesting, relevant, specific, and sufficient. Strong/good descriptions use discipline-specific vocabulary and/or evocative language to accurately, thoroughly, and vividly capture the sensation of hearing the musical feature being described. A strong description goes beyond mere description to say why a musical feature is significant. An OK/weak description is a chronological play-by-play of several details or is not vivid/evocative.					
“So what”	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/20
Strong/good analysis shows what ideas are communicated by the musical details described. Strong/good analysis is insightful rather than vague or superficial and goes beyond the superficial by thoughtfully incorporating comparison, contrast, and/or synthesis; strong/good essay analysis the implication of the ideas under consideration.					
Conclusion	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good/ok assignment includes a conclusion, and that conclusion is not a restatement of the introduction or a summary of ideas previously stated in the assignment. A strong/good conclusion broadens the scope of the essay by relating its ideas to other topics, new questions, or contexts.					
Structure	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good essay presents a logical flow of ideas and avoids straying or meandering. A strong/good paragraph remains focused on a single main idea, and all sentences within a paragraph support its main idea.					
Written skill	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good essay is well-organized and generally contains correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling; a strong/good essay demonstrates appropriate and effective word choice and style. Whether the writing is essay-like or creative, in a strong/good assignment the prose is easy to follow, precise, and clear; a strong/good assignment avoids both vagueness and redundancy; a good/strong assignment avoids inaccuracies.					
Requirements and process letter	Strong	Good	O.K.	Weak	Points: ____/10
A strong/good essay includes a process letter in which the author describes how they revised their brainstorming and what they learned in the process of creating this essay.					

Total points ____/100

Letter grade: ____