

Analysis Project: What Is Good in Contemporary Classical Music?

NAME: _____

- **Purpose:** Make a persuasive oral argument for the value of one contemporary classical piece of your choosing, using analytical tools and aesthetic concepts discussed this semester.
- **Project Components:**
 - Composition selected, with audio and score found (bring to class / links)
 - Presentation prepared, including A/V examples and practiced presentation

(In-class presentation dates to be assigned)

- **Project Description:**

MUSIC SELECTION

You may select any piece of music to analyze, provided it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1.) You truly **enjoy** listening to it and consider it an example of good contemporary classical music
- 2.) It is in the genre of **contemporary classical music**, meant primarily for a concert performance
 - a. While there are many excellent examples of media music (film, video game soundtracks, etc.), they are not meant for the concert stage, and so should not be considered contemporary classical music for the purposes of this project.
- 3.) It was written **on or after your birth year**
- 4.) You can legally access the **audio** on Naxos, YouTube (composer- or performer-uploaded), etc.
- 5.) You can legally find or borrow the **full score**
 - a. These last two requirements are often a challenge with contemporary music. I urge you to consider works you or your colleagues are working on in studio or ensembles. If you get stuck, ask your primary applied teacher for suggestions.

AESTHETICS

Briefly discuss the **artistic aims** of the work and composer, using identifying terminology of **compositional styles and techniques**. These claims should (eventually) be supported and demonstrated through your analysis.

Note: There have been many different trends in contemporary classical music beyond the few specific styles and techniques we cover in this course. Instead of trying to fit your work into an earlier mold, research your selected piece and its composer to learn more about the style(s) and technique(s) that may have influenced the composition. Although most contemporary works cannot be neatly categorized into a single style, most have at least some elements of one or more earlier artistic movements.



ANALYSIS

Support your aesthetic claims (above) with an **analysis** of your chosen work. To begin organizing your thoughts as you work, you may wish to return to the questions you answered in Analysis Project #1:

- 1.) How would you describe this excerpt, not in terms of musical analysis, but using objective and subjective adjectives? Is it predictable? Calming? Chaotic? Majestic? Turquoise?
- 2.) Explain the organization of the pitch content. Can you identify any structure or pattern to the selection pitches, and/or their order? Do one or more pitches seem to serve as pitch centers / goals? If so, locate and identify the pitch(es). Does any of this change throughout the piece?
- 3.) In addition to the pitch content, do any other parameters of the music give you clues as to the work's overall organization or divisions? (Form, rhythm, dynamics, register, etc.)

At a minimum, your analysis should discuss how the **pitch content** is organized. Is it tonal? Centric? Triadic? Serial? A mixture of these?

Because your presentation's time is very limited (see below), plan to make a small number of high-impact, specific analytical comments on excerpts of your chosen work. This is *not* a comprehensive or exhaustive analysis. Rather, aim to support your aesthetic and tonal/formal observations through the use of two to four carefully-selected musical moments that illustrate your arguments.

VISUAL EXAMPLES

Your presentation must include a **visual aid** in the form of a PowerPoint, Prezi, and/or paper handouts. At a minimum, these visuals should include the title of your presentation, your name, and two or more specific score excerpts discussed in your analysis.

AUDIO EXAMPLES

You must play **two or more audio excerpts** discussed during your analysis. These may come from Naxos (or YouTube, if uploaded by the composer, performer, publisher, or presenting organization). Have all excerpts carefully cued to the correct starting points before you start the presentation.

PRESENTATION

Be sure to **adequately prepare** your presentation, in terms of both its content and its delivery. This includes **practicing** the presentation with all visual and audio examples, and testing out any needed **technology** in the classroom before your presentation itself.

Each presentation will last a **maximum of 12 minutes**, followed by 3 minutes of discussion, and 3 minutes of transition. 12 minutes is extremely short, so you can't mention everything there is to say. Be brief, to the point, and focused on making your aesthetic and analytical arguments. Presenters will be stopped once they go over their allotted time.

Grading:

- 10 Aesthetics Artistic aims of the work/composer are discussed
- 20 Analysis Aesthetic claims are supported by two to four specific analytical comments, using terminology from class; pitch content discussed
- 5 Visual Examples Presentation is supplemented by visual aid, w/2+ images of score excerpts
- 5 Audio Examples 2+ well-chosen and well-prepared audio excerpts used effectively
- 10 Oral Presentation Oral delivery of presentation is well-prepared, polished, and persuasive

- **50 TOTAL**