

# Concert Review Paper Requirements – Second Quarter

**\*All papers are due Monday January 19, 2012**

## Overview of Assignment

- 1. The purpose of this assignment is to expand your musical knowledge and tastes.** Please choose a concert of substantial musical merit and excellence, and something that you are interested in!
- 2. It is mandatory that students travel outside of FHS for this assignment and attend a high school, collegiate or professional ensemble concert – no junior high concerts will be accepted. Students must choose a concert band, orchestra or jazz band concert for the assignment.** Small ensembles will not be accepted unless approved by Mr. Moore or Mr. Lang in advance.
- 3. Papers will not be accepted if the concert review is on a choir/band combination concert or musical/opera pit orchestra – no matter what ensemble or organization.** Papers critiquing a combined band/orchestra concert are allowed.
- 4. Students are required to choose a concert listed on this document, or one of the following:**
  - A symphonic band, orchestra, jazz band, or ensemble concert from an accredited university or college. All Big Ten schools, Illinois state colleges/universities, or excellent community college ensembles are acceptable schools.
  - A symphonic band concert from one of the local community bands: Palatine, Mt. Prospect, Mount Prospect, Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, etc.
  - Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Northbrook Symphony Orchestra, or equivalent professional orchestra
  - An outstanding high school symphonic band, jazz band, or orchestra concert.
- 5. Students are responsible for double checking all performance dates, venues, and ticket prices listed on this document.** Do not assume that all information is correct – please double check websites or call the organization before you go to the concert!
- 6. Please check with Mr. Moore or Mr. Lang if you are attending a concert by an ensemble that is not on this document, and are uncertain if it meets the criteria for the assignment.**

## Concert Review Paper Requirements and Criteria:

- 1. Opening paragraph of the paper must state the ensemble with its instrumentation (in paragraph form), the concert date and venue, and any other pertinent information.** Students must critique four pieces from the concert – your choice. Students must write at least one paragraph per piece.
- 2. Concert Review Papers should be 1-3 pages long, typed, maximum font size of twelve, and single spaced.** The program from the concert must be attached with the paper. The minimum concert review paper should have six paragraphs.
- 3. Expand on your thoughts and dig into each piece of music!** Discuss musical terms: tempo, style, instrumentation, dynamics, soloists, ensemble features/effects, meters, etc. Do not get “sidetracked” about your trip, friends, audience behavior, or other ways of filling up writing space.
- 4. Write only about the music and what you liked and disliked.** Prove why you disliked any music in a mature and logical manner. Do not use common talk or slang in your writing – write this critique as if it were an English paper. Conclude the paper with an ending paragraph that summarizes the music, ensembles, and experience.

## **Sample Concert Review Paper #1 – An example of a phenomenal paper! (A++)**

For my concert review paper, I chose to attend the Elmhurst College Fall Band Concert. The concert was on Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at the Hammerschmidt Memorial Chapel located on the Elmhurst College campus. This concert featured the Wind Ensemble under the direction of Professor Judith E. Grimes and the Symphonic band under the direction of Ross Kellan. I chose to critique the selection played by the Wind Ensemble. The Wind Ensemble includes 7 flutes, 2 oboes, 3 bassoons, 1 E flat clarinet, 9 clarinets, 3 bass clarinets, 1 contra bass clarinet, 6 alto saxophones, 3 tenor saxophones, 2 baritone saxophones, 7 trumpets, 4 French horns, 5 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 3 euphoniums, 2 tubas 1 string bass, and 6 percussionists.

The first piece the band played was “In Flight” by Samuel R. Hazo. The piece starts off with a strong cymbal crash, snare hit, and bass drum hit. This awakening force is followed by forceful runs played by the upper voices and strong sustaining notes by the lower voices. This forte and flourish from the band hints to the audience right away that the song is about the majestic qualities of being in flight. The main melody of runs is repeated 3 times by the ensemble, but the third differs in that the last note of the run is sustained by a trill in both the woodwinds and brass.

The next section of this piece features a softer and more legato melody. The middle voices (clarinets, saxophones, and French horns) perform the main melody with underlying staccato from the bassoons, bari sax, and bass clarinets. The end of each phrase of the melody is accompanied by short rapid tonguing in the brass section which ends by the beginning of the following measure. The melody is then dropped to a lower register and accompanied by sustaining notes in the low brass. The counter melody then changes for a third time when the flutes and bells perform frantic runs on top of the established melody in the low register.

After a brief transition featuring the trumpet section, the piece breaks into a soft and soaring melody performed by the tubas, French horns, euphoniums, and saxophones. The main runs heard by the bells and flutes in the second section return and contrast to the soothing melody played in the rest of the band.

A decrescendo and ritardando reintroduce the main runs heard in the very beginning of the piece. As before, the main melody is interrupted the third time with the percussion playing powerfully for 3 or 4 measures and then the band answers with 3 or 4 measures of powerful blasts. This battle returns to the familiar beginning runs and melody but soon breaks into a version of the melody heard in the second section. The French horns this time perform the frantic runs with the woodwinds performing the melody. The end of the piece seems to clash with all three main melodies going at once and ends with a majestic unified rhythm that cuts out sharply to a sustained high hat roll.

The next piece the band performed was much different than their previous piece. The song was called “Tribute” and is written by Travis J. Cross. This piece begins with a brass ensemble that is legato, powerful, and calm. A clarinet solo emerges from the almost melancholy chords and adds warmth to the brass sound. The whole clarinet section, along with the saxophones, joins the soloist and adds a layer of color to the brass melody. The music then changes as a short woodwind ensemble emerges with layering between the clarinets, flutes, and bells. The whole band then comes together to form a beautiful sound with intricate harmonies that add color to the melody. The brass ensemble from the beginning returns with a strong clarinet harmony. A trumpet soloist plays a moving melody with the band sustaining notes for beats 3 and 4. Near the end of the trumpet solo, the flute section comes in underneath that adds color to the solo and allows a gentle transition to occurring between the passing of the melody from the trumpet to the rest of the band. The low brass then take the melody which is brought to a short-lived forte by the woodwind sections. The woodwind voices allow for the introduction of an oboe solo which is backed by a euphonium countermelody. The solo is passed to a trumpet soli and back again to the oboe and euphonium almost unnoticeably. In a cool effect, the oboe solo, trumpet soli, and euphonium join together in a well-working ensemble.

The trumpet soli returns with the brass melody heard at the beginning of the piece. This time, though, many more harmonies and counter melodies occur with moving parts in the low brass. The oboe solo can be

heard subtly among the array of music. The trumpet solo returns, but this time it is accompanied by a second trumpet. The two perform a duet in which one echoes the other with an inversion of the first's solo. The band softly comes in on the unified hold at the end of the second echo. A single oboe glides slowly up the staff and holds on top of the unified note. The band decrescendos softly into silence.

The next song I critiqued was a song entitled "Lincoln's Portrait" by Aaron Copland. It was conducted by Brian Miller--the Illinois Air Guard Air Force Band director. This song does include a narration (which was performed by the new president of Elmhurst College), but the music in relation to the speaking portion is phenomenal.

The song begins with a high flute melody that seems to proclaim a somewhat sad feel. The clarinet section plays the same melody, but adds dissonance to the chords. The low voices sustain at the end of each hold in the clarinet and flute section. The trumpets join the upper woodwinds in the chords and more low voices join the sustains. This section is woven with numerous dissonant and powerful chords. With each sustain, the band grows bolder and the notes become higher. Each chord played by the upper voices begins on a note and then drops a whole and sometimes a half step lower. In contrast, the low voices play notes that start lower, with the second note higher than the first.

After a brief moment of silence, a warm euphonium solo emerges with the initial proclaiming melody heard in the flute section. In an opposite of the first section, the clarinets and saxophones play the sustained notes at the end of the solo. The euphonium is followed by a trumpet solo which is still accompanied by the euphonium.

A surprising fast melody suddenly comes to life. The peppy new melody is introduced with the bright upper tones of the flutes, clarinets, and bells. The sudden eruption of high notes gives way to an oboe solo that is supported by the lower voices. The oboe begins to ascend and the climax in the upper voices is again proclaimed. For a second time, this ring of voices gives way to the oboe solo with a surprising twist. The solo is an inversion of the song "Camptown Races"—written by Stephen Collins Foster shortly before the Civil War—which is one of 189 songs created by Foster which soon became part of the collection of American folk songs from Lincoln's time. This folk song brings life and character to the piece and helps to establish its 19<sup>th</sup> century foundation. In between short bursts of the folk song, the band plays sinister notes which give way to the again happy oboe solo. This exchange occurs 3 times before changing to a transition featuring the woodwinds.

The brass takes over the music and play short holds at the end of each phrase in a trombone. The woodwinds soon join and the music becomes confusing with an array of clashing melodies and countermelodies representing the many different ideas that were evolving around Lincoln's time. The music takes a turn for a smoother feel and the woodwinds and brass seem to work loosely with yet against each other creating an uneven feel. The familiar trumpet regiment-type melody can be heard above the again returning maze of melodies. A sudden suspended cymbal roll rises above the clutter and the band fades with the fade of the cymbal roll.

The clarinets and flutes bring forth a warm frontier feel with the oboes as the narration begins. The sections perform this log cabin feel because the narration begins at the home life of Abraham Lincoln. The brass joins as a quote as one of Lincoln's speeches is recited. As the speech comes to a climax, so too does the music as the words of Lincoln are almost drowned out by the majestic chord that has progressed upwards throughout the quote. A single euphonium plays as Abe Lincoln's unique qualities are spoken of. Abe Lincoln is quoted calling slavery "tyrannical." With those words, the band strikes an angry, yet majestic chord.

This chord gives way to the frontier feel as Abe Lincoln is again described. As one of his speeches is quoted, a neat effect happens. With the transition between Lincoln's description and his words, the melody is passed gracefully to a trumpet solo. This transition adds a lot of life to the words of Lincoln. With the quoting of the Gettysburg Address, a lonely sounding trumpet soli resonates with the words of Lincoln's great speech. This soli echoes the taps that may have been played over the bloodstained field. Ending with the words "government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth" from Lincoln's speech is carried on through the powerful and concrete chords of the band. The chords are majestic and definitely mirror the power of Lincoln's words. The band ends in a triumphant chord that fills every corner of

the room.

The last song the band performed is called “Slava!” by Leonard Bernstein. The piece begins with a mighty flourish produced by the whole band that ends in a unified downward gliss. A slap stick (which will become very familiar by the end of the piece) adds an ear piercing shot at the height of the flourish. The band immediately quiets down and an offbeat rhythm is played in the lower woodwind voices to establish the feel of the song. A trombone solo blasts over the offbeats and a cymbal joins the offbeat instruments during the trombone solo. Two more solos are played, one by a regular trombone and the other by a muted trombone. Each solo is interrupted by the band. After a series of short solos, the main melody returns.

The next section glides in on the tail end of the end of the main melody in the previous section. The woodwinds play short ascending “dits” which, when put together, create one connected phrase. The “dits” begin in the low woodwinds and end with the flutes. This cascade of notes seems to reappear one last time, but the audience is fooled as the flutes and clarinets seem to get stuck on two notes and they enter a rapid duet with the flutes playing high notes on the offbeats and the clarinets playing low notes on the down beats.

A new section is introduced with the clarinets playing short flourishes with the low brass playing their own theme. This new music accompanies a saxophone solo. This solo is passed to the upper voices with the trumpets playing a countermelody and the trombones echoing. The main melody suddenly returns with the slap stick and a surprise gliss from the whistle. The main melody of this section is quick to return, though.

A sudden break happens in the melody and the array of solos and solis return from section 1. Following the repeat, a frantic succession of the melodies from sections 2 and 3 is played powerfully by the band. At the height of this array of melodies, a single chime is played accompanied by a sustained note played by a single flute. At this cue, the band yells “Slava!!!” in triple forte and concludes the song with two powerful descending notes.

I thought that the Elmhurst Wind Ensemble was incredible. Their selection of music was outstanding because it showed off their talent and ability to switch between types of compositions. The song “Tribute” showed the band’s ability to play very melodically demanding. I was really blown away by the blend of melodies and harmonies and how the band was able to bring out the low voices and keep everything balanced. I think my favorite piece was the “Lincoln Portrait.” This song really brought the fact that every piece of music tells a story to life. The music was brilliantly crafted around the words spoken by and the description of Lincoln. The band had a very mature playing level to be able to connect the words to the music and noticeably bring out the connection between them. “Slava!” definitely showed that the band has incredible skill...and endurance for that matter. The band had played four lengthy songs before “Slava!” and I was surprised to see them end with such a forceful song that required a lot of brass “chops.” The band definitely pulled it off and gave a great performance. I thoroughly enjoyed the concert!

### **Sample Concert Review Paper #2 – An example of a decent paper that meets requirements (A-/B+)**

William Fremd High School’s Wind Symphony, directed by Matthew Moore, consists of two piccolos, nine flutes, three oboes, three bassoons, ten clarinets, three bass clarinets, three alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones, two baritone saxophones, twelve trumpets, four French horns, three trombones, two bass trombones, two baritones, three tubas, one string bass, a harp, a pianist, and seven percussionists. On January 27, 2009, Fremd held their Peoria preview concert in the Kolze auditorium and played six pieces: “Moorside March” by Gustav Holst, “Noisy Wheels of Joy” by Eric Whitacre, “Shepherd’s Hey” by Percy Grainger, “Be Thou My Vision” by Travis J. Cross, “Fantasia in G” by Timothy Mahr, and “Gloriosa” by Yasuhide Ito.

The first song played by Fremd’s Wind Symphony was: “Moorside March” by Gustav Holst. The piece has three main themes in which it transitions between. It begins with piano and an intro with the low brass,

percussion, and a trill from the woodwinds into the first theme. The oboes carry this main theme while other woodwinds enter and eventually the whole band is playing together. The sound then drops after echoing the trumpets, opening up for the clarinets. There's a slight ritardando and a decrescendo. Suddenly, the brass section powers through and the woodwinds come in with descending notes. As the low brass sustains even eighth notes, the woodwinds bring back the first theme. Shortly after, there is an oboe solo accompanied by the glockenspiel. After the solo, the brass section continued the theme and was followed by a soft saxophone feature, almost dream-like. Flutes and piccolo pick up the theme. The entire band enters, section by section, playing in cannon. They crescendo to a forte and instantaneously drop to a piano. Towards the end of the piece, there are several brassy trumpet features. The band crescendos and ends together on a chord played staccato.

The third piece played was "Shepherd's Hey" by Percy Grainger. The first movement is entitled "Lisbon". The piece starts out piano as the trumpets play marcato. The woodwinds then join them in playing the same rhythm which naturally increases the volume of the band to about a mezzo forte. The piece changes articulation and style from marcato to legato. Trombones and other low brass come in gloriously while the woodwinds hold and sustain the underlying theme. There is then a sudden drop in dynamics and there's a French horn feature. The theme ritards and the first movement ends with a diminuendo. The piece continues legato, soft and sweetly, and in four-four time with a French horn feature. The band comes in and swells to a forte then quickly decrescendos to a dull roar allowing for a trumpet solo. A gentle roll on the snare is in the background. A roll on the cymbals accompanied by a crescendo brings in the band for a full, rich sound. The piece is very legato and glorious. The low brass carries the band to another crescendo to fortissimo, but the sound suddenly drops and the entire band fades into silence.

The fourth song played by the Wind Symphony was "Be Thou My Vision" by Travis J. Cross. The piece begins legato and mezzo forte; the brass section plays long, stretched phrases. The meter is four-four. The band decrescendos and ritards; there is a break just before the alto saxophone solo. The soloist continues the legato articulation while the band enters to complete the last phrase with the alto saxophone and a solo trumpet then enters playing legato. As soon as this happens the tempo picks up; the trumpet is accompanied by mainly the woodwinds playing a counter melody which includes an articulation contrast, staccato, to the legato phrasing on top. So far there is no percussion in this piece, but as the band crescendos to a forte there is a roll on the cymbals. Now the entire band is playing grandiosely and majestically. This theme of counter articulations continues with the brass playing legato and the woodwinds playing staccato. The band then decrescendos and the music drastically slows down. A soft sustained note is cut off in a stop-time. Again, the trumpet soloist enters. This time the alto saxophone answers back to each phrase. The entire band crescendos and the piece closes with sustained chord by the band and a diminuendo.

I really enjoyed Fremd's Wind Symphony. Their music was entertaining, especially "Noisy Wheels of Joy," which was my favorite piece; it was quirky and put a smile on my face. "Be Thou My Vision" was also very engaging because the band sang during the piece, which really shows that band students can sing. Musically, there were some intonation issues, but otherwise it was a solid performance.