

Introduction to Music (FNRT 110) David McCarthy (damgla@rit.edu)

In this course, we'll look at music listening as a skill to be practiced, something like speaking a second language. We'll practice our listening skills on concert (classical) music, learning a few different listening skills. We will find out why music from a particular place, time, or person is the way it is, combining composers' biographies with some discussion of larger historical forces. There is no prerequisite. The **textbook** is *The Enjoyment of Music*, Essential Listening, by Forney, 3rd edition, ISBN 9780393603804. The ebook is \$50, and I like it because there are links to the music right in the text. There are two sets of listening lists: the main ones at [youtube.com/davidmccarthymusic](https://www.youtube.com/davidmccarthymusic), and those that go with your textbook at digital.wwnorton.com/enjmusic3ess.

The course grade will be:

- 40% from the seven tests
- 40% from either four concert reports or two concert reports and a term paper (whichever you decide to do)
- 20% from the final exam, which you don't have to do if you have a 95% average over all seven tests

Quick overview of things worth grades

Tests are given at the beginning of class, and last approximately 20 minutes. They're not cumulative. They're based on class lecture and assigned reading in the text, as well as ear training and identification of pieces from listening to a short selection. The tests cannot be given twice, so please do not be late (if the other section of Intro to Music works for your schedule, you can take the test with them). You drop your lowest grade, and in an emergency we can make up one other test with a paper.

For non-test work, you can either do four concert reports, or two concert reports and a short paper.

The **concert reports** are 500-800 words of review and commentary, based on visits to a classical chamber/orchestral/operatic concert. At least one really should be to a professional concert (not RIT students), and these are mostly downtown.

The **short term paper** is 1000-1500 words on pretty much any classical music topic that's not just biography. We usually work out the topics together.

For all submitted work, please use Times New Roman, 12 point, single-spaced, and give the word-count at the end.

Contacting me

My office is 1501 in building 9, the temporary structure south of the Ross building. I'm there most MWF afternoons, and some TR ones, but email me at damgla@rit.edu to set up an appointment if you want to chat about music.

More details on graded work

Tests

- The tests are open-note: use your handwritten notes from class, which are turned in with the quiz (don't forget to put your name on them). They're handed back to you with the graded test. I'd use loose-leaf paper for your notes; please staple them together.
- Each test has 3 sections: short answers, ear training, and music identification. The short answers are based on reading from the text, and notes from class (if you miss a class, get the notes from a friend). Make sure you get definitions for all the words in bold in the text, and take notes on whatever I write on the board in class. It's more than just vocabulary, though, so make sure you understand concepts. The ear training is based on techniques we practice in class, and is only worth bonus points.
- All the basic information (readings and pieces you need to identify) is posted on mycourses at least a week before the test.
- The music identification is the most heavily weighted, usually more than half the test, and the hardest to cram for, so I'd start by studying for that. During the test I'll play 30–60 seconds of a piece (usually not from the beginning, so listen through the whole thing), and ask you the composer's name and the title of the work. When you're taking down notes for the listening, be sure to write down what instruments are playing, as this is the easiest way of telling one piece from another. Also, it's more efficient to listen to each piece a couple of times than to just hear it 10 times in the background while you do something else. For bonus points, I'll often play a piece that I played in class, but didn't assign for the test, so it's worth paying attention to those pieces too.
- The tests are over quickly, so I'd review your notes beforehand to refresh your knowledge.
- There are lots of bonus questions, but they're usually oriented toward the more obscure details of the lecture and reading.
- **Make-up Papers:** Sometimes life happens on a test day, so you can make up one missed test with a 3-4 page paper on a topic based on that test (email me, and we'll work out a topic based on your favorite piece from that test). These are more difficult to get an A on than the actual test, so it's probably smartest to use the make-up paper as an emergency backup. Remember, you get to drop your lowest test score anyway, so for most people the make-up paper is for a second missed test.
- **Getting out of the final:** If you get an average of 95% on the seven tests, you don't have to write the final exam, and your test average will be used for that grade. Otherwise, your best six test results will count, and you write the final, as about 75% of the class does.

Concert Reports (at least two, and four if you decide not to do a term paper)

- 500-800 words (give the word-count at the end).
- Each report is due within a week after the concert.
- Each concert you report on should have professional musicians or Eastman students playing, and a program handed out at the beginning; use the program to jot your thoughts down during the concert, and attach it to the report. It should be an actual concert where people are just listening, not drinking or eating. It should be classical, not jazz, pop, or musicals, as that is the most likely to use the techniques we talk about in class. Get there a little early, and stay for the whole concert (they're usually 1-2 hours). If possible, try to see the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, or its equivalent in another city, for one concert. I'll send out emails with recommended concerts each week, starting a couple of weeks into the course (double-check the information before you go, because the online concert listings are sometimes wrong). Check out the Eastman School of Music site for good, usually free concerts. Public transit can be a pain, and can take a while to get you downtown and back, so I'd suggest Uber or Lyft, or teaming up with a car-owner.
- There should be at least two professional concerts on campus each semester, but there aren't always four.
- RIT student concerts can count, though it's preferable to see professionals or Eastman students.
- You might want to listen to the music ahead of time, if you can find the program, so you know what to expect.
- The reports should include lots of purely musical observations of each piece played, connecting the things we discuss in class (for example: the meter of the piece; techniques such as imitation, homophony, call and response, basso ostinato, or pauses before important sections, forms such as theme and variations or fugue, or special instrumental effects) to the concert. Listen for at least one melody or bass-line contour in each piece, and put it in the report.
- Pointing out specific similarities to pieces from class would be good. Avoid writing composer or performer biographies. Evaluation of the performers' skill is not a big part of the concert reports. References to outside sources are good.
- Samples: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/t/w/tws4/music5/sample.html> and <https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/access/content/group/59bdf0b4-ad07-473e-8050-fe67d7119d35/Music10/Syllabus/ConcertRptSample2.htm>
- Please number each report, give the word-count at the end, and include the program stapled to it.
- They're graded out of 10.
- **How to get an A:** see the whole concert, link class ideas to the pieces, show that you were listening intently, do research (and attribute sources) on the music, and write clearly!

Short Term Paper (optional – you could do two more concert reports instead)

- 1000-1500 words (give the word-count at the end). The student will choose a piece of classical music, or a group of related ones, and will try to make an argument/thesis. This could be a compare/contrast with another piece, a description of its role in the composer's biography, or an analysis of its internal structure; there are many other possibilities, and I'm happy to suggest things once you've chosen a piece. Try to describe interesting musical techniques in detail, using contour and rhythm examples if possible. You might try talking about the piece's form (how it's put together), function (why it was written), and comparison with other pieces (maybe its influences, and the pieces it influenced). Get some information on the context of the piece's composition (where the composer lived at the time, why it was written, the premiere), maybe what others have thought of it since it was written. Don't talk about biography except as it pertains to the piece you're writing about. Avoid using terms you don't understand (please ask me what they mean). Cite sources correctly (short, in-text cites with a bibliography are fine). Give your paper a title. Some frustration can result from choosing a piece you love, but about which there's not much to write. And pieces written in the last 50 years won't have too many sources, so you'll need to do a lot of analytical/technical work yourself (i.e., have a music theory background) if you choose a recent work (e.g., a film or game score). You'll want to use real books or journals for this paper, as there is not enough information online for most pieces.
- Here are some examples of theses that could work: "Mozart uses certain contours to represent heroic characters in his operas, and other ones for the evil characters"; "Clara Schumann's compositions were an influence on those of her husband Robert"; "The mutual influence of painting and composition in the 20th century, as seen in Picasso and Stravinsky"; "Later musicians' views of Palestrina's work"; "The role of chamber music in the 19th century"; "How John Adams's opera 'Nixon in China' combined Eastern and Western musical ideas, reflecting its subject matter." Often what happens is the student has a piece they'd like to study, and together we hash out an angle from which to approach it.
- **How to get an A:** lots of connections to ideas from class, original ideas, a bibliography with at least four different sources, at least one print source from the library (also check out the Sibley Music Library downtown), tight writing. Frankenstein papers (where you've just cobbled together a bunch of paraphrased sections from online sources) will be handed back.

Schedule for Introduction to Music, FNRT 110, David McCarthy (damgla@rit.edu)

Mon Wed Fri

1/14 -----

1/16 -----

1/18 ---

1/21 -----1/22 last day of add/drop

1/23 ----- Test 1: Fundamentals of music and music history

1/25 ---

1/28 -----

1/30 ----- Special Topic: Traditional music from non-Western cultures

2/1 ----

2/4 -----

2/6 ----- Test 2: Medieval and Renaissance, Early Baroque eras (ca. 1000–ca. 1680)

2/8 ----

2/11 -----

2/13 -----

2/15 --- Test 3: Late Baroque era (ca. 1680–ca. 1750)

2/18 -----

2/20 -----

2/22 --- Special Topic: Music theory

2/25 -----

2/27 ----- Concert Report 1 due

3/1 ---- Test 4: Classical era (ca. 1750–ca. 1820)

3/4 -----

3/6 -----

3/8 ---- Special Topic: Film music

3/10-3/17 ----- Spring Break

3/18 -----

3/20 -----

3/22 --- Test 5: Romantic era (ca. 1820–ca. 1900)

3/25 -----

3/27 ----- Concert Report 2 due

3/29 --- (end of Romantic Opera discussion)

4/1 -----

4/3 ----- Short Term Paper topic due

4/5 ---- Special Topic: Jazz; 4/5 last day to drop with a “W”

4/8 -----

4/10 ----- Concert Report 3 due

4/12 --- Test 6: Impressionism and Early Modern era (ca. 1880–ca. 1945)

4/15 -----

4/17 ----- Concert Report 4/Short Term Paper due

4/19 ---

4/22 ----- Special Topic: Classical techniques in popular music

4/24 -----

4/26 --- Test 7: Late Modern and Contemporary era (ca. 1945–now)

4/29 ----- Review for final

5/1-8 ----- Final exam week