MU 400 - Program Note Guidelines – Dr. McLamore

The purpose of the “program notes” portion of your senior recital is threefold:

1. Because it is a senior project, the program notes allow you to display your mastery of research and analytic techniques learned in history and theory courses;

2. A thorough investigation of the structure and history of your pieces (and the background of their composers) often improves your understanding of the works themselves—which can result in improved performance of those pieces (and of course you want your performance to be as absolutely splendid as you can make it); and

3. A set of well-written program notes can be invaluable in guiding your audience and helping them enjoy your program to the greatest extent; the notes prepare your audience to understand challenging works and build their anticipation of the musical treats in store for them. An enthusiastic audience also helps your performance; the notes can help to cultivate that enthusiasm.

There are two (or three) required components to your program notes, which must be FINALIZED no less than **one full week before your pre-recital**:

1. The actual program page (listing of repertory, composers, composers’ dates, and assisting performers).

2. The prose program notes themselves.

3. If you are performing a vocal recital: The original texts and translations for your selections. Note—for works in English: if the work is ‘art’ music, based on poetry, we would like you to include the text. If the piece is more popular in nature, such as an excerpt from musical theater, the text does not need to be included in the program.) YOU MUST TYPE THE TEXTS AS A WORD DOCUMENT (no photocopies of CD booklets, etc.). You need to type out every line in letter-perfect fashion (with every diacritical mark, too – accents, umlauts, tildes, etc.) Please put foreign languages next to the English translation, side-by-side, using tabs (NOT a table or columns). If you need help setting up the “tab” marks in the document’s ruler, please see me.

Acknowledgments are not required, but if you choose to include them, they will need proofreading and approval as well. (They are due to Michele at the same time as your other materials.)

To prepare for the program notes, you gather information by answering many questions for **each** piece on your program:

1. What is the background of the piece and its composer? Why (& when) did the composer write it? What was happening in his/her life at the time? Are there interesting aspects to the composer’s biography that you think an audience would like to know? etc.

2. What is the musical structure of the piece? What form is it? Does the form influence how you perform it? How does the accompaniment (if any) function within the piece? Are there particular musical elements (i.e. dissonance, syncopation, wide range, ostinato) that distinguish this work? etc.

3. What sells you on this piece? What do you like best about it? What would you like a listener to go away remembering?

After you have answered all these questions for every work, you can take a step back and decide what are the most interesting things about each work—sometimes it will be historical aspects, while other times it may be a particularly beautiful accompaniment or melodic line. You can then write three effective paragraphs that discuss the piece and make the audience glad that they’re going to get to hear it performed. (You will not use the same technical analytical terms for the audience as you used for yourself, of course.)

Procedures:

1. Discuss with me the program note process and grading criteria. **NOTE: YOU WILL LOSE YOUR PRE-RECITAL DATE IF YOUR NOTES ARE NOT COMPLETELY DONE ONE FULL WEEK BEFORE THE PRE-RECITAL.** If your pre-recital is cancelled, a new date will not be scheduled until the notes are finished and approved, and the new date will be at least **one week** after the notes are completed. Your recital date may be forced to change as well, since there must be at least **4 weeks** between a pre-recital date and the recital.

2. After approving your project, the department will send you a permission number for my section of MU 400 (Independent Study); you are expected to enroll at least one quarter before your recital. You have the choice of signing up for 1 or 2 units – it’s up to you. If you plan to maintain an A (according to my grading criteria), then by all means sign up for 2 units!
3. Plan your **Timetable** (see last page for a blank template). Put at least a week between most deadlines, so you have time to do revisions for the preceding task if necessary. Please allow a minimum of 10 days between each Combined Outline target, because this is the most critical phase of the process, and multiple drafts are always necessary.

4. Make a **chart** of your entire recital repertory, with 3 check-off columns: “historical research,” “analysis,” & “personal write-up” (and give a copy to me). If you are a singer, add another column for “texts/translations.” I.e.,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repertory</th>
<th>Historical Research</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Personal Write-Up</th>
<th>(Texts/Transl.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piece No. 1 (single-mvt)</td>
<td>(you’d research the whole piece only once)</td>
<td>(analyze each mvt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piece No. 2 - mvt. 1</td>
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<td>Piece No. 2 - mvt. 2</td>
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<td>Piece No. 2 - mvt. 3</td>
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<td>Etc.</td>
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</table>

(This is your personal checklist, so you can monitor your own progress in each area.)

5. **Program Page**: Type out your program, in order, with all names (correctly spelled!) of assisting performers, dates for the composers, and an indication where the intermission will be (if you plan to take one). [Put a DRAFT number at the top.]

The customary layout for the program is:

Your Name, your performance medium
Your Accompanist’s Name, piano

*Major Piece One (in italics: opera title, song cycle, etc.), K. 123*

Composer of Piece One [full name]

Title of Smaller Selection from the *Major Piece* [no quotation marks] (birth–death years of composer in parentheses)

or First tempo

Second tempo (etc.)

[centered underneath: Name of additional performer, his or her medium — multiple people are listed in score order]

*Major Piece Two, Op. 1, no. 12*

Composer [just last name if s/he has been listed previously]

Movement / Tempo One [dates are omitted if the composer has been listed previously]

Movement / Tempo Two

*Independent Minor Piece [our “house style” now uses italics for any work not part of a larger set]*

Composer [as above]

etc.

**Historical Research**

A. Fill out a template [Draft 1] for yourself of the historical information you need to try to find for each piece. I.e.,

1. Composer’s background  (Obviously, if you have several pieces by one composer, do this only once)
   a. dates
   b. training and career highlights; what are the composer’s best known works?
   c. interesting anecdotes about the composer as a person

2. [If relevant: Similar biographical information for Lyricist / Librettist / Arranger]

3. Background of the piece
   a. what does the title mean? If it is a genre title, what are the genre’s characteristics?
   b. is it part of a larger set or work? Is it representative of the other pieces or movements, or is it unusual?
   c. when written
   d. why written
   e. success of piece & its subsequent history
   f. interesting anecdotes about the piece
   g. published analyses of the piece
   (h. look for good translation if your work involves poetry) [if your Texts/Translations Deadline preceded this research, then you have already satisfied this task—but keep your eyes peeled for a better translation if possible.]
   (i. find a summary of the overall plot if it is a theatrical work or a connected work like a song cycle)

**4. Please include a list of the sources you’ve consulted (author/title/type of document is usually sufficient)**

B. On the Timeline, divide your repertory into two (or three) groups; on the right-hand side of the Timeline, lists which pieces will be in each group as you work on your research.
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C. “OF COURSE” you will go to the New Grove (and its bibliography), and will branch outward, using the research skills you learned in MU 320 (JSTOR, Music Index, RILM, Dissertations, OneSearch, etc.). Allow time for CSU+ or InterLibrary Loan items to arrive! It is rare that “Web-only” research will suffice. If you’re having trouble locating reliable information, please tell me well BEFORE your due date—and give me the list of resources you’ve already checked. (Incomplete outlines are considered to be “late.”)

D. Give me DRAFT 1 of your “completed” historical template for each piece by your due date; I will check it for accuracy and thoroughness. (If I do question items, please give me the next draft within 4 days unless we agree to an extension.)

E. You cannot include all this historical information in your final notes—but you should know all these aspects about every piece you perform before presenting them to audiences.

Analysis [PLEASE GIVE ME COPIES OF THE PIANO (OR FULL) SCORES FOR YOUR MUSIC—with Measure Numbers!!]
A. Make a template [Draft 1] for yourself of analytical features to consider in your work (please follow the model below; some of the following elements are not relevant to all pieces, so write “N/A” if that is the case -- don’t just skip the item). “Fill out” the template for each piece in your program (or each separate movement in a multi-movement piece).

1. Structural Elements [do this analysis for EACH movement of a multi-movement piece]
   a. form (“defend” your answer by identifying specific measures where structural elements begin, and—IMPORTANT—explain HOW each section differs from the others). NOTE: You will not be cleared to move forward to your outlines until you “put into words” what characterizes the different melodies or sections of each piece or movement. Even if you think your piece is through-composed, it almost certainly falls into sections, and you need to identify how many sections there are and what makes each distinctive.
   b. medium [what was the original medium, and with what performing forces will you be performing the work?]
   c. genre
   d. style and/or compositional approach
   e. musical era
   f. mood(s)
   g. what do all the indications in the score mean?

2. Rhythmic Elements
   a. tempo(s) -- do changes relate to significant moments, words, or sections in the form? How?
   b. meter(s) -- do changes correlate with significant points in the form? How?
   c. subdivision(s) -- simple vs. compound; do changes relate to significant moments, words, or sections in the form? How?
   d. syncopation? -- does it relate to significant moments, words, or sections in the form? How?
   e. ostinato? -- Is it in the solo part, or the accompaniment? Does it help to distinguish sections in the form? How?
   f. special devices (i.e., Scotch snap, dotted rhythms, swing) -- do these relate to significant words, or sections in the form? How?
   g. Articulation (staccato, legato) -- do these relate to significant words, or sections in the form? How?

3. Melodic and Harmonic Elements
   a. Mode(s) and Key(s); identify areas of change and how they relate to the form
   b. Texture(s) (monophony, etc.) -- identify areas of change and how they relate to the form
   c. Melody type(s) (conjunct vs. disjunct) -- correlate these with melodies in your form
   d. Look for highest notes and longest notes -- are these important harmonic pitches? or significant words in the poetry?
   e. Look for Dissonance -- does it underscore significant moments, words, or relate to sections of the form? How?
   f. ‘Simple’ or ‘complex’ harmony? -- any correlation with form?
   g. Special devices (e.g., sigh motive, suspensions, sequence) -- do these relate to significant moments, words, or sections in the form? How?
   h. How would you describe the phrasing? (long and lyrical; short and choppy?)
   i. Dynamic range (and correlate with form) -- where are the loudest/quietest points, and do these underscore significant moments, words, or relate to sections of the form? How?

4-i. For Vocal Pieces
   a. Type of text setting (syllabic, neumatic, melismatic, mixture) -- identify which words are set melismatically and what they mean
   b. What’s it about? Give a short summary of the text’s meaning
   c. Word painting - identify any words that are ‘painted’ and how they are painted
   d. Voice type(s)
   e. Is there an accompaniment?
   g. Rhyme scheme of poetry? (Map out the letters that correspond to poetic rhymes: e.g., abab cdcd eefe)

4-ii. For Instrumental Works
   a. Is it programmatic? What’s it about?
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b. Are all instruments used continuously in the work? (Correlate changes in instrumentation with the form)
c. Are there “melody-only” instruments and “accompaniment-only”? 

5. For Vocal Pieces AND Instrumental Works
   a. Other musical features of interest
   b. What do you regard as the musical highlight?

B. On the Timeline, divide your repertory into two (or three) groups; on the right-hand side of the Timeline, lists which pieces will be in each group as you work on your analysis. Remember that our theory professors and I can help you if you are having trouble analyzing something (and also remember that incomplete templates are regarded as “late”).

C. Give me DRAFT 1 of your “completed” analytical template for each piece by your due date; I will check it for accuracy and thoroughness. (If I do question items, please give me the next draft within 4 days unless we agree to an extension.)

D. You will not include all this analytical information in your final notes—AND you cannot use the technical musical terms—but you should understand all these aspects about every piece you perform before presenting them to audiences.

Personal Write-Up
You should be able to summarize in a sentence or two why YOU want to perform each piece/movement on your recital. You may want to build on that “personal write-up” idea for your notes; however, please avoid using the “first-person” voice in your final program notes unless it is absolutely essential.

[Texts and Translations (For vocal music, or in rare instances for instrumental transcriptions): ]
As part of your program, the department asks you to provide the texts of all art music, even pieces in English (but not pop songs, jazz numbers, or musical theater excerpts). If the text is in a foreign language, you need to provide a translation as well, side by side. You need to type out every line in letter-perfect fashion (with every diacritical mark, too – accents, umlauts, tildes, etc.) As noted above, YOU MUST TYPE THE TEXTS AS A WORD DOCUMENT (no photocopies of CD booklets, etc.). Please put foreign languages next to the English translation, side-by-side, using tabs or a table (with a new row for each line of text) (do NOT use column formatting). Please come in for assistance if you’re not sure how to format the texts.

Again, number each draft, since these inevitably need editing; until I say “Done!,” please give me the next draft within 4 days unless we agree to an extension.)

Outlining and Writing the Notes
With your historical research / analysis templates and your personal write-up close at hand, devise a “combined outline” for each piece on your program. What historical facts do you want to include? What analytical details will help the listener comprehend the piece? What will help make the piece seem “special” to your audience, and will make them eager to hear it after reading about it? Every paragraph needs a good topic claim. E.g. “Mozart uses multiple elements to convey the despair of the singer” [thereby setting up the paragraph, which will point to specific musical aspects that contribute to the mood].

The key facts that need to be in every program note about every piece: 1) its date; 2) the time period and/or cultural background of its creation or creator; 3) how the piece came into being, and 4) a description of the piece’s most significant musical features—and why they’re significant. YOU MUST ADJUST YOUR VOCABULARY FOR A GENERAL AUDIENCE! (They don’t know what “sonata form” is [nor do many students!], nor “ostinato,” nor “syncopation,” etc., etc.)

The core pattern for each piece in your repertory normally is a three-paragraph unit:
1) a bio paragraph for the composer
2) a background paragraph that explains how your work came into being (and summarizing its storyline if it has one, plus identifying any poet, librettist, or arranger who should be credited)
3) an analysis paragraph (if you have a multi-movement work, or several songs from the same set, then you would write a separate analysis paragraph for each movement or song. Remember: keep the vocabulary accessible!

You need to initiate your discussions with a “hook” (an opinion or claim that makes an argument about the information to come!)
“Composer X was born in 1816 in a small German village” is NOT a hook!! What might be more engaging?
“Although composer X traveled across fourteen countries and three continents, his music still reflected the Germanic style of the village where he was born in 1816.”
“It is unlikely that the residents of Geburtenstad, Germany, had any idea that a baby born in their village in 1816 would eventually become one of the world’s finest sarrusophone composers.”
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We don’t customarily use footnotes in program notes, but if you need to refer to someone else’s writing or idea, you introduce the quoted or paraphrased information by identifying your source within your sentence. I.e.,

As Michael Kelly—the singer who débuted the rôle—commented, “Mozart . . .”

Alfred Einstein argues—in his biographical study of Mozart’s life—that Constanze “had no sense of the fitness of things.”

Music historian Neal Zaslaw discovered that these pieces blend . . .

Some writers, such as Alfred Einstein and Francis Carr, believe that Mozart’s relationship with his wife Constanze was detrimental to Mozart’s well-being.

As with your research and analysis, you will want to divide the “combined outlines” into two or three groups. Leave at LEAST 10 days between each group; it is almost certain that you will need to revise your outlines more than once. After we’ve worked out the bugs in the outlines, then it’s time to write the “prose” drafts (the full-sentences version). Number each draft of the outlines, so we can keep track of the different versions. I will tell you when I regard each outline as “ready to turn into prose.”

NOTE: You’ll have to wait to write the full prose until I have approved all your combined outlines. Put in those topic claims!!

Acknowledgments—these are optional, but if you choose to include them, they must also be edited and finalized before your program note deadline. We have been leaving the format up to the individual students, but you have a limit of 500 words. I encourage using “group” phrases (e.g., “Thanks to my family, who always cheer for me, and for my friends, who make me laugh”), because long lists of individual people run the risk of overlooking important names. Be careful not to misuse words or phrases; for instance, over the years, the Music Department faculty have been thanked for their “unyielding knowledge” (!) and their “vested interest” (!) in students—things that didn’t mean quite what the student apparently thought they meant; certainly they were not as complimentary as the performer wanted them to be!

Formatting Process
A. Once your combined outlines have all been okayed to “turn into prose,” put them together to create the full first prose draft. You should have reached this stage least six weeks before your pre-recital (but first we need have polished your outlines so they flow well; I’ll let you know when I think you’re ready to create the prose, so please edit QUICKLY if outlines need revision).

B. Double-space each full-prose program note draft (and include page numbers).

C. The program notes cannot exceed ten double-spaced pages (12-point font).

D. The Music Department’s computers use Microsoft Word, and this is the format Michele will need to set up your program design. You have free access to Word (and other Microsoft Office programs) via the Portal. (See me if you need help finding it.) NO GOOGLE DOCS or PAGES.

E. Don’t procrastinate! Program notes can be nightmarish or enjoyable, depending on the timetable you follow while you’re writing them. The more time you allow, the easier the task (and the more cheerful your advisor!)

F. Three copies of your program page, and one copy of your notes, should be brought TO your pre-recital. (If your pre-recital committee requests that you make changes to your repertory or its order, notify me immediately, so we can revise your documents as needed.) You must email ALL your materials to Michele no later than the Monday after you “pass” your pre-recital.
**Program Notes Timetable for**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chart due:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program Page:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Music to Dr. McL.:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>[Texts &amp; Translations:]</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Personal Write-up</strong></td>
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<td><strong>[Acknowledgments:]</strong></td>
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**FINAL DUE DATE:**

- Program Page, Program Notes, Acknowledgments [& Texts/Translations] must be finalized 1 week before Pre-recital, or Pre-recital will be cancelled.
- **Pre-recital:** Set by Music Dept. but estimate that it will be ≈6 weeks before recital.
- **Recital:**