Teaching Music History Today: Making Tangible Connections to Here and Now

Melanie Lowe

There are two daunting challenges in teaching undergraduate music history courses in the contemporary higher educational environment. First, despite the differences in our professional backgrounds, the wide variation in the level and musical experiences of our students, and the abundance of course formats and subjects, music history instructors often feel an imperative to be thorough and comprehensive, especially in survey courses. External pressures certainly play a role here, from the expectations of departmental colleagues to the obligations of college or university curricula to the very materials our field produces for use in these courses. Arguably the "standard" text (or at least the most widely used) in music history courses designed for music majors, the eighth edition of J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca's *A History of Western Music,* is a whopping 1,115 pages long. The accompanying three-volume *Norton Anthology of Western Music* literally weighs in at nine pounds.[1]

1. I should note that I am a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca's *A History of Western Music.* I find Burkholder's revision of this classic text to be remarkably successful in accomplishing its stated goal of making people—not musical style—the protagonists of this telling of the story of Western music (xxiii). This is decidedly not the narrative agenda of the competing texts. Mark Evan Bonds, for example, takes a diametrical stance in his preface: "This book rests on the premise that the best way to convey the history of music is to focus squarely on the music itself" (xiii). Craig Wright and Bryan Simms's *Music in Western Civilization* splits the difference, organizing the discussion of composers, pieces, and stylistic aspects by location and "placing music in a culturally resonant setting" (xxxv).

All three of these texts are simply enormous, and all three coordinate the narrative and musical examples with hefty recording and annotated score anthologies and a generous variety of online ancillaries for both student and instructor. Douglass Seaton's *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition* offers an alternative. A slight (by comparison) volume of fewer than 500 pages with no accompanying anthologies and a modest (again, by comparison) student and instructor website, Seaton's text makes good on his promise to tell the story of Western musical history in terms of the "epistemological underpinnings of the culture in which composers created it" (xvii). That said, while the philosophical orientation of the book ensures that musical thought is emphasized as part of the main narrative, musical style more

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At the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, where I teach, we have had until very recently a great luxury in teaching music history—four semesters (two whole years!) dedicated to a survey of Western music from the ancient world to our world. And yet, with even that much time, all of the useful, readily available, and quite wonderful resources out there, and twenty years of experience teaching undergraduate music courses, I have been unable to survey the history of Western music in any satisfying, meaningful, or lasting way. In meeting the challenge of giving my students the big picture, the whole picture, or even a corner of the picture more or less complete and intact, I have been an abject failure.

Coming to terms with my inability to survey Western music history and literature was the most liberating experience of my teaching career. To be sure, I still teach the usual assortment of music major survey courses, and I still use *A History of Western Music* and the *Norton Anthology* as my required textbooks. But when facing the task of taking my students on a mythical journey from Euripides to Bright Sheng, I have thrown up my hands and surrendered. I have given up.

Surprisingly (at least it was a surprise to me), failing in the survey allowed me to meet head on what I consider to be the second daunting challenge in teaching undergraduate music history. How do we make the study of music history tangibly relevant in the lives of our students, especially when their student lives seem so different from the student lives we (sometimes all too fondly) remember? And by "relevant," I do not mean just musically relevant, for that goes (mostly) without saying. We all know and have experienced the tremendous benefits performers gain by studying music history. But, of course, we music historians are not in this business merely to serve at the feet of the almighty musical performance. The real challenge for teachers of music history is to put this history in direct dialogue with our contemporary, everyday lives—to make music history not just musically relevant, but intellectually relevant, politically relevant, sexually relevant, spiritually relevant, psychologically relevant, even ecologically relevant not just in the "there and then" of history but in the "here and now" of today. In other words, our musical-

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than ideas nonetheless remains the central character in his story. Moreover, while Seaton nods admirably toward the notion that studying music history "enriches our own thinking and our own human spirit" (xvii), his book still presents an abundance of facts, if not to the same degree as in the other texts. I should also note that I reviewed Seaton's text in typescript and provided comments and suggestions for the third edition.

See J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music,* 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010); Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture,* 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010); Craig Wright and Bryan Simms, *Music in Western Civilization* (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2010); and Douglass Seaton, *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition,* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

historical teaching needs to reach our students in ways that profoundly impact their existence as twenty-first-century citizens of Planet Earth.

This is a tall order.

In this essay I will share details of three multi-class activities I use in one music history course—projects that demonstrate how admitting defeat in the challenge to be thorough and comprehensive allowed me to explore tangible connections between the "old stories" of European music history and the experiences of my students' everyday lives in America.

Popular vs. High Art

In my course on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, before we even start reading, talking, or thinking about late eighteenth-century music, I assign my students a writing assignment in which they are to offer personal answers to the following questions:[2]

> Can something that is accessible or that "goes down easy" be "high art"?
> Can something that is produced for money, marketed, and sold for profit be "high art"?
> Can something that is entertaining be "high art"?
> Can something that is *merely* entertaining be "high art"?
> What might we mean by "high art" anyway?

After their essays are written, my students spend a whole class meeting debating these questions with each other, and quite often the only musicians mentioned are Miley Cyrus and John Cage. (It's not everyday that we hear those two names in the same sentence!)

These class discussions are always quite lively. As the students reveal more of their perspectives and debate the questions, I become less of a discussion leader and more of a traffic cop. When the class approaches intellectual road rage (which usually happens around forty minutes), I know we're truly getting to the heart of the matter, which, of course, is nothing short of the definition, meaning, and purpose of art. In a most revealing moment in one of these discussions, a composition major stood up, waved his arms, and shouted at his classmates: "Art is structure! Art is form!" He was very passionate, and the moment was terribly funny. But for a student so in touch with his inner Hanslick, the more progressive ideas of some of his classmates were truly threatening. These were the very people on whom he relied to perform his music and to transmit his ideas—musical and otherwise—to his audience. In

2. Complete assignment is included as Appendix A.

that moment, he also recognized that these students—his peers—*were* his audience. He was genuinely rattled by the realization that, at the end of the day, he had absolutely no control over the ultimate meanings of his music.

My intentions for this essay assignment and class discussion are not, of course, to give our young composers and performers an anxiety attack or to persuade them to change their majors to civil engineering. Rather, I want my students to become aware of their own musical-historical prejudices and to think about how such prejudices inform their broader aesthetic worldviews. Only by becoming aware of these kinds of biases can they avoid anachronistic thinking in the music history classroom or elsewhere.

For undergraduates, this is subtle and sophisticated intellectual work, and I have never been able to teach the pitfalls of ahistorical thinking effectively with mere presentation. To be sure, explaining the issues and demonstrating a few contradictions may be the most efficient means of communicating such an abstract concept in the classroom. But in my experience "lecturing" the notion of anachronistic thought into undergraduate minds simply does not work. Students need to reach this kind of conclusion on their own, and the ripening of their ideas cannot be rushed. Rather than acting as a transmitter beaming challenging intellectual content at a room full of receivers, I strive to provide the exercises, the opportunities, and—most importantly—the *time* for students to reflect on their own musical-historical thought processes and to examine (and then re-examine) what informs them.

Moreover, it is only after questioning their individual preconceptions of what art is and, more importantly, by examining the origins of those preconceptions that my students have been able to approach a composer like Haydn and to understand his music, at least initially, on its own terms. Before beginning their study of this composer, they have already wrestled with some of the big issues in Haydn reception history. That Haydn was a great artist, they readily concede. But it proves more difficult for them to reconcile his undeniable "artistry" with certain historical facts of Haydn's career—for example, that he wrote many pieces that were accessible, popular, entertaining, and easy to digest, and that many of his greatest works were produced for money, marketed, and sold for profit. Indeed, these are the very reasons for which, in their essays and subsequent class discussion, nearly all of my students denied the status of "artist" to "mere entertainer" Miley Cyrus.

Of course, in my classes on Haydn we also talk about such important historical details as Haydn's contract with the Esterházy family, his career at Eszterháza, the status of composers and musicians in eighteenth-century society, rhetoric and "classical" style, the aesthetics of the Enlightenment, the make up of eighteenth-century concert audiences, performance practices, and structure and formal aspects of the music itself. But all of these historical, social, cultural, and musical details are framed by questions that are relevant today,

questions I believe are absolutely critical for our young music students to consider deeply. Ultimately, our study of Haydn's music in its own time and consideration of issues in reception history lead to a rather uncomfortable discussion about snobbery and the situation of classical music in contemporary American culture—something our music students are keenly aware of and at least somewhat concerned about.

As we study Haydn's Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp Minor, "Farewell," and Symphony No. 92 in G Major, "Oxford,"[3] for instance, students who initially don't care much for Haydn (they naively think his music is too "light" and "happy") find themselves challenged by what they hear as "proto-Romantic" in the "Farewell's" *Sturm und Drang* style. They also struggle to hear the more accessible and "popular" style of the "Oxford" symphony as coming nearly two decades *later* than the "Farewell" symphony. Since most students subscribe (if unknowingly) to the Enlightenment notion of progress in all things, including the arts, they tend to cling to a false linearity in the history of musical style.

To complement the historical and analytical study of Haydn's symphonies, I assign several musicological works by some of our field's heaviest hitters—including excerpts from H.C. Robbins Landon's five-volume chronicle of the composer's life and works (which cites many generic accolades from Haydn's time alongside Landon's own musical assessments) and James Webster's exploration of art and entertainment in Haydn's symphonies of the late 1770s.[4] Students immediately leap to Haydn's defense when confronted with what they read as snobbery in Landon's writing, even if it is more challenging for them to recognize a subtle contradiction in Webster's "rescue" of certain critically maligned Haydn symphonies by revealing the hidden complexity of those works.

The facility with which our combined historical, analytical, and musicological study of two Haydn symphonies leads my students to personal reflections on what *they* value in music, art, and entertainment is, to my mind,

3. Haydn's Symphony No. 92 in G Major, "Oxford," is included in J. Peter Burkholder and Claude V. Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music,* 6th ed., Vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2010); the third and fourth movements of Haydn's Symphony No. 101 in D Major, "The Clock," are included in Mark Evan Bonds, ed., *Anthology of Scores to A History of Music in Western Culture,* 3rd ed., Vol. 2 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010); and the second movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 94 in G Major, "Surprise," and the first movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 103 in E flat Major, "Drum Roll," are included Craig Wright and Bryan Simms, *Anthology for Music in Western Civilization,* Vol. 2 (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2010). Any of these symphonies will work well for the late Haydn symphony this assignment.

4. See H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works II: Haydn at Eszterháza, 1766–1790* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); James Webster, "Haydn's Symphonies between *Sturm und Drang* and 'Classical style': Art and Entertainment," in *Haydn Studies,* etc. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 218–45.

the ultimate pedagogical payoff here. In the study of Haydn's music itself, my students confront a musical history that seems "backwards" to them, forcing some reflection on what aesthetic ideals informed that false historical linearity in the first place and why many of them prefer "later" (read: "romantic") music to "earlier" (read: "classical" = "antiseptic" = "boring") music. Then, as we reflect on how much we, like Landon, Webster, and countless other writers in Haydn reception, tend to value complexity over simplicity in "high art," class discussions inevitably wind back to questions of audience composition, music education, the nature of musical understanding, and our own contemporary classical musical culture.

Questions about value and sophistication, complexity and communication, and entertainment and audience are not only about Haydn, music history, musicology, or even the historical versus contemporary standing of his symphonies within the context of "great" European music. These questions are much broader. They are relevant here and now, in our own time, place, and cultural situation—especially politically. In my experience, if given the opportunity, students readily relate musical-historical course content to their own contemporary cultural experiences. For example, in a class discussion about musical taste, value judgment, and Haydn's "popular style" that took place during the 2008 presidential election season, my students made tangible connections between Landon's claim that Haydn "pander[ed] to the lowest common denominator"[5] and a particular candidate's ostensibly adopted populism. To be sure, I try to prevent my music history classroom discussions from degenerating into heated debates about the significance of lettuce preference in American politics (which is where this particular discussion ultimately ended up). But when the questions and ideas we explore in a class on late eighteenth-century European instrumental music call up issues that are tangibly relevant to my students' everyday lives in twenty-first-century America, I believe we should explore such points of intersection. This is important work and an opportunity not to be missed.

Figaro Here and Now

The second multi-class project focuses on a piece that lends itself quite easily to this kind of approach in a music history course—Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro.* Its themes of class and gender warfare, as well as its entanglement with the progressive politics of the Age of Enlightenment, are obviously relevant in our own time. Making this connection is the easy part. What I find more difficult to teach is how the *music itself* participates in the opera's social critique.

5. Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works II,* 561.

My students can readily identify various social and political agendas in the plot and libretto, but they are unable to hear the social critique in the music.

In the same survey course on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, two activities frame our engagement with Mozart's opera. The first is aimed directly at solving an unsolvable problem: we do not have eighteenth-century ears and we never will. That said, there are many striking similarities between how we hear the music of our world and how listeners in the eighteenth century heard the music of their world. The first activity in my *Figaro* unit is an intense, twenty-four-hour listening exercise designed to heighten my students' awareness of how *they* hear music and then to stimulate active and reflective thought about how they invest musical experiences with meaning.[6]

For one full day, my students are required keep a journal—they have to take it everywhere they go—and make note of *every* musical experience they have. Their entries include such various musical experiences as hearing music in a music history or theory class, on the sound system in Starbucks, in the practice rooms, on their video games, at a frat party, in the basketball arena, during marching-band practice, in the supermarket, from their next-door neighbor's dorm room, and while trying to ignore television commercials. Most of them make a good faith effort to list anything and everything they hear that they consider to be music.

By doing this exercise, my students realize first of all just how much music is surrounding them at all times and then, perhaps more importantly, just how little attention they are actually paying to most of it. In our class discussion of their experiences keeping such a journal, questions follow about how they themselves and their classmates hear music and how musical meaning is created in these everyday experiences—whether they're in the concert hall or the coffee shop. This activity forces them to become aware and *mindful* of all of the associations that code the music of our everyday soundscape and the instantaneous mental work we perform to decode it. For example, many of them notice for the first time the structural communication musical bumpers and stingers provide on CNN Headline News or ESPN SportsCenter. Others notice how ringtones both reflect and project personal identity (as well as being supremely annoying). In a revealing (if uncomfortable) moment, one student claimed that he could identify the make of an automobile that pulled up behind him at a red light in and around Nashville, where Vanderbilt is located, simply by hearing the music playing on the car's stereo: if the music were country, it would be an old model Chevy pick-up with a gun rack; if it were hip hop, it would be a black Escalade. Some students were shocked by this comment—others reluctantly (and embarrassingly) agreed.

6. Complete assignment is included as Appendix B.

Within the context of my course, this exercise is pedagogically designed to lay the groundwork for an introduction to topical analysis—to prepare my students for the idea that musical figures, rhythms, gestures, and styles communicate meaning by means of association with other types of music and sounds from everyday life. So, in the end, this exercise returns to Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro.* But the musical and intellectual route taken back to the eighteenth century puts this historical point in direct contact with my students' own present-day musical listening experiences and habits.

As in our study of Haydn, in my *Figaro* unit we consider everything one would expect in a period survey course for music majors—dramatic structures, musical form, ensemble composition, topical analysis, and aria typology, as well as the historical details of this opera's composition. But the second exercise on Mozart's opera, which I have also at times used as the capstone essay for the whole course, is designed again to bring the study of music history into the present—to make this material (if not also our discipline) tangibly relevant to the lives of twenty-first-century music students. After studying *Le nozze di Figaro* for a few weeks (a luxury indeed, but one that requires the "giving up" I described at the beginning of this article), my students design their own productions of the opera.[7] In a substantial essay, they must first make a compelling argument for their concepts by taking into consideration the central themes of the opera and the philosophical and political ideals of the Enlightenment. Then, they must communicate passionately the relevance of those ideas today.

So far, this assignment may sound rather straight forward, as the issues and politics of Mozart's opera are not just obvious; they are obviously still important. But here's the catch. For this assignment, my students cannot simply discuss such issues either in general or in the abstract. Each student must choose a specific American opera company and tailor his or her production proposal for that particular institution and audience. Before designing their productions, they need to consider such things as the expectations of their audience, how one communicates effectively both musically and dramatically with that audience, the company's historical balance between tradition and innovation, the cultural needs for the particular environment, and the company's financial situation. Many questions arise: What are the implications of taking a risk in a production? What are the implications of playing it safe? Ultimately, what are the stakes when we perform a 225-year-old piece of music in our contemporary world? The answers to these questions vary widely, of course. But in sharing their individual research with each other in class discussion, it becomes abundantly clear to my students that a production that

7. Complete assignment is included as Appendix C.

may soar at the New York City Opera would likely crash and burn in our own city's Nashville Opera.[8]

Overall, students derive great pleasure from this project. They write interesting, engaging essays, and while many defend passionately a traditional production, with powdered wigs and all, others offer production concepts that are quite creative (if not downright outrageous). Several years ago, for instance, not too long after the Monica Lewinsky scandal, one student set *Figaro* in the Clinton White House: President Bill Clinton was the Count; Hillary Rodham Clinton the Countess, obviously; Monica Lewinsky was Susanna; Newt Gingrich Figaro (a stretch, admittedly); Linda Tripp was Marcellina; George Stephanopoulos was Basilio; and Ken Starr Dr. Bartolo. To be sure, many aspects of this production seem forced, but the student made a strong case for the exploration of gender, sexuality, politics, and power differentials. In the end she suggested that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Another recent production set the opera on a southern plantation just before the civil war, when it was clear that a particular way of life was under threat—not unlike the situation for many members of the upper classes in Joseph II's Vienna in the late eighteenth century. But in addition to the class and gender warfare of the piece, this student added a complicated racial dimension. Susanna and Figaro were black, as were Antonio and Barbarina; the rest of the characters were white. Here, questions of power, race, and miscegenation enter the mix. Similarly, just as the immigration debate was heating up in the United States a few years ago, another student proposed a contemporary setting in which Susanna was an undocumented Honduran immigrant, infusing the story with not only a racial conflict but questions of national identity, political will, and even human rights. (I will refrain from recounting the many settings on the starship Enterprise or in the Star Wars Expanded Universe I have read over the years, as wonderful as they were.)

In rising to the challenge of this exercise, my students not only learn about the opera *Le nozze di Figaro,* its creators Mozart and da Ponte, and its performances in its own time, but they also consider deeply their own contemporary musical and cultural scenes. In the end, they acquire a much richer and more sophisticated sense of what it means to perform eighteenth-century European music in twenty-first-century America. And more importantly, many of them for the first time begin to reflect on just what is at stake in a musical enterprise.

8. Incidentally, a 27 September 2009 article on the front page of the Arts & Leisure section of the *New York Times* reported on how Peter Gelb, general manager of New York's Metropolitan Opera, is negotiating these very issues. See Charles McGrath, "It's a New Met. Get Over It," *New York Times*, 27 September 2009. Next semester I will include this article as assigned reading for this project.

The last class in our *Figaro* unit is a class discussion in which my students share their production concepts with each other. Many students defend their progressive and challenging productions with the obvious argument: that in its own time *Le nozze di Figaro* was charged with contemporary political issues and, if we are to remain true to the opera, it still needs to be. Interestingly, those students who defend a more traditional production make exactly the same argument: since class and gender warfare is still ubiquitous in our world, the piece already speaks to contemporary issues. Quite often this discussion intensifies, and more often than not the traditionalists in the room band together and attack the progressives—those bold students who would dare to disrespect Mozart's intentions. This turn of the conversation, then, allows me to direct discussion toward such important and potentially controversial issues as the integrity of an artwork, the knowable versus unknowable intentions of a composer, and the production and location of musical meaning.

Today, Less is More

Before I started teaching this way, I had to perform some strained syllabus contortions to include content that at first glance may seem beyond the purview of a course on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music history. But now, I accept and even embrace the inevitable reality that lots of music and many topics just have to be sacrificed on my syllabi.[9] To be sure, because of the amount time I dedicate each semester to the three projects described in this essay, it is certainly a fair criticism that the students who take their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music history survey with me have not studied as much music as other students. To put it plainly, they just don't know some things. But, in my experience, even a strenuous effort to be comprehensive and thorough in music history courses produces students who don't

9. As painful as it is, in the eighteenth-century portion of this course I no longer cover Gay, Gluck, Billings, or Domenico Scarlatti at all in class meetings; I cram Pergolesi, Hasse, Sammartini, Stamitz, and C. P. E. Bach into one class meeting; and I skip Haydn's piano sonatas and oratorios and Mozart's concertos and church music altogether. I am most assuredly guilty of teaching only the heart of the canon. Further, my choice of repertory does little to expand the canon, dislodge it, or even challenge the value judgments that define it.

I am, however, up front with my students about my pedagogical choices and why I have made them. In setting up the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, I discuss canon formation, particularly the musical, social, political, religious, national, and aesthetic values that informed and continue to inform its construction. I also share my personal discomfort that my teaching and research choices undoubtedly appear as a tacit endorsement of the Western canon as we know it and, in many ways, seem to conflict with my commitment to diversity in university curricula. I would like to believe that this open admission of such contradictions within my own work demonstrates the complex nature and tricky balancing acts of all pedagogical and scholarly endeavors. But admittedly, such professorial confessions may be, at best, merely confusing; some students likely find them disingenuous.

know as much as we would like them to. My students might not know much about Haydn's career as an opera composer or what a baryton is, they will probably mis-identify Mozart's "Dissonance" quartet, and many probably (and sadly) do not even realize that Haydn lived for almost another two decades after Mozart's death. This is certainly discouraging, if not a serious problem.

On the other hand, they can speak intelligently about the cultural and social pitfalls of the Enlightenment notion of progress, the aesthetics of political entertainment in the eighteenth century, and the integrity of a musical composition (or lack thereof). More importantly, they can articulate how and why such issues, concepts, and ideas as those encountered in the history of Western European music have value in their everyday lives today—as musicians, students, responsible citizens, and thinking and sensitive human beings. Is this not more valuable than mastering a plethora of musical-historical facts? The question, of course, is one of quantity: how much information—how many facts per se—do our undergraduate students need to have at their fingertips to be able to think intelligently, meaningfully, and humanely about music? Perhaps far fewer than we may think.

APPENDIX A. Writing Assignment on Entertainment and High Art

Please think about and sketch answers to the following questions. Implied with each question is why/why not?—a simple yes or no won't cut it.

1. Can something that is accessible or that "goes down easy" be "high art"?
2. Can something that is produced for money, marketed, and sold for profit be "high art"?
3. Can something that is entertaining be "high art"?
4. Can something that is *merely* entertaining be "high art"?
5. What do we mean by "high art" anyway?

Then, once you have formulated your thoughts, use these questions and your answers to them as the launch-pad for a short essay on the situation of "high art" (however you define it) in our contemporary culture. This is a personal reflection essay, not a research paper. As such, your essay should contain *your own* thoughts, opinions, and definitions. I'm not particularly interested in what Webster, Grove, or the wiki-wisdom might have to say on these matters.

Length: As long as it takes, but aim for 3 double-spaced pages

Submit: MS Word document (YourLastName.doc or .docx) via e-mail attachment

[**Notes to the reader on assessment:** Grading this kind of assignment is undeniably subjective. The following are my general guidelines for assessing this assignment:

An "**A**" paper presents fully developed ideas that are nicely and passionately articulated in a correct and reasonably elegant prose style. Substantial discussion of specific examples supports the argument. The structure of the argument is clear, linear, and lean.

A "**B**" paper is essentially an "**A**" paper that comes up somewhat short in the writing style *or* the level of sophistication of the ideas presented.

A "**C**" paper is essentially an "**A**" paper that comes up short in the writing style *and* the level of sophistication of the ideas presented.

A "**D**" paper is poorly written *or* contains primarily underdeveloped ideas.

An "**F**" paper is poorly written *and* contains primarily underdeveloped ideas.]

APPENDIX B. Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro,* Assignment #1: 24-Hour Listening Journal

This assignment is an exercise in listening. It is simple, but also intense and time consuming (in many small bursts—a second or two many times over). Hopefully it will also be engaging, thought-provoking, and eye-opening. To complete this assignment you must purchase two things you might not already have on hand:

1. A small journalist's notebook that will fit comfortably in your pocket or purse
2. A pen or pencil

For twenty-four hours, starting from the moment you wake up tomorrow morning, please note—by hand in your notebook—*every* musical experience you have. If you use an iPod clock/docking station as your alarm, your first entry will be the music you have chosen to wake you up. If you use a clock radio, note the song playing—if one is playing, that is. If it's a commercial break and music plays as part of the commercial, note that. If you don't recognize the music, describe it briefly. If you use a tone, bell, buzzer, or other sound to wake you up, you need to decide whether that sound counts as a

musical experience. If it does, note it. If it doesn't, be sure you've considered at least for a second or two why such a sound is not music to your ears.

You must take your journal with you *everywhere you go* for the next twenty-four hours and record, however briefly, anything and everything you hear that you would categorize as music. What you hear during your practicing, lessons, and rehearsals is obviously music (or I'm at least assuming you'd consider it to be music). What's on the sound system in the rec center, the supermarket, and Starbucks is also presumably music. But what about the annoying ringtone of the person sitting across from you in the dining hall? What about your roommate singing in the shower? Are these musical experiences? If so, you must make note of them. And if you decide that they are not musical experiences, again, be sure you can articulate why you do not consider such sounds music. (You don't have to note your reasons in your journal, but be sure that if I ask you about these kinds of sounds you can articulate clearly *why* you do not hear them as music.)

Your entries will likely be brief, just a few words, but be sure that you can tell from your notes what it was that you were hearing. Better still, do your best to ensure that *I* can tell what you were hearing, since *you will be turning in these journals to me* the day after tomorrow. We will discuss the experience of completing this assignment in class on Friday. And I'll also share with you just why I had you do such a bizarre exercise.

[**Notes to the reader on assessment:** Grading this kind of assignment is undeniably subjective. It is also difficult because there is no way I can know just what my students hear and where they hear it. Also, because the entries are supposed to be spontaneous, there is no expectation for their level of writing—spelling, grammar, style, etc. do not matter for this assignment. For these reasons, I use three grades—"check-plus," "check," and "check-minus"—in my assessment of student listening journals. The following are my general guidelines for assigning these grades:

Check-plus: the student clearly included each and every sound that s/he heard as music. The list is long and somewhat varied in content.

Check: the student seems to have made a good-faith effort to include each and every sound that s/he heard as music. The list is at least somewhat varied in content.

Check-minus: the student seems not to have taken the assignment seriously. S/he turned in a tossed-off list of music that could easily have been written ten minuets before class.]

APPENDIX C. Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Assignment #2: Production Proposal

You, an up-and-coming opera director, have just been given the first big break in your career: a chance to stage Mozart's opera *Le nozze di Figaro* at <<an American opera company, chosen by you in consultation with me>>. The general manager of <<your company>> has reminded you that your production should be tailored to suit the needs, tastes, and expectations of this particular audience. At the same time, however, s/he has informed you that <<your company>> is trying to attract new people and grow the audience. Knowing that you need the general manager solidly in your corner to get the budget to do the production as you envision it, you write a most passionate proposal (at least five typed double-spaced pages) arguing for your setting and interpretation.

In your proposal, be sure to consider the central themes of the opera, the social and political ideals of the Enlightenment, the relevance of such ideals today, the expectations of your particular opera audience, the financial realities of that company, and the need to attract a broader audience to ensure fiscal stability for the future of the company.

Some questions and exercises to get you thinking:

- How is tension between the social classes established as a central theme of the opera?
- How is tension between the genders established as a central theme of the opera?
- Find at least one example of the intersection of tensions between class and gender.
- Consider the turn of events at the end of the opera in terms of class, gender, and power.
- What are the implications of taking a risk in your production?
- What are the implications of playing it safe?
- Ultimately, what are the stakes when we perform a 225-year-old piece of music in our own contemporary world?

Be prepared to discuss these issues and to defend your productions in class on Friday.

Length: As long as it takes, but aim for 5 double-spaced pages
Submit: MS Word document (YourLastName.doc or .docx) via e-mail attachment

[**Notes to the reader on assessment:** Grading this kind of assignment is less subjective than the other assignments included here. The following are my general guidelines for assessing the proposals:

An "**A**" paper presents a passionate, persuasive, and detailed proposal. Its structure is tight and the writing style is both grammatically correct and elegant. The student incorporates *all* of the following in his or her proposal:

- the central themes of *Le nozze di Figaro*
- the social and political ideals of the Enlightenment
- the relevance of such ideals today
- the expectations of the particular opera audience
- the financial realities of that company
- how to attract a broader audience

A "**B**" paper is essentially an "**A**" paper that comes up somewhat short in the writing style *or* does not address all of the issues listed above.

A "**C**" paper is essentially an "**A**" paper that comes up short in the writing style *and* does not address all of the issues listed above.

A "**D**" paper is poorly written *or* contains primarily underdeveloped ideas.

An "**F**" paper is poorly written *and* contains primarily underdeveloped ideas.]