

## THE SAYLOR FOUNDATION'S FINAL COURSE REFLECTIONS ESSAY

**Instructions:** Please write briefly on the major themes and topics stressed or implied during this course. Choose TWO of the following sets of questions to answer. Then, write TWO brief essays of about 500-800 word essays synthesizing your ideas on each topic. This exercise is “open book,” meaning you are encouraged to make use of your notes and all course materials.

Make sure your essays are well-organized, containing an introduction, body, and conclusion. A strong essay will use textual evidence and discuss specific examples of music studied in this course. Remember to include a strong thesis statement at the end of your introduction that clearly states the main point that will be discussed in your essay, which should relate to the topic you chose. This assignment will also aid you in studying for the Final Exam.

You may wish to make use of cited quotes from the readings and the primary source documents, such as the writings of Mozart and Berlioz. Students should make use of the style guide of their choice: (MLA, APA, etc.) When referring to pieces of music, please follow the conventions stated in these [guidelines for writers on music](#).\*

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### **Choose TWO of the following sets of questions:**

1. Why is Western classical music worth studying? Why is it an art form worth preserving in the face of the present tidal-wave of enthusiasm for pop music of all types? Why is it worth learning about and listening to classical music? (NOTE: In answering these questions, it will be of no avail to say simply that you like it or it is pretty or relaxing. Instead, develop a defense of classical music by discussing three compositions that you have studied in this course and what insights you have gained into the human condition, creativity, etc. What does Western classical music attempt to do that pop music cannot, and how is this manifested in each of your three pieces?)
2. Discuss two works you have studied that were particularly effective in arousing emotion and/or telling a story. What was each composer's intent in writing this piece? By what formal and expressive means did each composer carry out his intent? Does music have the capacity to evoke emotion or tell a story in a way that other art forms do not?
3. Discuss and compare two major examples of program music discussed in this course, such as Thomas Weelkes's "As Vesta Was from Latmos Hill Descending" and Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique." Using specific moments from both pieces, explain how Weelkes and Berlioz have made use of musical symbols to convey to the listener



the intended program of each composer's piece. How did they use this vocabulary to get across the program to the listener? How does each reflect its respective cultural context? Finally, identify one asset to having a program for a piece and one liability or potential danger in having a program written into a piece.

4. Discuss the development of the orchestra or the piano in the West from its earliest beginnings in the Baroque period to its explosion in the Romantic period. Which composers were especially important in bringing new instruments and

sounds into the orchestra? In which iconic pieces by these composers do we see these new instruments or sounds being employed and to what purpose? What advantages did the piano and the new instruments in the orchestra offer, and what limitations had to be overcome in order for innovation to take place?

5. Discuss the development and stylistic attributes of ONE of the following: the Gothic style, the Viennese classical style, or Impressionism. In which countries and under what historical circumstances did this style develop? How might it have been a reaction to the perceived limitations of earlier music? Which composers were particularly active in creating this style music, and what were some of the compositional techniques that they employed? How does the development of this new musical style relate to art, architecture, or literature of the time? (Choose any applicable examples.)

8. The concept of musical genius has been an important underlying theme of this course. Identify the one composer from this course who, for you, best exemplifies this concept of the musical genius. In specific musical terms, what did he do that was truly exceptional, truly innovative, or radical? In other words, how did this individual "think outside the box" (outside the musical convention of that time)? Identify the time period in which this individual lived and the public response to his or her work.

