

Writing Your Own Program Notes By Tomiko Hamai

“**Program notes**” are the text in a concert program that offer information on the composers and pieces performed. They are helpful to the audience and also to you as a performer, as they provide insight and understanding of the work performed.

Writing program notes takes time and research, so don't wait until the last minute. It is also helpful to have your program notes completed while you are still practicing and learning your piece as they help your musical interpretation and performance.

What to Write About:

1. The composer's background – where is he from, what were his birth and death years, what is he most famous for, where did he go to school, etc.
2. Information on the piece itself, if possible. Some pieces have lots of information available about them and some have little to none. Things to think about – was the piece originally written for flute, when was the piece written, when was the piece first performed, what is the genre of the piece (is it a sonata, concerto, or otherwise?).
3. Use your own knowledge of music to describe the work – is the piece pleasing to listen to, does the piece make you feel any emotions (happy, sad, angry, calm, etc.), is the piece in a major or minor key, are there several sections with different moods, etc.

Where to Find Information (Sources):

1. The New Grove's Dictionary of Music, available in all public and university music libraries. This is the number one source for anything and everything music. If possible, consult this source first.
2. Program notes from CD jackets or other concerts. Other people's notes are a great source as they have already done the research and may have found something interesting that you want to include in your notes as well.
3. Books on the composers, on the period of music during which your piece was written, or other related topics. There are books on everything, but it is sometimes time consuming to look through so many pages. Books are great sources if you plan ahead and don't wait until the last minute.
4. The Internet. Google is your friend and a really quick way to find dates and basic information. You'll have to be clever in your searching to find information on your specific piece.
5. People around you. Believe it or not some people actually walk around with the knowledge you are searching so hard for. Don't be afraid to ask for help! Teachers, parents, family, and friends are great resources. You may be surprised at what they know.

Note: I expect that you will consult the works of other authors to assist in writing your notes. You are expected to paraphrase and use bits of information from another's work. However, **you may not use a passage, a sentence, or a paragraph word-for-word** from someone else's writing. This is known as plagiarism and it is illegal! I know that you are creative enough to convey the same information in your own words.

If you are having a great deal of trouble finding information on your composer or piece, please let me know!!! I can show you examples of program notes for your benefit.

♪ Good luck! ♪