

NSF Young Festival Critic Competition

LESSON PLAN: Writing a Review of a Music Concert

Key Stage 3



AIMS

- ♪ To evaluate a performance of unfamiliar music
- ♪ To understand how to structure the writing of a concert review
- ♪ To develop persuasive and descriptive writing skills

OUTCOMES

- ♪ To be able to recognise and describe different features within a piece of music
- ♪ To be able to evaluate the success of a musical performance
- ♪ To be able to justify personal opinions
- ♪ To be able to write creatively with an awareness of audience and purpose

Resources:

- ♪ NSF Website
- ♪ Links to selected NSF 2024 performers videos ([click here](#)) [EDIT LINK]
- ♪ Smartboard (or other audio/video capability)
- ♪ Year KS3 Young Festival Critic Worksheets
- ♪ Selected Concert Review Example Sheets
- ♪ Pens and pencils

Introduction

What is a Concert Review?



Teacher shares with children that:

“A concert review is a way of sharing your opinion, and critique, of a musical performance with other people. It is a piece of informative and persuasive writing intended to influence future audiences and with the potential to impact the careers of artists and concert organisers in both positive and negative ways.”

“You can find examples of written concert reviews printed in newspapers and magazines and on websites. Video and multimedia reviews, which are often shared by artists, critics and influencers, can also be found online in blogs, vlogs, music forums and social media platforms.”

“Concert reviews share information about the performance you have experienced and your own personal opinions about how the performers brought the music to life. They use descriptive language to try to bring the performance alive in writing. Most concert reviews include a star rating to highlight the quality of the concert and a recommendation about whether someone should consider going to another concert or listening to this ensemble again”.

Activity 1

Analysing a Music Review

Divide the class into small working groups and give each group a copy of one of the selected concert reviews. (Each group can have the same concert review, or you can share a selection to enable a broader conversation).

Give everyone 5 minutes to read their review independently before asking the groups to work together to complete **Activity 1**.

Students should complete their own worksheets to reveal the information they have found out about their given concert including:

1. Where the concert was held and who the concert was given by
2. Who was in the audience and what was their reaction
3. Some details about the style of music and the way the concert was performed
4. A list of musical vocabulary used in the review

** Students with more musical ability or experience may be able to help support class discussion by giving the meaning of musical vocabulary used**

EXTENSION: Students can also be guided to identify or highlight the different structural sections and styles of writing within the review.

- Introduction
- Personal Opinion
- Descriptive Writing

- Recommendation



Activity 2

Active Listening and Note Taking

Teacher shares with the class that:

“Writing, or creating, a concert review is a form of reporting (reportage). Active, critical listening and note taking in the moment are essential if you are going to be able to communicate your thoughts and opinions about a performance accurately. It is not possible for a concert reviewer to ‘re-play’ a live concert so they need to be able to listen and make notes simultaneously”.

Listen to your chosen video performance and then complete **Activity 2** on the worksheet.

Give the students a few minutes to explore the question prompts on the worksheet before watching the video.

Encourage students to listen and make notes, however brief, simultaneously like they would if they were a concert reporter.

Allow the students a few minutes to reflect, in silence on their notes before ask the students:

“Do you feel your notes have captured the energy and your overall impression of the performance?”

“If not, why not”?



“Have you used any interesting descriptive or musical language?”

Ask the students to share their initial notes with a partner, exploring similarities and differences of opinion and encouraging students to help each other find creative ways to note down details from the performance.

*** ‘Re-play’ the video performance to give students more time to listen, consider their notes and add more descriptive language as needed***

Activity 3



Creative Writing in the Third Person.

Share with the students that:

“Most written concert reviews are written in the third person because it puts some distance between the reviewer and the concert itself. Writing in the first person is common for online blogs but, when writing for a newspaper or magazine, using the third person sounds more professional. It makes the writing read less like a super-fan and more like someone who has undertaken some careful research and analysis of the performance”.

Ask the students to complete **Activity 3** by transforming the statements from first person to third person and adding more interesting descriptive vocabulary.

E.g.

“I went to a concert on Sunday night and I thought it was good!”

Version 1: Sunday night’s concert was absolutely amazing!

Version 2: Sunday night’s concert, billed as the highlight of the year, certainly did not disappoint!

EXTENSION: More able students should be encouraged to create longer, more elaborate sentences using a range of descriptive techniques and musical vocabulary.

Writing a Concert Review



A Template

Look again at the selected concert reviews from the start of the lesson to help guide them in writing their own review.

Ask students to write a short review of the video performance they have experienced today. They should use their notes from the 'Listening and Note Taking' activity to help them and their review should include:

- ♪ **A Title and Sub-heading** – This should set the tone for the rest of your review and give the reader a hint of what is to come.

- ♪ **An Introduction** – When was the concert? Where was the concert? Who was performing? Why were they giving the concert? What was your overall impression of the concert?

- ♪ **A Description** – Share some details with the audience about what really stood out for you in the music and how the performers brought the music to life.

- ♪ **Some Background** – Try to include some information about the performers and/or the repertoire they have chosen. Ideally you should conduct this research ahead of your concert visit as it will help shape and inform your thoughts about the performance.

- ♪ **A Personal Opinion** – What was really successful in the performance? Were there any parts of the performance you thought could be improved? Make sure you give a reason and justify your opinions.

- ♪ **A Final Recommendation** – Complete your star rating and let your audience know whether you recommend listening to this ensemble perform in the future.

NSF Young Festival Critic Worksheet

Key Stage 3

ACTIVITY 1 – Read your concert review independently and then work in your small group to answer the questions below.

Where was the concert?

Who was performing?

Why were they performing?

Who was in the audience?

What was the audience reaction?

List any musical vocabulary used in the review?

What do these words mean?

What style of music was being performed?

How was it performed?

ACTIVITY 2 – Read the question prompts below before watching your chosen performance. Watch, listen and make your own notes simultaneously, like a concert reporter would do.



How many people are performing?

Which instruments are being played?

Is there anything striking or unusual about the ensemble?

What music is being performed?

Describe some features of the music that stand out to you.

Other notes and thoughts....

What is the energy like on stage?

What is the energy like in the audience/how do you and other listeners feel and react?

ACTIVITY 3: Transform these statements by writing in the **third person**.

You should consider adding extra descriptive detail and be as creative as



STATEMENT 1: "I saw a violin player with lots of energy"

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STATEMENT 2: "I heard some music which was really boring"

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STATEMENT 3: "I thought the drums were loud"

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ST GABRIEL'S
NEWBURY

A Concert Review by:

Concert Title and Date:



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Checklist! Tick the boxes to show which sections you have included.

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|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> An Introduction | <input type="checkbox"/> A catchy sub-heading | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing in the third person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> A personal opinion | <input type="checkbox"/> A recommendation |