

Approaching Musical Analysis

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Challenges in writing about music

- Where do I start?
- How do I keep track of all the moving parts?
- How do I navigate personal or emotional associations?
- How can I analyze music if I'm not a subject matter expert?

D.A.I.E. Approach

- Created by scholar/art critic Edmund Burke Feldman, late 1960s-early 1970s
- Description
- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Evaluation (Judgment)

Description

- List hearable qualities of the work that are obvious and easily perceived
- Include only the facts:
 - Instruments, number of voices, musical and lyrical content, for example

Analysis

Analysis of music considers integration of the elements. Focus on:

- Organization or form (verse, chorus, bridge)
- Examples of contrast, unexpected events, or other similar considerations
- How the artist creates interest
- The relationship between musical style and the lyrics

Interpretation

“Interpretation involves discovering the meanings of a work of art and stating their relevance to our lives and the human situation in general” (Feldman 1987, 478).

Interpretation

- Propose ideas for possible meaning based on evidence from D and A steps
- Consider emotions/feelings/intentions projected onto the work
- Examine performance in relation to its historical and social context.
 - Who might be included in the intended audience?
 - Is this piece political, humorous, romantic, melancholy, etc.?

Evaluation/Judgment

Evaluation of music should draw from all of the prior elements and discuss the overall strengths/success/merit of the work.

It includes:

- discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the piece (as supported by evidence from DAI stages)
- personal points of support or disagreement