

Definition of the Genre

A concert review describes a concert's overall structure - including its music, musicians, venue, time, and location - and attempts to place the concert in a larger context by comparing it to other concerts. For your readers to grasp the atmosphere and quality of the concert, you should try to capture the entire scene in your review and also include your own evaluation.

Actions to Take

To write a concert review, you will need to listen closely to an audio event and translate your acoustic observations into a written text. During this process, you will need to do the following:

A. Before and during the concert: take notes

1. Read the prompt carefully.

Usually, the concert review assigned in an academic context is different from the one in a newspaper or magazine. Be sure to understand your instructor's expectations.

2. Get access to the show.

In order to review the concert, you'll need to get in the door!

3. Take notes about what is happening on the stage.

Write down your observations of the time and space of the concert - such as intermission, stage lighting, and musicians' attire. Both formal and informal conversations by the musicians on the stage may be also useful for your review.

4. Get the list of songs/compositions.

You will need to mention what pieces were played at the concert in your review. If some particular pieces are outstanding among the repertoire, take notes on the reasons. If you do not know the names of all of the pieces, you can sometimes get a copy of the song list from the concert manager.

5. Review the performers.

Take notes about how well (or poorly) the musicians played, if there was any outstanding piece (and, if so, why?), and whether or not there was any stage banter. Be as descriptive and detailed as possible, including the performers' positions, attire, gestures, etc. You might also want to pay attention to the backup players; lead singers are not the only stars. Don't let your review be only a critique of the center stage.

6. Take notes about the audience.

While your focus should be on what the musicians do, not the audience, it may be useful for your readers to know what type of fans showed up, how the audience responded, and whether it was a large or small crowd. Whether the show was sold out or only 10 fans showed up, audience size and their response have a tendency to affect the musicians' performance.

B. After the concert: write a review

1. Introduction.

Your introduction should include the title, venue, and date of the concert, and names of musicians/ensembles/conductors. You may also include details, such as the specific locale, to give readers unfamiliar with the area a better idea of where the concert took place. Also, if the concert was held earlier in the day, or extremely late at night, be sure to mention that.

2. Description.

The main body of the concert review should include brief discussions of each piece played during the concert you attended. Do not quote the program notes: you should write your own observations on the performance. The format of your description may be varied according to the genres of music, but it should include: the title of each piece and the name of the composer and/or musician; basic and brief information about the composer and/or piece; and your reaction to the piece.

3. Evaluation.

Based on your notes, be sure to mention what made attending the concert worthwhile. What about the experience was new or different for you? Expand on your writing by augmenting it with relevant facts such as the history of the band or the effect the venue had on the performance. Be honest about whether you individually enjoyed the concert and how, in your opinion, the audience as a whole responded. Also, include in your review the acoustic quality of the music - if the live music deviated from studio versions of music as well as the effect of the music on the crowd.

4. Conclusion.

Your conclusion should summarize your overall impression of the concert. Do not include any new information (for example, upcoming events) in the conclusion.

Useful links (reviews in different genres of music)

Classical and Opera: <http://www.musicomh.com/opera/>

Jazz: <http://www.jazzreview.com/>

Rock: <http://www.rockmusicreview.com/>

Dance: <http://www.dancemagazine.com/reviews>

Performing Arts: <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/ArticleArchives?category=863476>