

Video 2: Writing about Music Part 1

Link to the video: nmcrec.co.uk/education/exhibition-project/video-2

Hello everyone!

I'm Kate, and I'm going to be talking to you about the next part of this activity: writing about music.

As you can see, I play the clarinet. I started learning the clarinet when I was at school and I've been playing ever since. I do many other musical things as well. One of the things I love most of all is talking about music. I'm often on the radio and I spend a lot of time writing about music too, because talking and writing about music are usually connected.

Now you might think, why do we need to write about music? Surely the point of music is to listen to it? Well, that's true, but writing about music is important for a number of reasons – and it's also fascinating.

Here are two reasons why its important and fascinating:

1. Sharing

Your words about the music you love can help to make other people intrigued and want to listen to it. This is especially important if it's not a well-known piece of music or a well-known composer.

Here is a real example as to how words can help make people want to listen to music. I often ask students to tell me about their musical discoveries. One student suggested a piece and wrote to me:

"This is a truly wonderful piece of music – you've got to listen to it"

Another wrote:

"This incredible piece of music really moves me, but I can't say quite say why..."

And a third wrote:






"To me, this piece of music makes me think of pebbles dropping into a deep ocean with sound ripples that spread across the water..."



You can probably guess that the one I listened to straight away was the last one. It was, in fact, the only one that didn't directly tell me that the music was brilliant – but I guessed it must have been pretty special to generate such a powerful image in the student's mind. A really compelling description can set a scene, tell a story, set fire to your imagination, transport you to another world... just like music does.

Mostly, my work as a writer is about sharing and encouraging other people to listen to music.

I write for:

-  BBC Radio 3, where I tell stories about composers, their lives and their incredible music;
-  I introduce concerts for places like London's famous Wigmore Hall;
-  I write features and blogs for newspapers and magazines;
-  I write 'Promotional copy' – which is the words you use to sell a concert or event. Its very important because your words can make a difference as to whether someone buys a ticket or not;
-  And I write social media – even just a handful of words can be very powerful and persuasive if you use them carefully.

Rarely a day goes past when I'm not writing some words about music.

2. Discovering Ourselves

The second reason that it's good to talk and write about music is because it helps us to discover more about ourselves, and understand our own developing and changing personal tastes.

Finding the words to describe exactly why you like something might surprise you and reveal things you didn't know about yourself. For example, you might find that you are particularly drawn to certain sounds, or textures or patterns in music; and once you realise this, it might lead you to other music which has the qualities you love.

And why is it important to keep discovering new sounds? Well, we are not born with a set of pre-made tastes. We have the power to change and shape the things we like and the things we don't. We can keep our tastes open, or we can shut them down.





Here's a fascinating comment from the neuroscientist and psychologist Daniel Levitin:

"Most of us base our adult musical tastes on what we liked when we were 12 to 16. In some cases, through effort, we can expand our musical tastes as adults. But if we had relatively narrow tastes in our developing years, this is much more difficult to do because we lack the appropriate models or templates with which to process and understand new musical forms."

So, if we close down our ears when we are young, we make it so much harder for ourselves to enjoy a wide variety of music when we are older. The choice is ours...

Let's get going!

For this project, we are asking you

-  to write a short composer profile
-  to write a short 'blurb' (copy is the proper word) about your chosen piece of music

Your task is to find the best way of communicating with your reader. You want them to start reading and keep reading right to the end.

How can you do that? You'll find out in the next video!

