

Suggestions for Researching & Writing Program Notes

Select a piece from our repertoire that interests you. What can you find out about:

1. the composer / lyricist / arranger, including:
 - a. birth and death dates?
 - b. locations of birth, childhood, schooling, adult life, and death?
 - c. life and work (including other music or texts he or she created)?
 - d. (for living persons) current location and work?
2. the piece of music itself, including:
 - a. when, where, and why was it composed?
 - b. the connections between the composer, lyricist, and arranger, such as:
 - i. in the case of a musical setting of poetry, how/why did the composer select the poem/poet?
 - ii. in the case of a collaboration (e.g., the composer and the lyricist worked together to create the piece of music), what was extent and significance of the relationship between the creators?
 - iii. in the case of an arrangement, what inspired the arranger to re-set the original piece of music?
 - c. the significance of the work within the output of its creator(s)?
 - d. the relationship (if any) of the work to a larger work or series of works?
 - e. the meaning of the text (if in a foreign language or if the text is a poetic interpretation of something)
 - f. anything that might help the audience understand and appreciate the work (especially if it is new and/or unusual), such as:
 - i. the form (“roadmap”) of the piece, such as ABA, sonata-allegro, rondo?
 - ii. qualities of the composition, such as tonality (e.g., major, minor, whole-tone), dynamic range, expressive highlights, challenges in learning and/or presenting?
 - iii. other information, such as dedications, special performance instructions, additional parts (e.g., instruments, narrators, soloists), alternate settings?
3. the performance history of the piece, including:
 - a. the world premiere performance (date, location, and performing artists)?
 - b. significant historical performances (dates, locations, and performing artists)?
 - c. the LGCW premiere performance (date, location, concert title, conductor)?
 - d. significant and recent LGCW performances (dates, locations, concert titles, conductors)?
4. current programming information, including:
 - a. reason(s) why this piece was selected for the current concert?
 - b. conversations (if any) that resulted from the work’s selection?
 - c. connections to our Mission, Vision, & Values Statements?

Where can you find information?

1. Start with a Google search, with the caveat that you can’t always rely on the accuracy of Internet information.
2. Contact the publisher of the piece for biographical information about the composer and historical information about the work. Many publisher web sites include composer biographies.
3. Contact the composer himself/herself. Many living composers have their own web sites which include detailed information about their lives and their music, as well as information about how to contact them for additional information.
4. Visit a performing arts library, such as the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library at the University of Maryland. You can prepare for your trip by accessing the library’s online card catalog to see what helpful resources are available. Try browsing through musical encyclopedias such as *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* and resources dedicated to specific categories of composers, such as women composers, American composers, African-American composers, etc.
5. For LGCW information, ask a veteran or former chorister and/or make an appointment to browse through the LGCW library.