

## HOW TO WRITE THE PROGRAM LISTS AND PROGRAM NOTES FOR CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS

By Piret Väinmaa (PhD)

European Chamber Music Teachers' Association

June-July 2018, EMC / STAMP / Workshop for trainers / Toolbox

A printed concert program informs the audience of what they are going to hear. It includes information on performers, composers and works and it will also be a historical document of a concert.

In case of the performances of vocal music, a concert program should include texts that are sung, with the translations as appropriate. Both the authors of the original texts and the sources of any translations that you use must be identified so that they may be properly credited in the program.

### A. PROGRAM LISTS

This is what you need to know:

1. What is the event about / the name of the event: a concert, a recital, etc
2. When (time and date)
3. Where (the venue with an address)
4. Who is playing / singing
5. What instrument
6. What composer/composers
7. What pieces

#### Example 1: Recital of piano music

What is the event about	Piano recital
When (time and date)	Wed 23rd of April 2019 at 18.00
Where (the venue with the address)	In the Holy Ghost Church, Vienna, Wolfgangstrasse 31
Who is playing / singing	Jane Johnson
What instrument	(piano)
What composer/composers	Ludwig van Beethoven Maurice Ravel
What pieces	Sonata for piano C Major op 53 („Waldstein“) (1805) <i>La Valse</i>

The trickiest part is to write the title of the piece correctly and with full information about the work.

If a title is based on the works genre, use the following form:

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) - Sonata No 21 C Major op 53 („Waldstein“) (1805)

1. Composers' name should be correctly spelled, and with birth and death dates in parentheses (1770-1827)
2. Number of the Sonata No 21
3. Key of the work (C Major)
4. Opus number (op 53) is added for identifying the works. Opus numbers are used to catalog the works of the classical music composers.
5. Additional title or nickname of the work is added in quotes and parentheses („Waldstein“).
6. The year of creation (1805) is added in parentheses after the title of the work.
7. If you are performing a piece with separate movements, please write the movements in the program list. Movement titles in are italicized:

*Allegro con brio*  
*Introduzione. Adagio molto*  
*Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo*

If the title is unique and given in original language, use Italic:

Maurice Ravel (1875 -1937) - *La Valse* (1920)

The information on the program list should look like this:

PIANO RECITAL

Wed 23rd of April 2019 at 18.00  
In the Holy Ghost Church, Vienna, Wolfgangstrasse 31

Jane Johnson (piano)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) - Sonata no 21 C Major op 53 („Waldstein“) (1805)

*Allegro con brio*  
*Introduzione. Adagio molto*  
*Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo*

Maurice Ravel (1875 -1937) - *La Valse* (1920)

## Example 2: Song recital

1. What is the event about	Song recital
2. When (time and date)	Sun 1st of June 2019 at 18.00
3. Where (the venue with the address)	In the Holy Ghost Church, Vienna, Wolfgangstrasse 31
4. Who is playing / singing	Matthew Mason, Jane Johnson
5. What instrument / voice	(baritone), (Piano)
6. What composer/composers	Franz Schubert
7. What pieces	<i>Die schöne Müllerin</i>

In case of vocal music, like *Lied*, art song and choral works, please write all the names of the separate songs in the program list. On a separate page, please include the original texts of the songs and their translations. Don't forget to add the author of the texts and authors of the translations you use!

The information on the program list should look like this:

### SONG RECITAL

Sun 1st of June 2019 at 18.00

In the Holy Ghost Church, Vienna, Wolfgangstrasse 31

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) - *Die schöne Müllerin* op. 25, D 795

1. Das Wandern
2. Wohin?
3. Halt!
4. Danksagung an den Bach
5. Am Feierabend
6. Der Neugierige
7. Ungeduld
8. Morgengruss
9. Des Müllers Blumen
10. Tränenregen
11. Mein!
12. Pause
13. Mit dem grünen Lautenbände
14. Der Jäger
15. Eifersucht und Stolz
16. Die liebe Farbe
17. Die böse Farbe
18. Trockne Blumen
19. Der Müller und der Bach
20. Des Baches Wiegenlied

Matthew Mason, baritone  
Jane Johnson, piano

(Note: The performers may be mentioned above or below the works.)

The page of the texts and translations should look like this:

---

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) - *Die Schöne Müllerin*, op. 25, D 795

Text by Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), translation by Celia Sgroi

1. Das Wandern

Das Wandern ist des Müllers Lust,  
Das Wandern!  
Das muß ein schlechter Müller sein,  
Dem niemals fiel das Wandern ein,  
Das Wandern.  
Vom Wasser haben wir's gelernt,  
Vom Wasser!  
Das hat nicht Rast bei Tag und  
Nacht,  
Ist stets auf Wanderschaft bedacht,  
Das Wasser.  
Das sehn wir auch den Rädern ab,  
Den Rädern!  
Die gar nicht gerne stille stehn,  
Die sich mein Tag nicht müde drehn,  
Die Räder.  
Die Steine selbst, so schwer sie  
sind,  
Die Steine!  
Sie tanzen mit den muntern Reihn  
Und wollen gar noch schneller sein,  
Die Steine.  
O Wandern, Wandern, meine Lust,  
O Wandern!  
Herr Meister und Frau Meisterin,  
Laßt mich in Frieden weiterzieh'n  
Und wandern.

2. Wohin?

etc.

1. Wandering

Wandering is the miller's joy,  
Wandering!  
A man isn't much of a miller,  
If he doesn't think of wandering,  
Wandering!  
We learned it from the stream,  
The stream!  
It doesn't rest by day or night,  
And only thinks of wandering,  
The stream!  
We also see it in the mill wheels,  
The mill wheels!  
They'd rather not stand still at all  
and don't tire of turning all day,  
the mill wheels!  
Even the millstones, as heavy as  
they are,  
The millstones!  
They take part in the merry dance  
And would go faster if they could,  
The millstones!  
Oh wandering, wandering, my passion,  
Oh wandering!  
Master and Mistress Miller,  
Give me your leave to go in peace,  
And wander!

---

(Translation: [http://www.gopera.com/lieder/translations/schubert\\_795.pdf](http://www.gopera.com/lieder/translations/schubert_795.pdf))

NB! For presenting texts next to on another, activate the texts you want to present and use the 'page layout'- 'columns' in MS Word format.

## B. PROGRAM NOTES

Program notes engagingly describe the works being performed and the histories and personalities behind the music. They give your audience information on the composer(s), pieces, context, expectations and interpretation.

Program notes may be organised in separate sections:

- a) A brief introduction to the composer
- b) Information about the historical context of the pieces the audience is about to hear
- c) Descriptions of the works
- d) Information about the performers
- e) Other - e.g. expectations or history of the interpretation fo the particular piece, interesting facts on the instruments, a brief history of the venue etc.

The most important part of the program notes is the information about composers and works to be performed. Some basic questions you might want to answer, include:

- a) Where was the composer born (where did he/she die)?
- b) What is the composer best known for? What is his/her most significant contribution to the music history?
- c) When was the piece written? What else was going in the composers' life?
- d) Did the composer write any similar works / works in the same genre or form?

Further details on the works:

- a) Titles of the movements of the pieces
- b) Structure or form of the pieces
- c) Explanation of any possible terminology/jargon that the average listener would not know
- d) Anything you would like the listener to listen or pay attention to during the performance

Citations:

If you use any text written not by yourself, please cite your sources.

## APPENDIX 1:

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Information of classical composers and their works:

[Oxford Music Online](#)

Translations of the *Lieder* /art songs:

[LiederNet Archive](#)

[www.gopera.com](http://www.gopera.com)

Examples of program notes:

Note: Liner notes for recordings give a good description of the work. Scores may also have a brief description of the work included in the front of the score. Best examples can be found online:

[Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#)

[NY Philharmonics](#) (Click on *Concerts and tickets/calendar/event details*. Scroll down and download the pdf-file of program notes.)

[Kronos Quartet](#)

[www.earsense.org](http://www.earsense.org) (a chamber music database that includes program notes for selected works. Search by the composer or by the work. Example: program notes on [Robert Schumann Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 44](#) )

## APPENDIX 2:

### ONLINE SOURCES FOR WRITING PROGRAM LISTS AND PROGRAM NOTES USED IN THIS ARTICLE:

<http://libguides.richmond.edu/c.php?g=42252&p=267404>

<https://lib.guides.umd.edu/c.php?g=326879&p=2194305>

<http://uark.libguides.com/c.php?g=78944&p=505485>

## APPENDIX 3:

### EXAMPLE OF A POSTER FOR A PIANO RECITAL (see next page):

# PIANO RECITAL

Wed 23rd of April 2019 at 18.00  
In the Holy Ghost Church, Vienna, Wolfgangstrasse 31

Jane Johnson (piano)



Program:

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Sonata no 21 C Major op 53 („Waldstein“) (1805)

**Maurice Ravel (1875 -1937)**

*La Valse* (1920)

Free entrance