This Discussion Topic will provide an opportunity to identify musical elements in historical/cultural  contexts (CLO 3).

**Background**

As we have seen, 20th-century musical modernism poses particular problems for audiences. One is the presumption by many composers that good music should be difficult; while the underlying idea is very familiar to us *outside of* music (how can you get in shape without sweating? How can you master any subject without putting in effort?), it clashes with an idea many of us were raised with, namely that music is primarily a form of entertainment. A second problem follows naturally from the first: if good music should by its very nature be difficult, and if most audiences don't want to make the effort, then pleasing them is irrelevant at the very least, and maybe even inadvisable. The problem, in a nutshell, is that modernist composers of the 20th century often don't seem interested in reaching out to audiences.

**Assignment**

1. Be sure to have covered the material of Week 9 before posting.

2. Read the following two statements (written from the point of view of a modernist composer of the 20th century) and react to one of them in a paragraph. You can agree, disagree or fall somewhere in between. Whatever the case, give a succinct justification for your position *and provide one equally succinct argument against your position*. What is the value of defending two opposing views? For one, it fosters critical thinking. For another, both views are very likely valid; were there clear-cut right and wrong reactions, then these issues would not have been debated so passionately over the past century.

Statement One: *Great music is an investment: you must apply yourself to understand and appreciate it. Just as you’ll never gain mastery over anything without effort, you’ll never improve your ear or musical intelligence through easy listening.*

Statement Two:*Be it music, literature, painting, or scientific innovation, great things are always created by great people, and great people cannot cater to the masses. A physicist does not ask for the public’s approval of a complicated theory regarding black holes. By the same token, a composer breaking new ground in music should not be driven by questions of what the audience thinks.*

3. Respond briefly to the posting of at least one other student. Again, you can agree or disagree or fall somewhere in between. While it is not necessary to make an entirely novel point, you must contribute to this particular thread; avoid merely restating what was written by a previous respondent.

**Grading**

Discussion 3 is worth a maximum of 30 points broken down as follows:

* Up to 10 pts. for articulating your stance in regard to either Statement One or Statement Two.
* Up to 10 pts. for articulating an opposing stance.
* Up to 10 pts. for a response to another student's posting, a response that contributes a point not already made in that thread.

**Food for Thought**

* Regarding Statement One: Can you think of some music that a) was easy for you to enjoy, while b) improving you in some way (ethically, intellectually, etc.)? Is one person's difficulty always another's? For instance, is it possible that music one person thinks of as "user-friendly" seems incomprehensible to another, and vice versa?
* Regarding Statement Two: Is there anything inherently wrong about composing music the public dislikes? Are there dangers in a composer catering to public taste?