

Thank you for submitting (or considering submitting) an essay for *Open Access Musicology (OAM)*. In keeping with our emphasis on combining the best of scholarship with the best of pedagogy, below you will find information about our review process and about the evaluation guidelines we send to reviewers.

Review Process

After the editors conduct an initial “desk review” to determine that all submission requirements have been met, we conduct double blind reviews (neither authors nor reviewers are identified), subsequently sharing the reviewer’s reports with the authors. We ask our reviewers to ensure that their criticisms are as constructive as possible and presented in a collegial tone. We strive to solicit reviews and communicate their results to contributors within three months of submission.

In addition to double-blind peer review, all submissions are also reviewed by undergraduate students. These will include either a review by individual undergraduates and/or a collective review by an entire class, organized by the instructor. *OAM* requires that at least three students or student groups review each essay; at least two student groups must come from liberal arts colleges. Students are provided with an evaluative rubric. We ask for a 4-week turnaround. The goals of the student report are to help ensure the author’s success at accessible writing and the author’s ability to demonstrate relevance. The editor and associate editor will incorporate students reviews into their evaluation of a given submission, and authors will receive a summary of student feedback.

Peer-Review Evaluation Guidelines

The essays in our collection unite up-to-date scholarship with awareness of pedagogical and curricular concerns. Thus we ask that writers consider the following criteria, used by our editorial board and readers, as you create a successful *OAM* essay.

1. **Accessibility:** Undergraduate students, both majors and non-majors, must be able to comprehend and engage with the argument and substance of the essay without previous knowledge of musical terms, notations, and scholarly debates. That does not mean, however, that critical thinking must be dumbed down. On the contrary, we believe that clarity of thought is possible without requiring that the reader have a PhD or the ability to translate jargon. We expect that writers take the opportunity to define within the context of the thesis the relevant technical language or theory and/or refer to other essays in *OAM* for clarification and expansion.
2. **Originality:** Essays may contain ground-breaking arguments/research that would be publishable in other scholarly journals. But essays may also serve as insightful and critical syntheses of *current* thinking and research, thereby providing readers with a framework with which to approach a given topic. We expect writers to move beyond overviews and literature reviews, but writers may choose to provide an argument that guides readers through the state of a given field.
3. **Relevance:** What does the essay offer students that’s applicable, extendable, or transferable? Are the questions and methodologies that drive the essay made clear? No single topic, even those traditionally within various canons, is inherently significant.

4. **Self-positioning:** In your autobiographical introduction or in the essay itself, do you acknowledge how your own subjectivity informs your desire to write about the topic? Are you transparent about the biases or personal experiences you bring - as a scholar, but also a human - to your inquiry and argument? Ultimately, we expect every essay to begin with a one- or two-paragraph reflection on the author's relationship to the topic (why *this* topic? why you?) but you may also choose to embed such reflection into the essay itself.
5. **Prompts/Questions/Follow up:** Does the essay leave the instructor and student with a series of further questions for discussion? These can be explicit at the end or embedded within the essay. Would this essay facilitate a productive lecture and/or class discussion?
6. **Collaboration with Writers/Reviewers:** Would you be willing to continue to collaborate with our writers, should the recommendation of "accept" or "revise and resubmit" be accepted? The editors of *OAM* recognize that writing these kinds of essays is difficult and unusual and would like to support writers in their endeavors in a manner that is as transparent and productive as possible.
7. **Models:** In addition to [already published OAM articles](#), we encourage you to use existing essays as models for how you might balance scholarly techniques with accessible, student-centered writing. Such models include work by Alex Ross (in the *New Yorker*), Richard Taruskin (especially his writings for the *NYTimes* or *The New Republic*), Bonnie Gordon (her articles for Slate.com), William Cheng (writings for Slate.com and Huffington Post), and Nicholas Cook (in particular his *Short Introduction to Music*). You might also think of the best conference papers you have given or heard: these anticipate expert and non-expert audiences, they work within a time limit by carefully choosing the evidence they present in support of an argument, and they attempt to engage audiences with humor, self-reflection, and creative language. We hope, however, that these writings inspire rather than limit the possibilities.