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MUS 361 - Assignment Combining Elements of Thought with Universal Intellectual Standards: Group Work for Class Presentation

This assignment is based on a piece of music from Norton anthology. I suggest it because every MUS 361 section uses an anthology as a primary text, be it Norton or another book. The assignment is on a specific work—it is not possible to write such an assignment without naming an actual piece of music—but the format can serve as a model for other similar anthology assignments using different pieces of music.

Although this assignment can be done individually, it is particularly suitable for group work which requires students to know and evaluate other points of view (one of the elements of thought) before coming to a consensus, while allowing individual students who disagree to do so (thus demonstrating intellectual autonomy, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, and confidence in reason, all of which are intellectual traits in the Paul-Elder framework). From my experience, group work tends to encourage students to study the music more closely than they would otherwise do.

Assignment: In the first half of the 18th century or so, before it became standardized with the cultivation of the Classical style, the meaning of the term “sinfonia” varied depending on the context of its use. Such was, however, not the case with the solo concerto; its meaning and its three-movement scheme was already well-established by about middle of the 18th century. As a result, composers of the Classical solo concerto did not have to address the question of its genre (in its fundamental sense). With this background in mind, examine the first movement of Mozart’s A major concerto, K. 488. Critique it on the basis of the following questions: (1) How and to what extent does this movement pay homage to its Baroque predecessors? How is the Classical style able to admit these Baroque elements? (2) Consider the sonata principle. To what extent is it played out in this movement and what is the justification for the presence of the “aberrant” features? You will need to speculate as you tackle this task, but your speculation should be based on firm reasoning. Although you should concentrate on the section of the movement assigned to you, you should also know enough of the rest of the movement to address the issues I have posed.

In your response, make it a point to be **clear, accurate, precise and logical** in your reasoning. You will also have to decide on what **information is relevant** and what is not, what is **significant or important** and what is not. Make sure that you are clear about your **assumptions** and the **implications and consequences** of the **assumptions** and **concepts** that inform your **point of view**, your **interpretation** and your **conclusion**. Remember that you will be expected to justify what you say in your presentation.