

## Good Music v. Bad Music: The Importance of Defining Greatness in the Arts

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### Abstract

I would like to begin this essay by making a statement that many will likely find to be at the least counter-intuitive: One can like bad music, and similarly, one can dislike good music.

How can that be? Do we not think music we do not like is automatically bad? That is usually how we describe music we do not care for, is it not? The reason that my seemingly contradictory statement works is because our definitions of what makes music good and bad are in need of significant revision. For most listeners, the issue of quality is related directly to the issue of personal taste: so much so that the two are intertwined beyond hope of separation. This is the non-thinker's guide to musical criticism: it leads us to erroneous conclusions in the least amount of time, and ultimately makes us lazy as listeners.

My task in this essay is to argue in favor of establishing objective criteria that can be then taught to students who will become the audiences (and arts patrons, providing funding) of the next generation, and who will, one day, be the parents of a subsequent generation of listeners. Teaching them to appreciate the differences in artistic and technical value between popular music and concert music will help develop a market that currently shuns concert music, and will therefore help save our profession.