2024 Music Contemporary Performance external assessment report

General comments

In the 2024 Music Contemporary Performance examination students were assessed against eight criteria by two assessors, with a maximum of 10 marks allocated to each criterion. The assessment focused on individual criteria rather than a global evaluation, ensuring fairness and consistency across all students and instruments.

Overall, the standard of preparation was impressive, with students demonstrating a confident command of stylistically appropriate techniques. This preparation translated into a series of highly engaging performances, reflecting the hard work and dedication of the students and their teachers.

Students showcased their talents on a diverse range of instruments, including voice, performing as soloists or within various groups and ensembles. A key requirement was the inclusion of at least one work featuring another live performer. The ability to address the assessment criteria varied, influenced by each student’s technical and musical skills, understanding of the styles they performed, and experience in different performance contexts.

Students who achieved the highest marks displayed exceptional musicality, technical proficiency and interpretive skills. These students confidently manipulated musical elements to convey a distinctive personal voice and demonstrated outstanding interaction with their fellow musicians, elevating their performances to an impressive standard.

The term ‘instrument’, as outlined in the study design, includes voice. While students have the option to perform on more than one instrument during their examination, it is important for them to carefully consider the potential impact on their assessment. Students are encouraged to focus on their strengths, as performing on a secondary instrument with less proficiency may affect their marks. However, for students who are highly skilled on multiple instruments, this can be an opportunity to enhance their performance. In such cases, demonstrating versatility may positively contribute to Criteria 3, 4 and 5.

The 2024 examination cohort reflected a high level of commitment to their craft, and it was evident that students, supported by their educators, had thoughtfully prepared programs to meet the demands of the study design. This year’s performances highlighted the rich potential of young musicians to express themselves creatively, inspiring confidence in the future of contemporary music performance.

Specific information

Note: The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Criterion 1

Compliance with the requirements of the task

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.6 | 0 | 99 | 9.9 |

The majority of students presenting for assessment were fully compliant with the requirements of the examination. Compliance requirements include the inclusion in the performance program of:

* one work that is a reimagining of an existing work
* one ensemble work
* one original work created by an Australian artist since 1990.

Students must indicate on the Statement of Expressive Intention which works in their program satisfy these compliance requirements. It is preferable for this form to be completed electronically and then printed. If handwritten, students should ensure legibility.

Some students answered the questions relating to the reimagined work by referring to their entire program. However, these questions specifically require information about the **reimagined work** only. Some students ticked most of the boxes for the questions about elements of music and compositional devices and concepts. This made it difficult for them to give sufficient detail and remain under the word limit. It is more important to select fewer elements/devices and concepts and address each of them in depth.

For ensemble performances where more than one student is assessed, each student may present a different reimagined work.

In detailing expressive intentions, students need to describe the character or mood they aim to express in their reimagining. Many students wrote only about the stylistic changes made, which did not adequately satisfy the requirement to articulate expressive intentions.

Students in ensemble performances should ensure they perform in a sufficient number of works to demonstrate a range of styles and techniques, as detailed in the criteria.

Criterion 2

Skill in performing a range of music styles and/or characters through a program of works, as specified in the Performer Statement of Intention

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0.7 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 13 | 7.1 |

Students who scored highly in Criterion 2 performed programs that enabled them to demonstrate skilful execution across a range of styles and/or characters. Authenticity of style or genre was a hallmark of students who scored highly, demonstrating specific techniques and tone colours unique to the styles they presented.

Some students chose to present a wide range of styles but lacked the ability to perform all styles convincingly. Conversely, students with a deep understanding of different characters within a narrower range of styles also achieved high scores. Exceptional students demonstrated both breadth and depth in their performances.

When selecting a program of works, students should consider not only the range of styles and characteristics of each piece but also their own proficiency on the chosen instrument and their ability to present the works effectively. High-scoring performers did not necessarily choose extremely difficult works but instead presented a diverse repertoire that aligned with their level of proficiency.

Criterion 3

Performs a diverse range of techniques to demonstrate control consistency and variation of duration throughout the program

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.06 | 0.7 | 2 | 7 | 16 | 13 | 16 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 7 |

This criterion focuses on the technical skills demonstrated throughout the program. High-scoring students executed a variety of techniques effectively, with clear expressive outcomes. This was often supported by program choices representing a wide range of styles that the student understood well.

Students who scored highly demonstrated technical diversity, control and consistency, enhancing their ability to convey expressive intentions.

Criterion 4

Performs a diverse range of tone production techniques including quality, projection and variety of sound (tone production) as appropriate to the instrument throughout the program

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 15 | 7 |

Students achieving high scores demonstrated the ability to manipulate pitch, dynamics, tone colour and articulation to create varied and appropriate expressive outcomes.

Those who treated all works in their program with the same approach – without varying tone colour, articulation or other expressive techniques – limited their potential scores.

Students using electronically amplified instruments should exploit their equipment’s full potential to achieve stylistically appropriate and varied sounds. For example, changes in instruments or equipment should align with changes in playing approach to achieve expressive variety.

Criterion 5

Demonstrates ensemble techniques

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 14 | 21 | 7.5 |

High-scoring students interacted effectively with other musicians, demonstrating visual engagement, sound balance, rhythmic synchronisation and active listening. Stage positioning of musicians and equipment often facilitated these interactions, especially eye contact among performers.

Students relying on backing tracks must ensure playback equipment has adequate sound quality and volume for live performance. While students need to include only one ensemble work to meet compliance requirements, those who included more than one ensemble piece generally demonstrated ensemble techniques more effectively.

Criterion 6

Demonstrates control and variation of interpretation of the chosen program to exhibit an understanding of style with evidence of personal interpretive ideas

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 2 | 8 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 17 | 7.1 |

High-scoring students demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the styles in their program. They achieved this by paying attention to articulation, tone colour, rhythmic feel and dynamics, often drawing from wide and detailed listening to inform their interpretations.

Sophistication was evident when students incorporated personal interpretive ideas, such as improvisation or embellishments, to enhance the emotional or stylistic impact of their performance.

Criterion 7

Reimagining of an existing work, manipulating elements of music and concepts in an informed manner to achieve expressive intentions and personal voice as described in the Performer Statement of Intention

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.4 | 0 | 0.5 | 2 | 7 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 20 | 7.2 |

This criterion applies specifically to the **reimagined work** within the program. High-scoring students convincingly expressed the emotional content of their reimagined works by skilfully manipulating musical elements, as described in their Performer Statement of Intention.

The Performer Statement of Intention should focus on the character or mood being expressed in the nominated reimagined work and detail how this is achieved through the manipulation of musical elements or compositional devices. Many students wrote overly lengthy statements that lacked the required detail, focusing instead on stylistic or compositional approaches. Where more than one reimagined work is present in the program, a student must nominate one to write about on the Performer Statement of Intention.

Students must specify the elements of music or compositional devices manipulated in their reimagining, explaining how these align with their expressive intentions. Students who took time to complete this demonstrated a deep understanding and high-level performance of the reimagined work.

Criterion 8

Demonstrates appropriate performance decisions relating to the context of the performance, the physical space, and any equipment and technologies used

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.06 | 0.2 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 16 | 21 | 17 | 23 | 7.8 |

High-scoring students approached the preparation for their performance with a ‘dress rehearsal’ mindset, ensuring familiarity with all stage movements, equipment and technologies prior to the exam. This preparation enabled them to handle unforeseen situations, such as equipment failure, with poise and professionalism, and waste very little time between works.

Other notable performance decisions included clear introductions, stage etiquette, and appropriate use of the physical space. For students using electronic equipment or playback devices, thorough testing before the performance was critical to achieving successful outcomes.

High-scoring performers, as part of ensembles, also considered instrument changes, changes in personnel, and movement between works in a thoughtful and planned manner, minimising interruptions to the overall flow of the program.