2024 VCE Music Repertoire Performance external assessment report

General comments

Overall, students seemed well prepared for this examination, and understood what was required to achieve a satisfactory result. However, there were some students who lacked a clear understanding of the requirements.

* It is important that all students bring to the exam venue **TWO copies** of every piece of music they are performing and ensure there are no identifying names on the copies.
* It is also important that the student performs the prescribed/approved alternative work as per the specified notated score listed. **Note**: Different arrangements, shortened works or simplified versions of the prescribed/approved alternative work do not comply with the Criterion 1 requirements. Editions listed in the Prescribed List *of Instruments and Works* are for identification purposes only. Any recognised edition is acceptable. Before using an alternative edition, students and teachers should check that it is in fact an edition of the listed work; that is, it is not a simplified version or an arrangement of the work.
* Students need to ensure that they complete the program sheet accurately and clearly. There were many sheets identifying ‘prescribed’ works that were incorrect and/or did not identify the ensemble work.
* Students should ensure that the program pieces listed on the program sheet are in the correct performance order.
* Students should understand which instruments are supplied at venues and what they will need to bring to the venue. In most cases, venues only supply an acoustic piano. This information is available in the examination specifications document on the VCAA website.
* Piano students are encouraged to rehearse and perform on different pianos throughout the year to help them develop the ability to adjust to performance conditions, which may include different pedal and action feels from what they are used to.
* In the warm-up period before the exam, it is possible to move equipment such as pianos to suit the student’s performance requirements. However, check with the venue coordinator before doing so.
* Students who perform multiple instruments will be examined on each instrument performed. Some students were able to demonstrate equal skills, which allowed them to access higher marks. However, some students did not access the higher marks due to one or more of the instruments being performed at a lower standard.
* It is highly recommended that students practise how they are going to use their preparation time before the exam. Some brass and woodwind students suffered fatigue towards the end of their exam, which may indicate that they played too much during the warm-up period.
* Students should be prepared for contingencies. They should bring extra equipment to the examination venue, such as extra leads and cables, extension cords, strings, reeds, sticks and backing track equipment as appropriate for the performance.
* Please advise instrumental teachers, including studio teachers outside of the school, of the requirements and direct them to the VCAA website to see the prescribed list of works and the exam specifications.

Specific information

Seven examination criteria were used to score the performance examination. Each criterion was graded independently by two assessors using a marking scale from 1 to 10. In total, the assessment was graded to a maximum score of 140.

In 2024, students who scored highly demonstrated:

* accuracy, fluency and control over a range of music styles and/or characters
* a diverse range of techniques and consistent control of duration
* a diverse range of dynamics, nuances and phrasing
* excellent expression, with nuances to highlight the stylistic characteristics
* a diverse tonal range and tone production techniques representative of the styles performed
* excellent ensemble techniques, including balance, empathy and synchronisation, as well as responding to and leading real-time cues
* a well-developed performance program, with a range of music styles and characters.

In 2024, students who did not score well often demonstrated:

* a lack of accuracy and control of rhythms, pitch and time, with some attempting pieces that were beyond their technical ability
* poor ensemble skills, such as not listening to and adjusting the balance as needed, and/or not interacting with or acknowledging the other live performers
* that they were mostly following and not leading their ensemble
* little variety in their program
* a lack of expression or nuance in the performed phrasing
* little understanding of the stylistic characteristics
* an inability to manage their equipment well or a failure to maintain a continuous program of works.

Note: The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding, resulting in a total of 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 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 98 | 10.0 |

Students were required to present a live performance that included the following:

* at least one work from the *Prescribed List of Instruments and Works* or an approved alternative work (this work must be performed on the nominated principal instrument)
* at least one ensemble work (with one or more additional live performers)
* at least one work created by an Australian composer since 1990.

It is evident from the data that there were still a few compliance issues. It is important that students and teachers ensure they are viewing the latest prescribed list for the accredited period 2023–2027. It is also important that the work chosen is performed in its entirety and is not simplified nor an arrangement of the listed work.

* Ensure that there is at least one work from the 2023–2027 prescribed list in the student’s program.
* If the student wishes to apply for an alternative work or alternative instrument, please check and follow the details on the VCAA website.
* When choosing an Australian work composed since 1990, ensure the composer is Australian and that the work was composed since 1990. Some works presented were by an Australian composer but were written prior to 1990, for example, the drumkit solos by Frank Corniola in his book *Rhythm Section Drumming*, which were written in the 1980s.
* Some works were performed by an Australian artist but not composed by an Australian.
* **Note**: Students who are self-accompanied need another live performer to cover the ‘ensemble’ component.

Criterion 2: Skill in performing a range of music styles and/or characters through a program of work of appropriate complexity

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 21 | 7.7 |

Accuracy as notated, at referenced tempi, is an important element of this criterion.

* Higher-achieving students included a diverse program of challenging works and had prepared their pieces thoroughly, allowing them to perform each work fluently and with the required accuracy.
* Some students did not do well as they chose works that were beyond their technical capabilities and they were not able to demonstrate control and/or fluency.
* Students and staff are encouraged to listen to examples of works in the styles or characters being performed to gain a better understanding of how articulations, appropriate tones, embellishments and other relevant elements are typical of the styles or characters being presented.

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 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 22 | 7.6 |

Having a diverse range of techniques is important but the student needs to be able to perform them with control, which was not always the case. Being in control of rhythms, tempos, meters, beats and tempo transitions is required for students to access higher marks.

* Higher-scoring students selected works that included a diverse range of techniques.
* Students who did not score as highly in this criterion may not have prepared their works well enough to show the necessary level of control, or selected works that did not allow them to display enough range.
* For vocal students, if a microphone is being used in their performance examination, using the microphone correctly is an important technique to optimise their performance.

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 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 21 | 7.5 |

* Higher-scoring students were able to demonstrate a diverse range of tone production techniques by using appropriate tones and being able to change these tones by manipulating pitch, dynamics and articulation.
* The quality of tone was also important. Some students were not able to project their sound adequately or performed with a poor quality of tone throughout their performance.

Criterion 5: Demonstrate ensemble techniques

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 16 | 19 | 28 | 7.9 |

Almost all students used at least one live performer to help accompany their performance. However, some of the issues identified by examiners included:

* The student’s program did not include a range of textures.
* When accompanied by piano or other instruments, the student did not lead the performance and only followed the accompanist’s lead.
* Some of the performances may not have had adequate preparation, as there were often problems with balance and synchronisation between instruments. Accompanists need to be chosen wisely. Rehearse often and consider balance.
* Sometimes the placement of the student and the accompanist did not allow for eye contact. It is possible to move equipment in the room to suit the performance.
* Many students used a larger ensemble for one or more of their works to their advantage.
* Higher-scoring students were able to demonstrate that they were leading the other musicians and had developed a very high level of balance and synchronicity among all the performers.

Criterion 6: Demonstrate a stylistic and informed interpretation of the chosen repertoire

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 7.6 |

* The higher-scoring students selected appropriate works and were able to make the music come alive through the excellent use of phrasing and expressive communication, using articulation, ornamentation and embellishments, instrument-specific techniques, and other forms of interpretation.
* Students who did not do as well selected works that did not allow for a variety of articulation or ornamentation, or they did not demonstrate their understanding of how to perform the works to convey an informed interpretation.

Criterion 7: 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 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 36 | 8.5 |

Given the 30-minute warm-up and/or set-up time in the examination room prior to the exam, it is expected that the physical space and the use of any equipment and technologies is managed well to produce a balanced sound in the performance space. Poise and focus throughout is another consideration for this criterion.

* In the preparation time before the exam, try to organise to have an observer check the balance of all instruments and/or any backing tracks being used, as the performance space may be unfamiliar.
* Assessors noted that many successive backing tracks in performance programs were at different volumes, with no adjustment made for the overall balance.

Students who did well in this criterion:

* had thought about where best to place themselves and any equipment or accompanists they were using, and made sure their music stand was not obstructing the assessors’ view
* had prepared their accompanists to know when to enter the room, and any interruption to the flow of the performance was minimal
* had their music in the correct order, did not remove music from plastic pockets or folders between pieces, thought about how to minimise page turns, and were able to move seamlessly from one work to another
* made sure any backing they used was set up, so the student was able to manipulate the controls effectively and check that the balance was appropriate for the space
* did not overuse drink bottles, which can detract from the overall performance – students should limit the use of drink bottles to small occasional sips or avoid them unless absolutely necessary
* were prepared for contingencies and brought to the venue extra leads and cables, extension cords, strings, reeds, sticks and backing track equipment as appropriate for the performance.