VCE Music Advice for teachers 2017–2022

Group and solo performance resources

In Music Performance Units 1 to 4 all students perform group and solo repertoire. In Units 1 and 2 the balance between group and solo work will vary between students in the class, depending on students’ prior music experience and the context they select for Music Performance Units 3 and 4 and/or Music Investigation Units 3 and 4.

For all students, work undertaken on an individual basis to develop technical expertise and facility challenges them to develop a range of music performance skills they can use when performing group or solo repertoire. Each student should have a technical work program designed to meet their needs as an instrumentalist and to support their learning and performance of repertoire. Students may use different instruments for the solo and group components of their program in all units. Students who complete Units 3 and 4 as a member of a group may use more than one instrument to perform group works for Outcome 1 and the end-of-year performance examination. All students should complete all or at least a substantial majority of technical work and exercises for Outcome 2 using their main instrument.

Group work allows all students to experience the complexity of music produced by an ensemble, and to develop an ability to work collaboratively with others to achieve musical outcomes. Structured rehearsals should be a part of each student’s VCE Music Performance program. These rehearsals are also an opportunity for students to apply aural perception skills, for example by listening to all parts being performed and refining intonation to accurately perform specific chords across a music texture.

For students whose main focus is group performance teachers need to establish requirements relating to solo performance for Outcome 1. Students may use any instrument to meet these requirements. The nature of the learning activities and task required to demonstrate Outcome 1 should be closely aligned to the student’s work as a member of a group. For example, a student in a rock or jazz band might transcribe (practising Outcome 3 skills), learn, rehearse and perform a short solo from a work in a similar style to one they are preparing for group performance. This approach provides opportunities for students to develop dexterity and flexibility in using stylistically relevant techniques. Students focusing on chamber music might learn, rehearse and perform a short notated work by one of the composers they are studying as an ensemble focusing on manipulating the expressive elements of music to achieve specific effects.

Students whose main focus is solo performance might complete the group performance requirement by rehearsing and performing with an existing ensemble such as the school chamber choir or clarinet ensemble. Smaller rather than large ensembles offer more opportunities for these students to develop specific skills that will enhance their solo performance such as exploiting expressive qualities in the music through sophisticated manipulation of the elements of music or stylistically specific performance conventions.

Another option is for the class to form an ensemble. This approach allows considerable flexibility to explore approaches to interpreting works and trialling different ways of achieving expressive outcomes.

In Music Investigation, the Topic chosen may have a particular alignment with group or solo performance. This decision needs to take into account specific performance conditions such as the composition of Groups. These conditions are outlined in the Performance Examination Specifications. For example:

* If the Investigation Topic is based on the work of a multi-instrumentalist, the student may wish to be assessed on all the instruments they use in their performance and so will select the Group option.
* If the Investigation Topic is based on the work of a singer/song-writer, students may choose to be assessed as a singer, enrolling using the Voice – Contemporary popular code or as a multi-instrumentalist, enrolling using the Group code.