2023 VCE Music Contemporary Performance external assessment report

General comments

In the 2023 Music Contemporary Performance performance examination, students were assessed against eight criteria, newly developed for the new study design implemented in 2023. Each student was assessed by two assessors and a maximum of 10 marks was available for each criterion.

Each student was assessed on their performance according to the individual criteria, rather than receiving a global assessment. The criteria were applied equally to all students across all instruments. Students generally showed a high standard of preparation for the performance and confident use of a diverse range of stylistically appropriate techniques that contributed to many engaging performances.

Students performed with a diverse range of instruments, including voice, as predominantly soloists or in the context of many different types of groups and ensembles. All students were required to perform at least one work with another live performer. The students’ abilities to address the criteria varied and were influenced by their performance skills, understanding of the music styles being performed and experience in performing in various contexts.

Students who received high marks confidently exhibited a high level of musical, technical and interpretive skills, could manipulate elements of music to create a strong sense of personal voice, and displayed excellent interaction with other musicians.

The term ‘instrument’, as used in the study design, includes voice. Students may choose to perform on more than one instrument in their performance examination; however, they should consider the likely impact on their assessment when making this decision. For example, students may affect their marks negatively by playing a second instrument that they are not particularly competent with for part of the program. Students should be careful not to compromise the amount of time spent performing to their strengths. On the other hand, there might be a student who is a strong performer on more than one instrument. In this situation, there are certain criteria in which the student may benefit from performing well on more than one instrument, such as Criteria 3, 4 and 5.

Specific information

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 | 9.9 |

The majority of students presenting for assessment were fully compliant with the requirements of the examination. Compliance requirements are the inclusion in the performance program of one work that is a reimagining of an existing work, one ensemble work and one original work created by an Australian artist since 1990. Students need to indicate on the Statement of Intention which works in the program satisfy the compliance requirements. It is preferable for this form to be completed electronically and then printed. If handwritten, students should ensure legibility. Some students completed the answers to the questions relating to the reimagined work by referring to their whole program. These questions are specifically asking for information only about the reimagined work in the program. In the case of an ensemble where more than one student is being assessed, it is possible for each student to have a different reimagined work within the program. In detailing their expressive intentions, students need to describe the character or mood they are attempting to express in their reimagining. Many students wrote only about the stylistic changes they made.

Some students who presented in the context of an ensemble performance chose not to perform in every work. Students should ensure that they play in a sufficient number of works in the program 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 stated in the performer Statement of Expressive Intention

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 19 | 17 | 11 | 14 | 7.1 |

Students who scored highly in Criterion 2 performed a program that enabled them to demonstrate skilful performance of a range of styles and/or characters. Authenticity of a style or genre was a hallmark of the highest-scoring students who had developed specific techniques and tone colours that were specific to particular styles and genres. Some students took the approach of having a diverse range of styles in their programs but were not able to play some styles well, thereby showing a lack of skill. It is possible to score highly in this criterion with either a skilful performance of a wide range of styles or a demonstration of a deep understanding of different characters within a limited range of styles or genres. The highest-scoring students did both.

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 | 12 | 19 | 18 | 15 | 12 | 15 | 7.1 |

This criterion focuses on the skill evident in the performance techniques demonstrated throughout the program. High-scoring students were able to execute a diverse range of techniques and this was made possible in many cases with a program that represented a wide range of styles. The highest scores were awarded to students who were able to use various techniques to achieve clear expressive outcomes.

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 | 3 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 18 | 16 | 11 | 16 | 7.1 |

The control and manipulation of pitch, dynamics, tone colour and articulation were skilfully demonstrated by the highest-scoring students to create appropriate and varied expressive outcomes throughout the program. Students who treated each work in the program with the same approach as regards tone colour and articulation, as well as the other techniques listed above, limited their potential scores for this criterion. Students whose instruments rely on electronic means to produce sound should aim to exploit their equipment’s full potential for a varied range of stylistically appropriate sounds in conjunction with varied playing techniques to access the highest marks for Criterion 4. Some students changed instruments or other equipment to facilitate a change of sound, and this was best done along with a change of approach to playing the instrument.

Criterion 5: Demonstrates ensemble techniques

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 19 | 7.4 |

The highest scores for Criterion 5 were awarded to students who showed they were able to interact effectively with other musicians during performance. This involved visual interaction, awareness of balance of sound levels, rhythmic synchronisation, leading and following, and active listening and responding to other musicians. Stage positioning of musicians and equipment is an important consideration to facilitate these factors, especially in enabling eye contact between performers. Where students use backing tracks, the playback equipment should have adequate volume and sound quality for the live musicians. While students are fully compliant with examination requirements if they include only one ensemble work in their programs, the techniques of ensemble playing were demonstrated most effectively by students who incorporated more than one ensemble work in their programs.

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 | 2 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 17 | 7.1 |

The highest marks for Criterion 6 were awarded to students who were able to show understanding of the styles represented in their programs with attention to the nuances and details of articulation, tone colour, rhythmic feel and dynamics. They showed in their interpretations that they were informed by being familiar with various styles of music through wide and detailed listening and were able to execute the required techniques to a sophisticated level, often adding interpretive ideas that went beyond the notated or recorded reference material. In some cases, this involved improvisation, but most important was the musical expression of character or mood throughout the program.

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 |
| % | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 12 | 20 | 7.3 |

This criterion refers specifically and exclusively to the nominated reimagined work. However, the performance of the reimagined work is taken into consideration in awarding marks for all other criteria. Marks are awarded for the performing skill in expressing the character or mood as described in the student’s Statement of Intention. Students who scored highly in this criterion were able to express convincingly the emotional content of their performance by skilful manipulation of specific elements of music as nominated on the Statement of Intention. Students can develop an understanding of how musicians achieve expressive intentions with wide and detailed listening, leading to experimenting with concepts in rehearsal.

The detail required on the Statement of Intention is specifically about the expressive intentions; that is, the character/s or mood/s that is/are being expressed in the performance and what the student will do in performance to achieve these intentions. Many students wrote unnecessarily lengthy statements that contained little of the detail required, often concentrating on stylistic or compositional approaches to their reimagining.

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 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 25 | 8.0 |

Students are advised to take a ‘dress rehearsal’ approach to their entire program prior to the exam so that they are well prepared for stage movements including relocating and adjustment of equipment and any other necessary use of the physical space. Students should be thoroughly familiar with all instruments and equipment they intend to use in the exam, including playback equipment for backing tracks.

The strong presence of poise and focus was evident in many high-scoring performances. This involved the sharing of introductions, awareness of arrangement, stage etiquette and/or movement as appropriate to the context. Other elements included adapting positively to unforeseen situations; for example, when another group member forgot their part or a string broke. Preparation includes anticipating failure of equipment so that the performance can continue with little interruption in the event of malfunction.