



Pearson

Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCE A Level
In Music (9MU0)
Paper 01 Performing

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Introduction

This was the first year of examinations at A2 under the new specification. Centres are to be thanked and congratulated for playing their part in ensuring that the process has gone smoothly, especially in view of the very different requirements compared with the previous specification.

The changes included the raising of the standard level of difficulty from Grade 6 to Grade 7 and the reduction in the minimum length of the recital from 12 minutes to 8 minutes (with short recitals being awarded a mark of 0). There was also a fundamental change from teacher-assessment with Edexcel moderation to a fully external assessment.

Assessment

An important change in the method of assessment is that recitals are now assessed as a whole rather than piece by piece. This has implications for those students who chose to perform for significantly longer than the required minimum of 8 minutes, in some cases significantly longer than the suggested maximum of 12 minutes.

Piano and voice continue to be the most frequently offered subjects for assessment, though the number of pianists was not quite as great as in previous years. Guitar, including electric and bass guitar, and also drum kit, continue to rise in popularity and some examiners reported a continued drop in the number students offering the rarer orchestral instruments, eg oboe, bassoon, french horn, viola, double bass.

Some students continue to present performances of pieces that are beyond their current ability, perhaps in part attracted by the scaling up of raw marks for Standard level or More Difficult level performances. This may be counter-productive. They should look carefully at the second descriptor in each of the levels of assessment (from 1 to 5) under Grid 1 Technique. These range from Level 1 ('The demands of the music are beyond the current ability of the performer.') to Level 5 ('The demands of the music are within the current ability of the performer.')

In a few cases, students failed to supply adequate copies of one or more of the pieces they were performing. This sometimes occurred when a lead sheet was supplied for a performance that may have been partly or wholly improvised. These should give enough information for an examiner to make a fair assessment of the accuracy of performance of the stimulus material (see Assessment Grid 2). With some styles of music where scores are not normally used, a reference recording may be submitted.

Administration

It is essential that the Performance Authentication Sheet is fully completed with signatures of student and teacher. Most examiners

reported having to contact one or more centres to secure signatures either from a teacher or a student or even both.

It is also essential that each student makes the appropriate announcement at the beginning of the recording (see page 14 of the Specification). This is an important part of the authentication process.

The Specification requests that the recitals of all candidates are on the same CD or USB stick. It is helpful if this is accompanied by a list of the contents of each track.

There were some problems with CDs that required special programmes before anything could be heard and also one or two problems with USB sticks that were encrypted or which required the use of a password before they could be used. It is much appreciated when problems of these kinds are avoided, especially if they involve an examiner having to spend time contacting a centre in order to gain access to the submitted work.

Centres are reminded of the importance of balance in the recording. Though the quality of recordings was generally good, there was a significant number of cases where the microphone seemed to have been placed so as to give undue prominence to a piano accompaniment.

Centres are reminded that the recitals which students submit for assessment should be recorded in the presence of an audience. This does not need to be large but there should be a minimum of two people in addition to student and accompanist. They should make their presence known by some applause at suitable moments during the recital.

Finally, it has to be noted that sadly a few recitals fell short of the required length and were awarded, as the Specification requires, a mark of 0 (zero). There were also a few instances of recitals lasting much longer than even the suggested maximum of 12 minutes. This can be self-defeating, especially if some parts of the recital are performed at a lower level of competence than others.

One or two centres seemed unsure about how to apply the timing requirements as set out on page 13 of the Specification, particularly with regard to the last phrase, 'sections of music where the student is not performing'. This does not mean that a short piano introduction or later interlude in an accompanied piece cannot be included. It is only intended to apply to very extended passages, eg the orchestral exposition in a classical concerto movement.