



2004 Music Performance Group GA 2: Group performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who presented for the Music Performance: Group examination presented a diverse range of instruments, including voice, in the context of many different types of groups and ensembles. Students' ability to address the criteria varied and was influenced by their performance skills, understanding of the music styles being performed and experience in performing in a group context (perhaps as a member of a school ensemble).

Students who attained high grades confidently communicated a high level of musical, technical and interpretative skills and displayed excellent interaction with the other members of the group.

Some students could have increased their marks in some of the criteria relating to group interaction and presentation. It appeared to the assessors that these students were not aware of all of the criteria when rehearsing and practising during the year; in many cases students seemed to have focused on instrumental skills and neglected to develop their skill at performing as a member of a group. Many students would benefit from consciously listening to and acknowledging the other group members and adjusting their musical contribution to enhance the overall group sound.

In some examinations one student introduced all the songs when this could have been shared among the group. Students should not be reticent to spend a moment or two between items to check their tuning. Also, students' ability to adapt to unforeseen situations, for example, where another band member forgets their part or breaks a string, can enhance their result if they demonstrate an ability to adapt positively to the changed musical situation.

On a few occasions teachers performed inappropriately as a member of the group. Examples of this were where a teacher counted in the song, talked to or joked with the students during the performance, improvised for extended periods (thus costing valuable time for the assessed performers) or otherwise played a dominant role in the group. Such behaviour is distracting and does not ultimately assist the assessed students. The performance examination conditions for the study specifically preclude this sort of behaviour. Non-assessed performers must read and follow the conditions listed in the Study Design.

Students consistently met the requirement to perform two musical items from the Prescribed List. The responses in general were very satisfactory. A number of students also performed additional works from the Prescribed List, which is also permissible. It can be difficult for groups with two or more assessed performers to perform substantially on only two prescribed works; in this case students should consider performing more than two prescribed works to allow all of the assessed performers to meet the criteria.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Study Design

'Units 3: Group Performance' and 'Unit 4: Group Performance' in the current Music Performance Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design contain the relevant key knowledge and skills, and a description of the examination. This document is available on the VCAA website, www.vcaa.vic.edu.au. Teachers and students should also refer to the Examination section of the VCE Administrative Handbook, which is published annually (in print and online).

Students and teachers should be aware that a new Study Design will be implemented in 2006.

Prescribed List

Students must include two works from the 'Prescribed list of arrangements for Music Performance: Group' in their end-of-year performance examination program.

Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are applied to the whole program presented and not to individual works. There are eleven criteria that cover all instruments and the performance of all approved works in the program. The document that lists the criteria also includes commentary about each criterion to help unpack them into components more relevant to particular instruments. The criteria for the performance examination are published annually, and only the current version should be used. The criteria for the 2005 examination are the same as the 2004 criteria and can be found at: <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/correspondence/bulletins/2005/february/05febsu2.pdf>



Selection of instrument

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, this decision should be made with the student's likelihood of scoring well in the assessment criteria in mind. For example:

- where the group wants an assessed performer to assist the balance of the group by playing an instrument that they are not particularly competent with. This may result in the student losing opportunities to maximise their marks if they perform on this instrument for a considerable part of the program. The student should be careful not to compromise the amount of time spent performing to their strength
- where the student is a strong performer on more than one instrument (or voice). In this situation, there are certain criteria in which the student would benefit from performing on more than one instrument, such as 'skill in performing a range of techniques' and 'skill in performing as a member of a group'.

The examination

Assessed students perform as members of a group or ensemble, and are assessed in this context. The level of ability of other members of the group does not directly affect the assessed student's results. The assessors concentrate on the performance of the student being assessed and on how well they meet the criteria for assessment.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the assessed performer's ability to maximise their results is contingent on the context that they perform within. For example, a drummer who keeps poor time or rhythm will affect the ability of the assessed performer to demonstrate their ability to maintain an even tempo and accurately interpret rhythm patterns, and will therefore indirectly influence their ability to maximise their results.

Composition of the Group

A group is defined as two or more students enrolled in a secondary school.

The assessed performer(s) can vary the composition of the group during their performance as they wish, which may enhance the assessed performer(s) ability to demonstrate a variety of styles and techniques. Students must decide how best to organise their group context(s) in a program that will facilitate their best performance according to the assessment criteria.

Although students can be assessed as individuals (that is, as the only assessed performer in a group), they should be aware that this doesn't guarantee better marks.

Students should also be aware that non-students may assist as part of the group within certain guidelines as outlined on page 38 of the Study Design. Teachers are advised that their role, if participating, should not distract from or limit the ability of the assessed performers to present a program that will maximise their marks.

Assessed student performers are expected to perform in a way that allows them to maximise their results in all criteria. Hence, non-assessed performers should not count in, conduct, tune, adjust instruments and equipment, lead, or otherwise play a dominant or distracting role during the performance examination. This will only lessen the opportunities for the assessed students to address all of the assessment criteria. These details are outlined on page 38 of the Study Design.

Program selection

The program selected by the student(s) is the foundation that allows them the opportunity to achieve their best results against each criterion. It is strongly recommended that the student(s) carefully consider the selection of works/songs for their program on the basis that each work contributes to a program that meets the assessment criteria.

It is important that assessed performers ensure that they participate significantly in the presentation of the prescribed list of works. Assessed performers should present the selected works from the prescribed lists at a standard that is consistent with the rest of the program. This may involve arranging works to create appropriate parts and/or allowing opportunities for improvisation as appropriate to the style.

The students should not be distracted by their inclination to perform works only from styles which they are most familiar with, as this may limit their ability to perform in a variety of styles. The assessed performer's primary focus should be on performing a program that it is diverse in style and mood.

It is acceptable to present a program that has a range of styles that relate to the type of group, as contrasting styles can exist within particular genres such as rock or jazz. Therefore, groups can perform music that has contrasts in styles; for



example, a jazz group could perform swing, bebop, west coast and/or fusion. Students should not necessarily perform styles that are not associated with the type of group that they represent. On the other hand, the criteria allow scope to acknowledge when students extend their variety of styles to successfully perform styles uncharacteristic of their group composition or instrumentation.

Assessed performers who present a program with a variety of styles enhance their ability to score marks in criteria other than that which specifically assesses students' ability to present a program that has a variety of styles. For example, by performing a diverse program stylistically, the assessed performer(s) could also score more highly in 'skill in using a range of performing techniques'.

Students should demonstrate their ability to use a range of performance techniques. Each instrument is capable of producing different timbres, dynamics and effects, and has an inherent potential to allow the performer to apply a range of performance techniques. The student should be able to demonstrate their awareness of this in their performance. A guitarist, for example, could use plectrum, finger style, sliding, bends, double stopping, tapping and/or alternative tunings.

The assessed performer(s) should also be aware of the need to avoid performing material that is merely a repetition of material previously presented.

Time Limits

The examination time limits listed in the Study Design are maximum times only – no minimum time is prescribed, and students are not penalised if they finish before the maximum time limit. However, students are advised to make full use of the time available. Each song or item performed should demonstrate further musical ability and not merely repeat previously demonstrated skills.

Performance program information form

Prior to the examination, students will receive their individual VCAA examination slip and a performance program information sheet. The examination slip states the student's name, the date, time and venue of the examination, and the address of the venue. The program information sheet should be completed prior to the examination and presented on arrival at the examination venue. The works selected should be written in order of performance and the selections from the prescribed list identified. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority examination slip is sent to schools electronically through VASS, usually in August each year.

Equipment

Students are advised to carefully check their equipment before leaving home/school for the examination. They must remember to pack all the required gear, including replacement strings if appropriate. They should also bring extra powerboards and extension leads so that the planned set up is not compromised by the placement of electrical switches at the venue.

Students are able to access the examination room at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination. They are advised to arrive early and use this time to set up and adjust equipment, tune their instruments and warm up. Non-students, such as teachers, may assist in adjusting equipment; however, once the examination has commenced only the assessed performers may adjust their instruments and equipment. When setting up, students may need to restrict their volume level if another examination is being conducted in a nearby room.

During the year students should perform in a variety of rooms with different acoustics in order to become accustomed to adjusting to different performance spaces with varying qualities of acoustics and volume requirements.

Groups should also plan how they will sit/stand during the performance. Assessed performers must ensure that assessors can observe all performance techniques and technical skills. This may mean setting music stands so that finger movement and breathing techniques are visible. The seating plan or group organisation may be varied across the program to achieve the best performance environment for each work in the program.