

VCE Music Conference 2016

VCE Music Performance

Teaching Strategy Workshop MP.2

Writing about music

Worksheets and accompanying teacher notes

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VCE Listening and writing about music
Writing About Blend and Character

Student name

Due date

A: Name of work, excerpt
B: Composer or performers
C: Initial response – context, purpose, genre, style, sounds like,
D: Elements of music that convey the character
H: Aspects of the performance where blend of instrumental lines evident
I: Sense of Character in this performance
J: Written response – write one sentence that includes key points from H and I.

VCE Listening and writing about music

Writing About Blend and Character

TEACHER NOTES

A: Name of work, excerpt

- *Early in the year, select excerpts from works shared by your students – choose music they know so they can get used to the process*
- *As there are no guidelines as to the genre of the music selected in Section B of the e-f-y exam, your course needs to include mainstream styles and genres represented in Australian Music, then a range of works that are fusion of styles and genres. It is unlikely a well-known work is chosen for the exam as students who didn't know it would be disadvantaged*
- *The name of the work gives clues to sociocultural influences, place in our musical heritage, geographical location, context, purpose – see C.*
- *Select the same excerpt and repeat this exercise a month or so later to track improvement in use of vocabulary and writing critical responses.*
- *Choose an excerpt that has some consistency of a duration between 1 and 2 minutes. Repeat three to six times with silent writing time of around 2 minutes in between, and around 4 minutes at the end of the last playing.*

B: Composer or performers

- *The person attributed to some works is the composer where other subsequent performances remain authentic to and consistent with the composer's artistic decisions*
- *In much contemporary popular music, the performer adds their own "stamp" and composer is no longer significant in the artistic outcome*
- *Systematically choose works from each realm, and differentiate the listening response accordingly.*

C: Initial response – context, purpose, genre, style, sounds like,

- *This can be anything that will help the student recall their experience on listening. Responses should be unjudged and recording quickly and freely*

This response should not be assessed.

D: Use of Tone Colour

- *Tone colour is the element of music that evident and ensemble settings.*
- *Over the duration of your course, identify different instruments (including voice) and combinations of instruments, then appraise the particular combination in the excerpt discussing whether each instrument plays an equal role. Each instrument's tone colour has unique characters that it carries with it from performance to performance. When instruments are matched how are these characters modified?*
- *The expert performer varies tone colour when they interpret music in performance. Consider this as an expressive element*
- *The composer or performer may choose to perform in a particular register, if the instrument has different registers, each with a recognisable tone and character. This is one aspect of voicing in an orchestration or arrangement*
- *In combination, instruments have many different tones depending on voicing, the arrangement or the liberties taken by the performer to change their part, eg. perform an octave higher.*

H: Aspects of the performance where blend of instrumental lines evident

- *Blend of instrumental lines is a special skill of performers who perform with two or more members.*
- *The listener hears performers using their skills in blending and also they hear the equalisation applied by audio equipment and audio engineers in the amplification and recording. In this examination, I understand that no aspect of technology used in a performance is not examinable*
- *The skill of blending involved pitch matching, matching the amount of vibrato used, the volume of their sound which is different to the 'dynamic level' (a term usually used for notated music and not in the performer's realm), the acoustics of the performance space and the physical distance between the players. Blend would also be subject to how well each player can hear each other and themselves.*

I: Sense of Character in this performance

- *Consider what 'character' means and differentiate with 'mood/feelings' and 'emotion'.*
- *English curriculum have definitions and worksheets that lists words that describes different characters. See the website of Teacher Pay Teacher 'Character Traits and Character's Feelings/Emotions' <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Character-Traits-vs-Character-Emotions-Adjective-Lists-1298528>*

J: Written response – write one sentence that includes key points from H and I.

- *In a similar way to how students construct Critical Responses, have students take the works used above and form one or two sentences that joins together the facts of what blend occurs in the excerpt and what sense of character is portrayed.*

This worksheet is to prepare the student to answer examination questions such as the following.

2015 VCE Music Performance Aural & Written Examination Section B Question 16, 17b

Use this template and replace “blend of instruments” with “articulation” or other expressive elements of music.

2015 VCE Music Performance Aural & Written Examination Section B Question 17a.

Refer to the VCE Music Study Design Music Performance Unit 4, page 44, third dot point that lists the expressive elements of music included in the exam (but there may be others).

VCE Listening and writing about music
WORKSHEET: Writing Critical Responses

Student name

Due date

A: Name of work, excerpt
B: Composer or performers
C: Initial response – context, purpose, genre, style, sounds like,
D: Elements of music that convey the character
E: Expressive elements of music used by performers that shaped the response
F: Expression, mood, feeling, power, impact of the excerpt
G: Critical response – write one sentence that includes key points from D,E,F

VCE Listening and writing about music

Writing Critical Responses

TEACHER NOTES

A: Name of work, excerpt

- *Early in the year, select excerpts from works shared by your students – choose music they know so they can get used to the process*
- *As there are no guidelines as to the genre of the music selected in Section B of the e-f-y exam, your course needs to include mainstream styles and genres represented in Australian Music, then a range of works that are fusion of styles and genres. It is unlikely a well-known work is chosen for the exam as students who didn't know it would be disadvantaged*
- *The name of the work gives clues to sociocultural influences, place in our musical heritage, geographical location, context, purpose – see C.*
- *Select the same excerpt and repeat this exercise a month or so later to track improvement in use of vocabulary and writing critical responses.*
- *Choose an excerpt that has some consistency of a duration between 1 and 2 minutes. Repeat three to six times with silent writing time of around 2 minutes in between, and around 4 minutes at the end of the last playing.*
- *A Mystery work – don't tell students the title or composer/performer until later. See how close they can get and what clues in the music narrow the possibilities. It can be a competition and game.*
- *From the title of the work selected, is the sounds what listener's expect?*

B: Composer or performers

- *The person attributed to some works is the composer where other subsequent performances remain authentic to and consistent with the composer's artistic decisions*
- *In much contemporary popular music, the performer adds their own "stamp" and composer is no longer significant in the artistic outcome*
- *Systematically choose works from each realm, and differentiate the listening response accordingly.*
- *Is the composer or performer's style recognizable from other performances heard? Reflection will tie together past listening experiences.*
- *Are there other composer/performers who sound the same?*

C: Initial response – context, purpose, genre, style, sounds like, ...

- *This can be anything that will help the student recall their experience on listening. Responses should be unjudged and recording quickly and freely*
- *This response should not be assessed.*

D: Elements of music that convey the character

- *Select the element of music that conveys the character in the music*
- *More likely these elements will be decisions made by the composer; for example, tonality, phrase shape, featured instrument (including voice), accompanying instruments, rhythm in accompaniment, rhythm & intervals in melody, dynamic levels, etc.*

E: Expressive elements of music used by performers that shaped the response

- *Focus on what freedoms and choices made by individual performers that convey character.*
- *Using contributions from students who are specialising in the instrument being discussed, what are the individual performing skills that are extraordinary and memorable?*
- *Expressive Elements of Music are*

F: Expression, mood, feeling, power, impact of the excerpt

- *Using the Hevner's Mood Wheel students select adjectives and words that describe mood and feeling at a particular point in the music.*
- *Due to the nature of responding to music, students may have quite different responses. As listening responses have attributed rather than absolute meaning, every answer has to be respectfully accepted. Responses should not be assessed. Class discussion can seek explanation of how the student has arrived at that word, but the answer could be very personal. Have an opt-out strategy ready. Early in the discussion, it may appear that the student does not have a common understanding of the meaning of the word used. As in any teaching of vocabulary,*

work toward agreed meanings of mood words.

G: Critical response – write one sentence that includes key points from D,E,F

- *Use the words above as a pool of words to use to write a critical response. One sentence that focuses on one character at one moment in the music*
- *Critical responses where fact and mood/feeling response are aligned to give insight and understanding how character is achieved in music heard; where subjective responses and analytical information are linked together; using artistic knowledge, imagination, thought and skill; expresses thoughts, feelings and understanding of music studied; appreciating music through reflection, analysis and critical evaluation. Critical responses are supported by evidence from the work. From VCE Music Study Design 1991 Critical Response Area of Study p.14 and VCE Music Performance Study Design 2003 Unit 4 Outcome 4 pp.55-56*
- *Examples of critical responses may include:*
 - *the driving, energetic feeling evoked in the Police song “Synchronicity” is created by the rapid, consistent regular rhythms of the hi-hat and kick drum aligned with the unison rhythm of the bass*
 - *the lush, rich and lyrical atmosphere of the final theme of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody In Blue” is achieved by the use of unison, legato full string orchestration*
 - *VCE Music Styles Study Design 2003 Appendix p.30*
- *Share student critical responses with their consent and collectively work through an editorial process to improve them; is there a better word? what do you really mean? Will switching words around be clearer? Start where they are rather than copy set answers provided in Examination Reports.*