

Q&A

with Finian McGregor, student and David Jones, teacher
Hillbrook Anglican School

Music Extension — Composition, Internal assessment 3: Composition project

Finian McGregor, student

Q: What did you enjoy most about Music Extension?

A: The thing that I enjoyed the most about Music Extension was the freedom afforded by the curriculum. With very little restriction on style or structure, it was easier to home in on areas that could be meaningfully improved. That freedom of expression is excellent at highlighting where your writing falls short.

Q: How did you prepare for this assessment task?

A: There wasn't much preparation necessary for this assessment. I had an idea and then I set about making it.

Q: How did your teacher prepare you for this assessment?

A: Music Extension is largely self-directed, but my teacher was always happy to listen to pieces as they were being constructed and offer his thoughts. His input was invaluable.

Q: What made you choose the topic or method of presentation?

A: The topic of 'faux jazz' was of interest to me. In some ways the piece was merely an experiment, created just to see if it was possible to make something which evoked muzak without actually being muzak.

Q: What is most important to you when you are preparing a response to an assessment task?

A: Meeting the criteria and making sure that you know what the task requires of you is the most important thing. The other more interesting, most important thing is to make sure that you actually like what you create.

Q: What are your thoughts about this assessment and the approach you took when responding to the task?

A: There were, of course, a lot of small decisions made while writing. The most challenging thing I encountered was just trying to explain my writing processes in the reflective statement as concisely as possible. I am particularly proud of the way that the strings enter in the last leg of the piece; I really dig how cheesy it sounds.

Q: How will you use what you have learnt in this subject?

A: I am going to use what I've learnt to continue writing music, both in a professional and personal capacity. I feel as though I have gained a positive emotional outlet as well as a useful skill set. In the immediate future, I'm writing some music for a friend's game, a task I absolutely wouldn't have had the confidence to undertake had I not done this subject.

David Jones, teacher

Q: What was the purpose of this assessment and what key decisions were made in the design of the task?

A: This task is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to apply best practice in the process of creating music. They need to be able to do this in a manner that is meaningful to them as developing young artists.

Q: How did your teaching and the student learning experiences prepare the students to complete this assessment?

A: Fin and I met throughout the year to discuss compositional processes and his personal interests in compositional styles. As Fin developed as a composer, our meetings became less feedback and technique–orientated and more about me asking him questions regarding what he was trying to achieve and how he was going about it. Fin showed the capacity to use our meetings as a means of compositional reflection, and he was also willing to rework and refine his ideas until he was truly satisfied with the finished result. I believe this was an important learning experience in his development as a composer and, in turn, his ability to complete the assessment to such an impressive standard.

Q: How does this assessment reflect the unique characteristics of your school and your students?

A: Music is valued at our school. Students are encouraged to use the skills, knowledge and understanding that they have been developing to be imaginative and creative, to produce work that is personal and meaningful to them, and to share it with our community.

Q: Can you explain the exemplary aspects of Finian’s response?

A: The work shows clear and purposeful compositional intent. Fin has emerged from his musical apprenticeship having developed the skills and understanding necessary to create music that is personal and unique. His application of compositional devices demonstrates a command of the techniques and processes relevant to his own compositional style. His music is cohesive and conveys character convincingly. Fin communicates his ideas in a thoughtful and organised manner that shows deep self-reflection and clear independent best practice.