

Q&A

with Matthew Siellet, student and Sarah Cox, teacher
Kedron State High School

Music Extension — Performance, Internal assessment 3: Performance project

Matthew Siellet, student

Q: What did you enjoy most about Music Extension?

A: I enjoyed being able to practise and make music on my own. However, the best part was the fact that I could collaborate with my classmates for their performances. Our teacher gave us necessary time to collaborate. It made the class enjoyable and memorable.

Q: How did you prepare for this assessment task?

A: For the IA3 specifically, I allocated time for the reflective/performance statements. I did not find them particularly interesting to write but I knew that they were an important part of the assessment.

Regarding the performance, I planned and learned the piece efficiently and ensured I was in a position where I could work on the performance aspects long before the assessment was due. This meant that I was not stressed about learning the piece a week before performance.

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

A: As a class we performed for each other and gave feedback. We also received feedback and support from our teacher, which is always great. I am glad that I paid attention to the lessons where we discussed the statements because these allowed me to write with a better understanding of the criteria.

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

A: I chose an instrument and a genre of music which I was confident in. I enjoyed experimenting in Music class but when it came to the Music Extension IA3, I knew that it was best for me to stick with what I was best at, which was romantic era solo piano.

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

A: For me, striving for the highest marks with the least stress has been important. In order to reduce stress, I made sure I was organised and mindful of deadlines. Finding a balance between schoolwork and extracurricular was one of the best strategies I found for reducing stress.

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

A: The most important skills I have learnt from this subject are time management and diligence. Preparing for performances is what developed these skills. They have proven to be useful in every endeavour that I am involved in, whether it is educational or extracurricular. I love having the musical skill and knowledge. I hope that it stays as a significant part of my life.

Sarah Cox, teacher

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

A: This task (IA3 — Performance project) asks the students to prepare a performance, and to write a performance statement and a reflective statement. The design of the task was broad to allow for performances in any style/genre and for any solo/ensemble.

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

A: Students already had experience of performance, so length was the only thing 'extra' to consider, as the task asked for 5–6 minutes, longer than previous tasks. The performance statement was also not new to the students, but in the teaching, I reiterated the need for students to be explicit in their examining of the performance choices made and in expressing the meaning communicated through the performance.

The part that had not yet been assessed in the course was the development of the reflective task. Because students needed to evaluate at least two techniques and/or strategies of 'best practice', I chose to develop the necessary skills early on in the course. As a class, we:

- explored the 'models of apprenticeship', deciding whether some methods of learning were already engaged. We brainstormed the ones that were unfamiliar, and students investigated these further.*
- watched videos about metacognition and discussed the methods of reflective practice. As these students were involved in many school music experiences, we discussed the impact of the wealth of music experiences to inform their assessments in Music Extension.*
- brainstormed the idea of 'best practice', discussing and evaluating the different methods as a class.*

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

A: The task design allows for the performance of music in any style, so students could choose a work or works that best demonstrated their abilities and understanding of chosen repertoire. What was interesting about this group of Music Extension students was the fact that they could perform as a class ensemble because of their wide range of skills. It was a great learning experience for them to work together as an ensemble and apply all the things that they had learnt over their years of Music. To watch them use their 'best practice' skills in the development of a musical item for Graduation was an honour.

Q: Can you explain the exemplary aspects of Matthew's response?

A: Matthew had a wealth of performance experience. He came to us at high school as a classically trained pianist and at this stage, his skills were already well honed. In between the day he arrived at high school and giving this performance of a classical piece towards the end of Year 12, he immersed himself in a wide range of activities across many styles/genres, e.g. he was the keyboard player for Big Band and, in order to understand this role, he took it upon himself to learn jazz piano skills. He was also a member of our school choir and played bass in pop ensembles during his senior years.

I believe it was the depth of his experience and engaging with a wide range of mentors that allowed him to be reflective and thus to perform at this standard — one that was individual and poised.