

Unit 33: Solo Music Performance Skills

Unit code:	K/600/6937
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit enables learners continued development of the skills required by a solo performer.

● Unit introduction

To be an effective solo performer, the instrumentalist or vocalist must not only possess high levels of technical skill, but also needs to be able to develop a varied repertoire that will be appropriate for their target audience. The choice of suitable repertoire for an extended programme is crucial to the success of the overall performance.

Performers need to be able to play/sing confidently and accurately to an audience with a level of technical accuracy, expression and interpretation in their work that, when combined, is referred to as 'musicianship'.

Where appropriate, learners should organise their own accompaniment whether this be an accompanist backing track or a band.

Learners should practise regularly and rehearse their chosen pieces thoroughly, so that they can present performances at the highest standard they can achieve. Some learners may find performing to an audience daunting. Therefore, ample opportunity should be provided for them to perform to an audience on a regular basis throughout the unit. Learners will need to understand the preparation processes required in the lead-up to an extended concert performance. They will learn how to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their preparatory work and performance.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know how to choose appropriate pieces for an extended programme of music
- 2 Be able to perform an extended programme of music to an audience
- 3 Know the processes required in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music.

Unit content

1 Know how to choose appropriate pieces for an extended programme of music

Factors to be considered: balancing the programme; choosing pieces appropriate for – the venue, the audience, performer stamina levels; technical/musical difficulty of pieces; amount of preparation time needed before concert; availability of printed music and/or recordings; type of accompaniment required; availability of suitable equipment and personnel to operate it eg sound system, technical crew/operator

2 Be able to perform an extended programme of music to an audience

Elements of musicianship: accuracy of rhythm, pitch and intonation; expression; interpretation appropriate to the genre/style of the music; confidence

Communication: musical communication with accompanist/band if appropriate; musical communication with audience

3 Know the processes required in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music

Technical preparations: 'warm-up' techniques, scales, arpeggios, other technical exercises to improve tone and technique relevant to the instrument or voice; formulate effective practise routines; pieces for performance thoroughly rehearsed and learnt

Physical preparation: eg relaxation and/or breathing exercises as appropriate, concentration techniques, exercises to control nerves, preparatory performances at the venue and in front of an audience

Other preparations: instrument (where applicable) is in working order and in-tune eg new strings, serviceable reeds/mouth pieces, correct beaters, voice is warmed up; rehearsal with accompanist if one is being used

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 identify appropriate and contrasting pieces for an extended programme of music [IE]	M1 describe appropriate and contrasting pieces for an extended programme of music	D1 justify appropriate and contrasting pieces for an extended programme of music
P2 perform (as a soloist) an extended programme of music to an audience, demonstrating some elements of good musicianship [SM]	M2 perform (as a soloist) an extended programme of music to an audience, demonstrating a high level of musicianship	D2 perform (as a soloist) an extended programme of music to an audience, demonstrating a high level of musicianship throughout
P3 describe the processes implemented in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music. [RL]	M3 explain the processes implemented in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music.	D3 evaluate the processes implemented in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For the purposes of this unit, 'an extended programme of music' should comprise at least three contrasting pieces, which in total time must be between 20 and 30 minutes, including introductions. It is of paramount importance that learners be provided with rehearsal/practise facilities. They should have access to video recording equipment and sound reinforcement equipment where necessary. It would be of benefit for learners to perform to an audience on a regular basis, even if this is only to a group of their peers.

The role of the tutor is to encourage the learner to plan and prepare for their extended solo performances as well as research which pieces are to be performed. Learners should have access to a wide range of recordings and scores for their instrument so that they are able to research the repertoire available. An important element to this unit is teaching learners how to select music that is both appropriate for their level of performance, and which will form a balanced, interesting and varied listening experience for the audience. Very often, learners struggle to perform a piece that is technically too demanding and are then discouraged when they receive lower grades for their efforts owing to their lack of accuracy. Through this unit, learners should gain an understanding that an overall performance is judged on far more than the ability to play a technically demanding piece of music. They should be taught that it is more effective to play a manageable piece of music well rather than struggle through a more demanding piece. To achieve the higher-level criteria, learners will need to demonstrate a high level of musicianship in their performances.

In terms of instrumental technical ability, the instrumental/vocal tutor, if available, guide the learner in a range of appropriate practise techniques specific to their individual needs. It will be beneficial if at least some practice sessions can be recorded. Learners may then revisit these recordings to hear how they have improved so far, and set targets for the remainder of the unit.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit – whole-class activity.
<i>Know how to choose appropriate pieces for an extended programme of music</i> – individual activity.
Assignment 1: Personal Playlist – P1, M1, D1
Individual activity.
Assessment feedback and review of Assignment 1 'Personal Playlist' (learning outcome 1).
<i>Be able to perform an extended programme of music to an audience</i> – initial considerations.
Technical, physical and other preparation – ongoing process throughout the unit during rehearsal process and before performances.
Assignment 2: My Performance – P2, M2, D2
Practise as an individual and with accompaniment.
Feedback and review. (learning outcome 2).
<i>Know the processes required in preparation for the performance of an extended programme of music.</i>

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 3: The Performance – How it Went – P3, M3, D3

Attributes for successful performance and musical communication – mainly experiential learning through regular rehearsals/practice routines, culminating in the production of evidence.

Assessment feedback and review. (learning outcome 3).

Assessment

The evidence required for this unit will be generated through the assessment of the learners' ability to choose appropriate material for performance, their ability to perform an extended programme of music on their chosen instrument or voice and to reflect on the process.

For learning outcome 1, the ability to choose appropriate material for performance could be assessed in different ways. If the suggested example of a personal playlist is used, where the learner is required to provide a rationale for their chosen pieces, the appropriateness of their choice of material could be assessed at a relatively early stage. However, if a different scenario is selected, it could be that the effectiveness of the chosen repertoire is assessed in the performance itself. If learners have chosen pieces that are too technically demanding, they will be unable to produce a well-rounded performance. For P1, the learner must identify appropriate and contrasting pieces. Therefore, great thought should be given to these elements – has the learner selected music in which they can cope with the technical and musical demands of the pieces? Is the selected repertoire appropriate for the target audience and is the programme well balanced while still having contrast? For M1, learners have to describe the repertoire. This should consist of a brief overview of when and where the pieces were composed; the nature of the piece, eg does it tell a story? For D1, learners should justify the inclusion of their chosen pieces in the programme – ie why have they chosen these specific pieces?

Learning outcome 2 requires the learner to perform an extended programme of music to an audience. It is required that the learner performs at least three contrasting pieces. This will allow for the inclusion of one, or even two pieces of significant length, but this is not a requirement. Depending on the genre(s) of music being presented, the number of pieces performed could be as many as six or seven. It is a strict requirement for the learner to perform their programme of music in one session and it must take place in front of an audience, in order to give the soloist a sense of occasion for their performance. The contrast element should be relatively easy to achieve for most learners but, even where the chosen musical genre is quite narrow and much of the music is in the same style, learners must find a way to meet the grading criteria. To gain P2, the learner must perform accurately, showing some sense of musical style eg the performance is in keeping with the conventions of the particular style of music. For a M2, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner must demonstrate consistent technical accuracy and considered musical interpretation. In addition, for D2, the learner must show musical expression and a clear (and appropriate) sense of style.

For learning outcome 3, evidence may be submitted in written form or through an oral presentation. A presentation could be given 'live' or could be recorded on video. To satisfy P3, the learner should describe the processes that they implemented in preparation for their programme of music. They should describe what they did. For M3, the learner should explain why they used the particular processes involved in their preparations. For D3, the learner should assess the relative success, or otherwise, of the preparatory process. All details of what areas should be covered in this criterion can be found in the relevant section of the *Unit content*.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Personal Playlist	You are applying for a 30-minute set at a local music festival and the organisers would like you to send a list of the material that you might perform at the festival if selected.	A written or oral justification of your choices.
P2, M2, D2	My Performance	You have been successful in your application for the festival. Using the musical material from your personal playlist, you have to perform a set lasting between 20 and 30 minutes, to an audience.	Video recording of the extended performance.
P3, M3, D3	The Performance – How it Went	As part of the festival, you have been asked to take part in a discussion group following your performance. You must prepare a report in which you describe, explain and evaluate what you did in the preparation of your programme.	A written report or oral presentation.

Links to other BTEC units

This unit forms part of the BTEC Music and Music Technology sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Music and Music Technology suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Music Performance Techniques
		Singing Techniques and Performance

Essential resources

Learners will need to provide their own instruments. Centres should provide larger instruments such as pianos and drum kits where appropriate, as well as amplification equipment and PA if required, for learners to use on the premises.

A variety of recordings and scores should be available for learners to use for their research. Video recording equipment is essential for recording rehearsals and performances, for both review and assessment purposes.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Learners should be encouraged to attend live performances wherever possible, especially where they can hear performances featuring the instrument(s) that they play. Centres are encouraged to invite professional performers in to speak to learners and, where practical, to deliver masterclasses.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	undertaking research into instrumental repertoire
Reflective learners	setting goals for the achievement of successful performances through their practice routines reviewing progress in the practice/rehearsal and performance processes
Self-managers	working towards their goal of improving performance through practice routines.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	identifying questions to answer and problems to solve in the process of practising their instrument
Self-managers	organising time and resources and prioritising actions in the selection and rehearsing of musical material.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	making presentations
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	selecting musical material
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	preparing evidence for learning outcomes 1 and 3.