

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator
Feedback



Summer 2016

GCE Music (5MU01) Unit 1: Performing
Music

The quality of the submissions for the performing paper this year, have been found to be excellent in general. The moderators have reported some fine submissions and some interesting performances. These still tend to be traditional performances, with the majority of performances being either sung or played on the piano. While these are good, it is of concern to note that most candidate's performed better in their solo, over their ensemble. This is due to a number of reasons, one being the difficulty found by many moderators to unpick the assumptions made by teacher-examiners and the other being the unsuitability of many ensemble pieces. It was felt that too much time has been spent in these instances working at ensemble pieces to make them fit the specification criteria, when the time could have been better spent working on a more suitable piece in the first place. The two biggest problems being, that candidates often perform theatre-style duet songs, which usually do not have enough ensemble to enable the best marks to be awarded or they have performed a part in an unspecified ensemble, with no score, only a recording. These issues have been highlighted for a number of years and would be lessened, if the report had been read.

The types of performances for solo are varied and generally excellent. Many candidates score very highly with their solo piece, but can be let down by the interpretive elements. Attention paid to phrasing, dynamics and articulation, with their consistent use through a piece will enable the top most criteria to be utilised. Many instances abound of candidates demonstrating one or more of these elements, however, they were not using them consistently throughout a piece which has tended to be overlooked by some markers; with the result that marks have been altered by the moderator.

When it comes to the ensemble pieces, these also enable the marker to consider the ensemble element and issues of balance and rapport are crucial for the success of a performance. Often it is clear that a duet is being performed with a teacher taking the other part, all perfectly fine, but often the performer does not shine in ensemble leading: it being very clear that they are following the lead of the other part.

It should be re-iterated that the marking of teacher-examiners is excellent overall. There is a tendency to mark slightly on the generous side, though, this year it was noted by moderators that there was a feeling that some centres were being more cautious with their marks. Where issues appeared, it was apparent in certain instruments. Drum kit and guitar are often marked a little vaguely and the wrong level of difficulty is chosen. Unfortunately, with the mark scheme, a changed moderator mark and a change of the level of difficulty can make a big difference between centre and moderator marks. Therefore, to reduce the need for re-marks in the autumn, teacher-examiners should ensure that they consider all nine elements of the difficulty grids before choosing the level. Where there is some doubt, or a new teacher may feel uncertain, do copy the grid, marking your chosen sentences and including this in the submission. Teachers who have done this make the moderation process more straight-forward and will discover that the levels are less likely to be changed.

The numbers undertaking some of the technological options of the course remain fairly static, though most candidates taking the recording option now opt for the engineer type. Many excellent recordings were heard and it may be important to consider that these performances will normally be of standard level, and the unity of ensemble is an important aspect. Keeping the performers together, ensuring tuning is good, balance is fair and errors are kept to a minimum are all the responsibility of the engineer. The quality of the recording would be enhanced by the lack of noise - and the correct silence at both the beginning and the end of a recording.

With sequencing, accuracy is marked more harshly than in a live performance and great attention is given to articulation, dynamics and timbres to ensure a musical performance.

Ethnic and other realisations have, as ever been excellent. The quality of some veena and tabla performances are equal to the finest performances we have heard this year.

The recordings are usually of good quality. Unfortunately, many good performances were marred by poor quality recordings: it was clear that some were made by phones or ipads in small practice rooms: just a little time taken to ensure that these were as good as possible would make all the difference. It is interesting to note that the new recommended style for submitting recordings is still being ignored, despite being raised in the subject report and the ICE document. So to remind teachers, please submit recordings with a track list: candidate's names do not need to be spoken on the CD - indeed, moderators prefer there to be no announcements.

As we draw to the end of this current specification, it is interesting to note that the diversity that the specification provides is utilised in the varied instruments performed and the excellent standards that many candidates reach.