

# Music — Composing and Arranging

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
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# **MUSIC — COMPOSING AND ARRANGING**

## **2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT**

### **OVERVIEW**

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

More than 120 students completed the Composing and Arranging subject in 2012. Students presented a wide range of musical styles, including traditional and contemporary choral, percussion, jazz, and contemporary genres for acoustic instruments and rock band. Most students fulfilled the requirements of the subject and presented a suitable folio of minor works, with recordings and written or oral commentaries, for the school-assessed component and a major work and analysis for the externally assessed component.

### **SCHOOL ASSESSMENT**

#### **Assessment Type 1: Folio of Minor Works**

Students were presented with the opportunity to write two or more compositions or arrangements for a solo instrument or ensemble combination, in a folio of minor works.

The most successful arrangements and compositions:

- displayed an ability to formulate an idea and develop it through a piece
- used an appropriate structure
- employed a plan or rationale for the piece, and used this framework to help in planning the works
- displayed knowledge of the instruments included in the works, and wrote parts in an idiomatic style for those instruments
- showed a clear awareness of the specific features of the assessment design criteria and how the criteria would be used to assess the folio
- displayed knowledge of applicable and appropriate terminology for the instruments and their use in the style of the composition
- were well crafted and polished.

Students had the best opportunity to achieve at the highest level when the teacher's assessment task design allowed them freedom for creativity and extension, was open-ended while still outlining clear expectations related to the performance standards, and was not highly specific or limiting in terms of pieces chosen.

Students should produce folios that adhere to the time requirement (a combined duration of 6–7 minutes), in order to display learning at the highest levels. A number of students chose to complete arrangements for their folio. The best arrangements were those that reinterpreted an existing melody, and experimented with tempo, meter, rhythm, harmony, structure, instrumentation, and texture to create a new and original piece based on an existing melody. Pieces written in an idiomatic style, which developed compositional ideas and yet made a clear departure from the original source, were very effective. The least effective arrangements were little more than transcriptions, simply copying existing melody and harmonies for new instruments.

Scores were generally legible and properly aligned, and displayed skills in the use of technology. In preparing the folio, students and teachers are advised to:

- ensure that the grouping of quavers and rests is correct and avoid using multiple short rests in a bar, long rests across half-beats, and beats that extend over bar lines or across the middle of the bar
- avoid unison patterns that are notated differently between instrumental parts especially long notes followed by rest
- take care to use the correct placement of dynamics, tempo markings, and performance indications on a score
- avoid placing dynamics under rests, or writing the tempo marking on every stave
- include applicable bowing indications for violin, viola, cello, and double bass
- ensure that voicings for guitar and piano are applicable for the instrument
- present drum-kit notation with appropriate style and detail
- ensure that the use of articulation is consistent through parts and pieces
- avoid the use of shorthand symbols and abbreviations (e.g. chord symbols, the indication of 'solo') as these do not display the creativity of the composer; it is recommended that students write in full and notate these aspects
- ensure that the automatic computer-based use of enharmonic tones is correct.

Teachers should ensure that recordings are submitted in the required formats, to allow moderators to access student work easily at final moderation.

## Assessment Type 2: Commentary

This assessment type is an accompanying commentary on the folio of minor works. The focus for this assessment task must be directed to the musical aspects of the minor works.

The best examples of this assessment type display the following characteristics:

- a description of a progression through the piece in a sequential manner
- a focus on the musical elements, not the challenges of composition process or the background story behind the piece
- a level of sophistication and depth, with strong and appropriate use of terminology
- relevant and properly annotated musical illustrations
- dot points and tables that help to provide a structure and illustrate key points
- a discussion of the formal structure of the works.

The commentary relating to the folio of minor works represents a significant part of the school assessment component for this subject. Teachers should ensure that students complete and submit this task with due attention to detail, content, and presentation.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 3: Major Work**

#### **Part 1: Major Work — A Composition or an Arrangement**

In Part 1 of this assessment type, students write an extended composition or arrangement for a small or large ensemble. Major works are expected to reflect significant detail, scope, and depth.

The characteristics of successful works in this assessment type are the same as those listed under Assessment Type 1: Folio of Minor Works.

#### **Part 2: Major Work — Analysis of the Major Work**

In Part 2 of this assessment type, students present an oral or written analysis of their major work. The analysis requires a greater level of depth and musical description, to a maximum of 1000 words or 6 minutes. Students are reminded that the focus for this assessment task must be on the musical aspects.

The characteristics of successful analyses are the same as those listed under Assessment Type 2: Commentary.

## **OPERATIONAL ADVICE**

For details of the learning requirements, and information about dates and assessment processes, teachers should download the 2013 subject outline and subject operational information, available on the subject minisite.

Teachers are encouraged to share and discuss the exemplars of student work from the SACE website.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The good work of teachers is widely acknowledged in the preparation of students for undertaking this subject, especially the rigorous way in which teachers applied the performance standards across all assessment components.

Students are encouraged to undertake a range of experiments with compositional techniques before starting their works. This is vital to the successful construction and development of ideas. If students are writing for instruments other than the ones they play, it is recommended that they consult widely in order to establish an awareness of idiomatic writing conventions. Students are encouraged to write for available instruments, in order to learn about the capabilities and limits of 'real' instruments in performance, rather than relying on the playback capabilities of computer-based software.

Students should understand the importance of reading scores and listening to works in the style or genre of music in which they plan to write. This may be helpful in learning how a score is presented and what conventions may be applicable.

The use of computer-based notation software that does not allow formatting to standard conventions is not recommended. Students should be able to input notation and edit or make additions as required and are encouraged to be rigorous in editing and redrafting their compositions, especially in the use, placement, and consistency of notation. The best presented scores resemble a published work.

Teachers are encouraged to attend clarifying forums as these sessions are especially useful for networking with others teaching this subject and receiving useful information and feedback.

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