

MUSICOLOGY: SENIOR ASSESSMENT | NOTES

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Musicology assesses the **sustained application of higher order cognition** (analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and development and justification of music ideas and viewpoints) in responding to stimulus materials. Students respond to repertoire and other music sources, **analyse, interpret, synthesise** and **evaluate** data and information to **develop, justify and express** a music viewpoint.

Musicology cognitions

Perceive, interpret, analyse, evaluate, synthesise and justify

The cognitions are demand that the students **perceive** and **interpret** music elements and concepts in repertoire and music sources; **analyse** and **evaluate** music to determine the relationships between music elements, concepts and stylistic characteristics; and **synthesise** findings, **justify** music viewpoints and communicate music ideas

So, what does this look like?

- When you **perceive and interpret** music elements and concepts, you identify and show understanding of the meaning of words, sounds and symbols.
- When you **analyse and evaluate** music, you investigate, review and critique repertoire, extract and clarify information. You draw conclusions through the evaluation of a range of repertoire and other music material.
- When you **synthesise** findings, **justify** music viewpoints and communicate music ideas, you consider possibilities and make judgments about music repertoire. You structure and organise extended written text using correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary, appropriate to a music context.

The cognitions:

- are staged and cumulative in nature; interdependent yet interleaved and entangled
- are foundational to demonstrating and supporting a music idea/s
- form the basis of the criteria/standards (see standards pp. 26-27).

Authenticity of evaluation

- Evaluation is at the heart of purpose of Musicology
- When we evaluate **we measure against a criteria** – this can be a stylistic one, period/era one, or one we devise and propose ourselves (criteria for a ‘sad’ song).

Evaluation must be authentic...

Authenticity:

- provides greater connectivity, intent and purpose to tasks
- allows and encourages meaningful interaction
- allows the student to form an actual viewpoint, and weakens connections to already well-supported and historically-based knowledge

- cannot really take place if we do pure analysis on the ‘masterworks’ of whatever repertoire (style, context, genre).

Do the following examples require authentic evaluation? If not, how could they be improved?

1. Argue the case that Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5* is representative of the Classical period.
2. Discuss how this Bach’s *Organ Fugue in G Minor (“Little” Fugue)* is characteristic of the Baroque period.
3. How does the use and manipulation of the music elements work to effectively express the religious joy at the birth of a son in Handel’s *For Unto Us a Child is Born* (“For Unto Us a Child Is Born” – Isaiah 9:6)?
4. Griffith (2011) summarised Debussy’s contribution to music saying, that he “opened up the paths to modern music – but he did so by stealth” (p. 2). His beautiful masks the revolutionary nature of his work. Through analysing and evaluating one or more of Debussy’s works (identified below), and synthesising your findings, you are to justify a viewpoint in response to Griffith’s quote.
5. Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps (Rite of Spring)* is perhaps one of the most influential works of the twentieth century; it intended to shock. As Benjamin (2013) states, “its savage violence confronted head-on the aesthetics of Impressionism...” and challenged the “musical perspective and logic that had dominated European ears for centuries” (para. 4). Stravinsky’s greatest weapon in this assault was the fundamental musical resource: rhythm. Through an analysis and evaluation of this work, and through a synthesis of your findings, you are to justify a viewpoint in response to Benjamin’s quote above.
6. Many, both critics and supporters, have referred the complexity of serialism as ‘art for art’s sake’ – appealing only to the intellectual demands of music, rather than the ability (or function) of music to be for the ‘masses’. Kamien (2008) suggests that minimalism was “partly a reaction against the complexity of serialism” (p. 486). Through an analysis and evaluation of one representative work of each style, and through a synthesis of your findings, you are to justify a viewpoint in response to how the intellectualism of serialism contributed to the development of minimalism.
7. You are to present an extended response that evaluates the effectiveness of Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* at evoking a particular emotion/s in the listener. Your evaluation is to be founded on an analysis of the work, and you are to synthesise your findings to justify your viewpoint.

Curriculum/pedagogic approaches

The focus of Musicology is making sense of music itself. How can any of these cognitions be demonstrated to any degree of success or significance if students aren't listening or thinking for themselves... making their own discoveries, asking their own questions of music, taking an evaluative stance...?

Some general thoughts....

- Get the students to think for themselves – don't just hand them the analysis on a plate (via listening guides, worksheets)
- Whole-part-whole listening/performing (involvement *in*, not just information *about*)
- Give reasons for why we deconstruct and analyse – contexts for understanding, compositional practices, inform theoretical knowledge...
- What do you 'reveal' about the piece?
- Music elements rarely work in isolation – this can be problematic for deconstruction
- Use best quality examples (performances and sound file quality)
- Scrolling scores are becoming common and facilitate discussion and isolation of specific uses/manipulations of elements and compositional devices
- Step back and allow them to discover... they learn, and importantly, I you learn from them
- Encourage deep, focused and **'untainted' listening** (by 'untainted', I mean listening without the baggage of context or background. I want them to come to know and understand the repertoire and how it uses and manipulates the music elements to achieve particular effects).

In action...

- The start of this process sees me get the music to the students – sound recordings and scores (if applicable) – through an online platform used by the school (the LMS). They are to listen to the music independently (and read the score, if applicable) – even across a few days before class (if possible) and become familiar with it – become 'saturated' by the music.
- When class time arrives (if before), we listen several times through the music together – the music is somewhat familiar; there is opportunity to listen with more 'depth' – and the high cognitive load associated with listening and responding to new music has been lessened somewhat. The students are given several Post-it notes, and upon each they are asked to write down a separate 'finding' on each – in their own words, focusing on elements of their choosing, no 'right or wrong'... their own 'voice' on the music. Once done, they adhere them to the whiteboard.
- We listen again. We add more Post-it notes.
- It is after these experiences that I frame the repertoire with a question, for example: "Does this music effectively convey the emotion of sadness?"
- More Post-it notes. All voices are represented – everyone contributes. The students begin to construct a viewpoint; the classroom is then characterised by conversation about the music from their own experiences with it.
- From here the objectives/criteria statements frame our collective discussion. The first criteria – perceive and interpret – is unpacked through the questions, "What's important here?" and "Why is this important?" Through discussion we sift through the Post-it notes and distill, 'tease-out' and draw connections between features of the music that are needed to support a response to the teacher-posed question/viewpoint. This is where the most 'light-bulb' moments occur, and where meaning and connectivity is experienced (see attached Musicology Analysis Template).
- Through the first stage of the process we find out whether or not our initial perceptions are 'worthy'. We move through the questions: "What evidence can you find to support this?" "Where is this evidence?", "How can we unpack this evidence?", and "How effective (or otherwise) is the use, application and manipulation of music elements and stylistic concepts?"

Then, we draw all of this together and ask: “So what?” and “How does this support my argument/viewpoint/position?” We make sense of it all and synthesise our findings.

Let's try this with 'Gloomy Sunday' (Holliday)...

Question: Does this piece deserve the reputation of the 'Hungarian Suicide Song'?

Assessment approaches

- Assessment is the demonstration of the cognitions
- Completes the 'triangle' of interaction – curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
- Connectivity of assessment tasks to (possible) real world experiences
- Don't forget the QCAA website (rich in example and advice)
- See handouts/attachments on website: <https://cmbonar.wordpress.com> (see 'Resources'):
Year 11 – M2 (The Piano); Year 12 – M1 (Art Exhibition); Year 12 M2 (Gloomy Sunday)
- Look for connectivity between our discussions and the task sheets

Thank you!

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Attachments

(I am more than happy to share these, but please respect that they are sample of my work/my students work):

1. *Musicology Analysis Template (on website)*
2. *Year 11 M2 – The Piano task sheet (on website)*
3. *Year 12 M1 – Art Exhibition task sheet (on website)*
4. *Of Foreign Lands and People (Schuman) score*
5. *Nocturne No. 2 (Chopin) score*
6. *Gloomy Sunday (Holiday) score*
7. *Sample Response 1 - Year 11 M2*
8. *Sample Response 2 – Year 11 M2*
9. *Sample Response 3 – Year 12 M1*
10. *Sample Response 2 – Year 12 M2 (workshopped activity)*