In this module, as well as developing their solo performance skills, students choose between either playing in an ensemble or composing a short new work. For the first time in 2012-13, the module coordinator Bede Williams and composition tutor Ed Jones organized an end-of-module concert to showcase students' compositions, performed by fellow students on the course; this demonstrated what live performance can bring to a composition, and was a successful celebration of what had been learnt by all students during the semester.

The composition students work with the composition tutors over the first half of the semester to learn technical skills in writing and structuring music; this is assessed through short technical exercises. Then in the second half of the semester these students create a free composition. The full composition portfolio is submitted to the composition tutors for marking before the end of term; this is given an initial mark based on the scores alone (in some cases, students also provided an electronic realization of their score, but this fell well short of what might be achieved in acoustic performance). The initial mark reflects the technical competency of the arrangement exercises, and as far as possible, what the tutor could see to be the intended effect of the free composition. During the week of the practical exams, all the students on the module are invited to the composition concert, during which each new work is performed by a variety of ad-hoc ensembles. In a couple of cases, the performance of a piece in live performance context can produce a much more convincing and subtle composition than might have been obvious from the score alone. The composition concert audience includes both the internal and external examiners, who were able to recommend a re-calibration of the original composition mark in a couple of particularly revealing cases. The concert is also recorded so that the students have a record of their work in performance, and for audit purposes.

**Benefits/impact on students/staff:** all composers are excited by the opportunity to get their original work performed live. It is also important to realize that these are first level students, some entering the course with only basic skills in writing music, but who sometimes had very capable and original musical imaginations. Creating music for live performance helped to address this entry skill-gap, as ideas could be worked out pragmatically where the theoretical language for recording these was still developing. The composers also left with a much clearer sense of what worked in performance and what didn’t quite work so well: tutor oral and written feedback may have indicated
this, but hearing for oneself is even more convincing. Other students learnt that taking part in the first performance of a new composition is an opportunity to contribute towards the creative process. The event itself was also good fun, at a time of term when fun can be in scarce supply: it showed that music making is a communal activity, demonstrating this without any heavy-handed instructional note. As part of the final, summative assessment, therefore, the composition concert was also able to include a strong element of formative information.

**Student feedback:** Reactions to the event at the time from both performers and composers were very enthusiastic.

**Supporting material:** mp3 files of *Credo* by George Barrett for choir and organ (performed by the composer), and *Sanctus* by Kirsty Parratt for choir and piano and saxophone (performed by the composer). The first shows the influence of Messiaen; the second of minimalist composers such as Philip Glass.

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