

The Appraisal

1.

The 2 areas of study I chose to focus on in my piece were:

- Texture and Melody
- Structure and Form

The links between my composition and the given strand (The Western Classical Tradition) are:

- Instrumentation: Piano and flute, both are western classical instruments
 - Also make the composition a piece of chamber music (music for a small group of players)
- Form: The musical development of the piece – I have used a theme and variations form, which is popular in western classical pieces. Particularly within the Classical era, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote a number of variations pieces such as the first movement of his Piano Sonata in A. K. 331

2.

I chose the area of study 'Structure and Form' to focus on because I felt comfortable working with a pre-determined form and I felt it would be a good base to start from. It would ensure that my piece would have a clear direction and would develop as it progressed because it would be well structured and the big picture would always be in sight.

I chose the area of study 'Texture and melody' to focus on because this would mean that the piece would sound fulfilled and completed. The 'Texture' element would be met by the piano, as I play the piano myself I wanted to explore creating different textures and rhythms using this instrument

The focus of the melody was originally meant to be met by the piano also but further down the line of my composition I decided to add a flute to my piece. The flute naturally contrasts with the piano and can be used melodically. I chose the flute in particular rather than other woodwind instruments after I heard a piece by Bach Carl Philipp Emanuel and rather enjoyed the melodies that it played.

I chose the instrumentation link between my piece and the western classical tradition as I wanted the piano to play the largest role of any instrument in my piece. As I am a pianist myself this would entitle me to compose from the piano directly and would be able to play the sections I notated. Originally I intended my piece to be a piano

solo, however as the composition process progressed I decided to add another instrument to create contrast. The flute was chosen as it also is a western classical instrument and am slightly familiar with it after having written for it in previous compositions and one of my friend played the part. I also enjoy listening to solo flute pieces like *Danse de la chèvre* by Arthur Honegger, this piece was one of my inspirations for the flute part I wrote.

3+4.

Upon being given the Unit 2 Composition task I instantly decided that I would have the piano as the main featured instrument. This meant as a pianist myself, I could rehearse sections and play what I wrote to see if it worked.

I pre-determined the form would be a variations piece to make composing an easier process

To begin with I played around with broken chords and then decided on a starting key simply because it sounded good. I wrote my first broken chord (AEA) and then created/developed variations on it simply by transposing it up and down. This later became my first section (for the left hand). I went on to write an initial melody for the right hand, this did not seem to work as well as I hoped though and was not what I intended to write. Therefore I began mimicking the left handed part changing it slightly (i.e. bar 17's right handed part was adapted from the left hand but to alter it I made the note length shorter so that it was repeated several times). I looked earlier back at my piece and decided to use arpeggios in the right hand that were similar to the chord played by the left. The introduction came about from viewing the bass note of the left hand, placing it in a suitable higher octave and adding a slightly higher note above it, then using the middle note of the chord and stepping one down beneath it.

From this point I developed ideas further by altering the quality of the sound, some notes became staccato (bar 25), while accents were added to others (bar 24). After doing this I realised I had lost sense of a melody and the piece sounded dull, never really altering much. I figured since one of my chosen areas of study was texture and melody that I should add a second western classical instrument to provide variety and carry the melody. The flute was an obvious choice as it is able to play it melodically and as previously stated I have experience with it. It had been a while since using it in a composition though so I consulted my friend who plays it on the range of notes it could play and then put the notes in a suitable octave.

When playing through the composition as far as it was I decided the piece suited a minor key better, especially B minor as the existing content didn't really fit a major key and I intended from there to change the tone so it sounded slightly darker but exciting at the same time. I transposed the entire piece accordingly. I resolved the piece in a different key (bar 48 through to end) as the form was variations and I wanted to exploit the opportunity for doing this. When I came to review the piece I

noticed some of the transitions in-between sections were incomplete (such as what is now bar 23 and 27) so I returned to the piano and played around with some ideas till I eventually came up with suitable ways (time changes and such) to bridge them together. Finally the piece was complete.

I gathered the relevant players together over the next few weeks and as both were good sight readers neither of the two needed much practice. On the day of recording I positioned the flute closer to the microphone to increase the volume on playback. Minor adjustments were made to the score to improve the quality (more accents on notes, bars 43-46) there were 4 attempts at performing the piece and the best of those was selected for submission. I returned to Sibelius and input some of the changes that were played on the recording.

5.

With regards to the area of study 'Texture and Melody' the piano fulfils the element of texture by varying it with the type of chords played (broken and unbroken). Primarily the flute meets the requirement of the melody and carries it throughout the piece maintaining a balance between the two instruments.

In bars 17-23 you can clearly see the melody being carried by the flute whilst complimenting the texture of the chords played by the piano.

The texture was mostly homophonic – Flute melody, piano accompaniment but this varied throughout the piece. From bar 1 upto bar 16 only the piano is playing, creating a light texture comprised of only broken chords. Whereas at bar 17 the texture is much thicker, the piano is playing block chords now parallel to the melody the flute has begun to play.

The melodies themselves develop throughout the piece, initially they are scalar but later feature jumps and become offbeat slightly.

Had I more time to develop the composition I would have probably added more instruments each carrying the melody at one point and possibly changing from scalar to chromatic every so often.

The area of study 'Structure and Form' was key in my piece and was always being thought of when composing the piece. The piece is successful in relation to this as it is written in themes and variation form, in which the fundamental musical idea is repeated in an altered form. This happens several times throughout the piece through key and time signature changes as well as varied speed and texture of chords, i.e. broken as well as joined.

The first section (bars 1-16) is the theme; the second section (17-25) is different from the first and instead uses block chords rather than the arpeggios/ broken chords. The third section (26-42) is in a different time and the left hand and right hand for piano are separated and played individually, ending on longer notes. The fourth section (Bars 43-47) is heavily accented and the flute was the focus of this section playing independently from the piano. The final section (from Bar 48 until the end of the piece) is in a different key and rather than being off beat like some sections is meant to flow legato, the sound builds up and then diminishes.

Had I more time I would have made the piece longer and input another key change so the form would be more recognisable and so there were more developments making the composition even more musically stimulating .

The Focus of the western classical link being instrumentation worked well as the two instruments worked in harmony together and made a great sound.

The piano used the pedal to begin with to make the notes last longer and make it seem fluid when moving between bars. There were markings to indicate how particular sections should be played (i.e. accents above notes and crescendos) all things considered the instrument was used to a high standard.

6.

The context of the piece is western classical chamber music and so this piece fits well within this category as it has the aspects a classical piece should have such as:

- Western Classical instruments
- Structure/form – A theme and variations piece, popular in Western Classical music and among others like the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in A. K. 331
- Finally the homophonic tonality is not unsimilar to some of J.S. Bach's Concerto for 2 violins, strings and continuo in D minor; a piece of baroque music, only instead the instruments are from a different family .