



Dear Composer,

Thank you very much for submitting your composition to the National Association for Music Education.

On the following page, you will find an evaluation of your composition written by a composer/composition teacher. We hope that you discuss the evaluation with your teacher and ask your teacher to explain any terms you may not have learned yet.

Our aim is to encourage you in composition. We hope that you continue to explore your musical ideas in your own original music. Thanks again for sending us your piece!

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

The compositions are evaluated according to three broad criteria:

1) compositional technique, 2) overall musical appeal, and 3) originality.

***Compositional Technique*** includes the following elements, where applicable:

- Organization of pitch elements (such as melody, harmony, and counterpoint)
- Organization of rhythmic elements
- Formal design
- Accuracy and clarity of notation
- Appropriate writing for instruments and/or voices

***Overall Musical Appeal*** includes the following aspects:

- Stylistic coherence (regardless of the particular style)
- Effective handling of unity/variety and tension/release
- Effective use of dynamics, articulations, and expression marks
- Interaction of all of the elements (atmosphere, mood, direction, and flow of the music)

***Originality*** refers to aspects of the piece that reveal the composer's individual "voice," and distinguish the piece from a musical exercise or a direct imitation of another piece.

***Please see the next page for the evaluation.***

## Composition Evaluation

Student Name: [Name] (Grade 6)

Composition Title: [Title]

Evaluator Name: Dr. X

Dear Sally,

Thank you for submitting a composition this year! It's obvious to me that you have put a great deal of work into this piece. Composing your own music is not easy – so you, your teacher, and your family should be proud of your work! I want to share some thoughts about your piece that I hope will give you even more great ideas for compositions you will write in the future!

You've done a fine job of notating your piece! You have been very clear about what you expect from the performers in terms of tempo and dynamics. My only suggestion for your next piece is that you be just as clear in terms of articulation and phrasing. For example, should the pianist play the triplet figures in a separated style? Connected, but without pedal? With pedal? I would encourage you to think like a performer as you write. What would you want to know if you were playing this piece for the first time?

Your form is very clear and reflects the title of your composition well! Changing key areas in the middle section helps to separate the sections of your piece. In future compositions, think about other ways that you might create variety, within or between sections of the piece. For example, you might consider changing the meter or the style in some part(s) of your composition.

You've done a great job of writing for piano and for violin. Many young composers write music that is awkward to play, but you have done a good job of composing music that works well for both instruments! I enjoyed that fact that you used a different register of the violin in the middle section of the piece – in your next composition, you might also think about places where you could use different registers of the piano!

I also really like the way that you used several motives to tie the composition together! The melodic gestures that repeat, as well as the triplet accompaniment, give the different sections a sense of unity. That said, reusing material too much could start to sound monotonous. This is my subjective opinion, but you might consider varying the accompaniment throughout the piece. You've done this in a couple of places (mm. 32-35, mm. 44-51), but you might also consider other opportunities to create more interest. Tying this together with my suggestion above about using a different register in the piano, you might consider doing something like this at measure 18:

The image shows a musical score for measure 18. It consists of two staves: a violin staff (top) and a piano staff (bottom). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The violin staff contains a melodic line with quarter and eighth notes. The piano staff features a triplet accompaniment in the bass register, indicated by a '3' above the notes and a bracket. The word 'Ped.' is written below the piano staff, suggesting the use of a sustain pedal. The measure concludes with a double bar line.

I hope that you'll continue to write more of your own music! As you continue to compose, make a habit of listening to lots of music, in as many different styles as you can. When you hear an idea you like, figure out how the composer created it, and make it part of your own compositional "toolbox." A score can be helpful if it's available, but also try to recreate the elements you like with your voice, with your instrument, and in notation. Your compositions will become even more interesting as you expand your palette! I hope to see more of your works in the future – best wishes for a successful school year!

## *Composition Evaluation*

Student Name: [Name] (Grade 11)

Composition Title: [Title]

Evaluator Name: Dr. Y

Dear Evan,

Thanks for submitting your composition! I hope that you continue to enjoy composition and keep on creating your own music!

Here are some comments on your piece:

Your piece conveys a mood of excitement and passion very evocatively. The very beginning starts off in an exciting way, opening with the dominant harmony, without the main theme, and builds intensity by climbing upward through the bassoon register. The crescendo of insistent eighth notes and dotted rhythms, combined with the flat-ninth extensions, contribute to the tension. The main theme enters at letter A. It is propulsive and dynamic. One of my favorite features is the rest that it introduces in its third measure. That draws the listener in.

Unity and Variety: You have created a highly unified piece. It is stylistically consistent and carries its “argument” forward without “going off topic.” You stay true to your themes. You also introduce variety in several ways. At C, you introduce a longer note to change the flow. At D, you add a melodic twist. At E, you give the instruments a brief dialogue with the theme. At F and G, you modulate the theme. At H, you begin a genuinely new section. The cadenza at M diverges most of all from the general thrust of the piece.

In future pieces, you may want to experiment with creating even more variety. Perhaps you already have! For example, in this piece, the themes go through some transformations, but are usually reiterated in 4-bar blocks throughout. In music you admire, notice how the composers fragment and extend thematic material. The new idea at D could be extended to provide more contrast with the main theme. In my opinion, the same is true of your “slow theme.” At J, the gestural contours are predictable after a couple of phrases. In your recapitulation, at N, it looks like you copied the exposition exactly. Beware of the copy and paste keys on the computer. In my subjective opinion, it is wise to introduce some little (or big) twists on the original material. Hasn't the piece learned something new about itself by this point?

I commend you on your professional notation. One quibble: the dynamics look small. Is this a Sibelius score? Did you hold down the control key when you typed the dynamics?

Congratulations on a wonderful piece! Thank you for sharing it with us. You and your teacher should be proud of your accomplishment.