

13 August 2022

Concert Band Adjudicator Summary Report

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate in this role – it was an enjoyable experience. We were very impressed by and grateful for the wonderful work done by the organisers (and the great supply of coffee and nutrition).

Although the late withdrawal of John Snowling was disappointing, it was a privilege to work alongside Vincent Hardaker.

- We were very impressed with the standard of bands in light of the disruption caused by COVID. Every performance was the result of extraordinary commitment.
- A complete run sheet, with band names, *titles of works* and columns for the various awards would be really useful. This would aid adjudicators in their keeping track of performances, after listening to about 200 pieces.
- The quality of repertoire varied enormously. It is important that bands showcase what they *can* do, rather than risk works beyond resources. Some performances had very little contrast between the numbers and – given the vastness of available repertoire – this shouldn't be the case. (Just two performed works were written pre-1950 for concert band, overlooking a wonderful heritage.) Film themes are popular, but 1 per set should be enough. Some programmes featured very little actual melody at any point.
- I know band directors need to attract students to band programmes with music students enjoy (and remember their audience when playing in schools) but the introduction of a wide range of good quality repertoire will be doing students and audiences a favour. Most NZ students will finish their secondary education without ever encountering Beethoven or any of the 'masters' – concert bands are a great opportunity to introduce students to an incredibly wide repertoire. Much of the effectiveness of this comes back to the passion, courage and commitment band directors show in this area. (An interesting corollary is with schools for whom Shakespearian productions are a popular annual feature. This happens in spite of the Olde English, etc, as a passionate teacher builds a culture of appreciation and students experience success...). Choice of repertoire is the single most influential decision a band director makes.
- Some groups played too much music in their allotted time, often repeatedly revealing the same strengths and weaknesses.
- Many (actually *most*) bands struggled to start works cleanly. Frequently, the opening note was untidy. Conductors do need to communicate confidence and certainty with their groups before setting off.
- Balance (1) – a lot of (presumably) wonderful work was swamped by the snare or cymbal. This could be due to the acoustics of the venue but, whatever the cause, did some real harm to some performances.
- Balance (2) – I understand the reality of resourcing bands. Not every school can access tubas and bari saxes (or bassoons). Some creative problem solving effective got around this with the judicious use of keyboard and electric bass. Obviously, care must be taken to blend the tone and volume of these instruments

Congratulations on another wonderful event.

Nga mihi,

Grant Burns & Vincent Hardaker