

Exploring music in context

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Music · SL

IB Diploma Programme Music SL (first assessment 2022; 2020 guide). This topic equips EXPLORING MUSIC IN CONTEXT, the externally assessed exploration portfolio (30% at SL): written work demonstrating engagement with, and understanding of, diverse musical material, plus practical exercises in creating and performing. The exploration is focused through the four AREAS OF INQUIRY and experienced across three contexts in the roles of researcher, creator and performer. This handout teaches the inquiry kit, the matrix of encounters and the portfolio. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for exploring music in context:

Family	Content
inquiries	four areas of inquiry, each a lens, not a genre list
contexts	personal, local and global: where the encounter sits
roles	researcher, creator, performer: every encounter, all three
elements	rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre: the analysis kit
portfolio	written work plus practical exercises in creating and performing

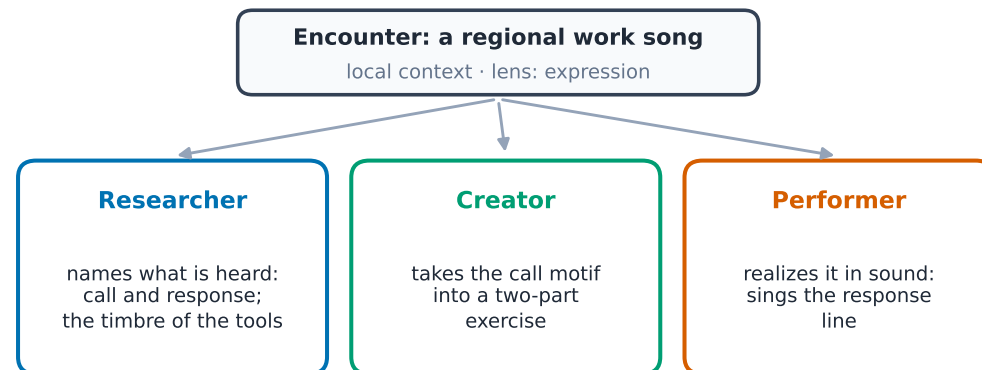
The four areas of inquiry

The **areas of inquiry** are lenses onto any musical material, not a syllabus of set works: music for sociocultural and political expression (protest songs, work songs, anthems); music for listening and performance (the concert and its repertoires); music for dramatic impact, movement and entertainment (film scores, game soundtracks, dance); and music technology in the electronic and digital age (production, sampling, the DAW). One piece can sit under more than one lens, and the strongest explorations say WHY the lens fits.

Worked example. A student plots three encounters: a regional work song under expression, a film cue under dramatic impact, and a phone-DAW remix under technology. For the work song the lens fits because the music organizes collective labour; for the film cue because the harmony steers tension the picture cannot show.

The three contexts

Every encounter sits in a context: PERSONAL (the student's own musical world), LOCAL (the culture and community around them) and GLOBAL (previously unfamiliar music). The course asks students to move beyond the personal: breadth is shown by reaching local and global material. The three roles run through every encounter: the researcher analyses elements and context, the creator takes something into an exercise, the performer realizes it in sound.



One encounter, three roles: researcher, creator, performer

Worked example, continued. The work song is a local-context encounter (collected from a regional archive): researched (its call-and-response **texture** and the **timbre** of voices against tools), created (its motif taken into a two-part exercise), performed (the response line sung).

The exploration portfolio

The **exploration portfolio** is the course's first submission: written work demonstrating engagement with, and understanding of, diverse musical material, plus practical exercises in creating and performing. The discipline: every claim about a piece is made through the elements (an audible or notated event named before any context or effect is claimed); diversity and breadth are shown across the inquiries and the contexts, not asserted; and the practical exercises grow out of the same encounters the written work analyses.

Worked example, concluded. The written entry for the work song names two audible events (the leader-group call and response in texture; the dry timbre of the tools marking time) and reads them as sociocultural expression: the music organizes the labour. The linked exercise sets the call motif for two instruments and performs the response.

Checklist

- The four inquiries as lenses, each fit argued (inquiries).
- The three contexts: personal left behind for local and global (contexts).
- Every encounter worked through all three roles (roles).
- Element claims: event named before effect (elements).

- Written and practical work from the same encounters (portfolio). Boundary notes: the examiner must see the music happening: engagement shown in the elements, the processes evidenced, the work finished. All worked examples are original.