



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**MUSIC
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2018

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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MUSIC

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

A warm welcome was given to all examiners and the majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live.

In most cases, the administration and timetabling of the examinations was excellent with many centres providing running orders. In the case of longer sessions, please continue to build into your timetables comfort breaks for the examiners. Allowing 15 minutes for Option A and 12 minutes for Option B seems ideal.

Please remember that Option A requires a minimum of THREE pieces, one of which must be a solo.

Most centres had downloaded the correct forms as required but, in some instances, these had been completed by the candidates themselves. Please double-check these for accuracy. In addition, forms need to be completed neatly and legibly. In some instances, examination numbers were missing from the forms when they were given to examiners.

Please ensure that Links with an Area of Study have also been completed. At A level the links are the Western Classical Tradition (Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music); 20th or 21st Century Music; Rock and Pop; Musical Theatre; and Jazz.

Examination rooms were, on the whole, fit for purpose with good quality pianos which had been recently tuned. Some centres choose to use electronic keyboards.

In cases where the standard of the repertoire is known, it would be helpful if this information was given on the form, eg. Grade 7 ABRSM.

Most candidates provided copies of their music for the examiners. Please ensure these are correctly labelled with the candidate's name and number. Please ensure that the music provided accurately reflects the performance being given, especially when downloading tab from the internet. In order to achieve the top marks for accuracy, singers must ensure that the vocal melodic line has been added to lead sheets which give lyrics and chords. Please clearly mark any repeats, cuts or any other modifications on the copies. In addition, ensure that the edge of the music has not been cut off on the photocopy.

There were many excellent performers but some candidates need to give more careful consideration to their choice of programme as some are over-ambitious. Conversely, the occasional candidate performed a lower standard piece amongst more difficult repertoire which resulted in a lower overall mark. This is understandable if the alternative is that the candidate does not meet the minimum time requirement.

In some instances, more care is needed in choosing ensemble repertoire in order to ensure that the individual parts are significant and of the required standard. These parts must not be doubled by any other performer. Candidates also need to be aware of the technical challenge afforded by their own compositions in this regard. Teachers and candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.

Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

Performers need to ensure that they pay attention to the performance directions on the music. Some drummers and guitarists are not aware of the need for contrast, especially of dynamics. Some singers lack projection and communication due to over-reliance on their music. If the music or lyrics are needed, it would be preferable for them to be placed on a stand, slightly to the side of the performer.

In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound-checked in advance allowing the examination to proceed without hold-ups.

More careful timing of recitals is necessary in some instances in order to ensure that candidates do not fall short of the minimum requirement as stated in the specification. It should be noted that long piano introductions (e.g.) orchestral expositions in concerti, will not be included when calculating the time of a recital.

On the whole, the feedback from the examining team was very positive and I am very grateful to all those involved, including the team based in the office in Cardiff.

Eric W. Phillips

MUSIC
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COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

Principal Examiner: Jan Richards

This is an overview based on the feedback received from the members of the examining team, in the first year of the new specification. I hope that this general report will be of value to all those responsible for guiding future candidates in their completion of the Component 2 coursework submission for A level Music.

Administration

In the vast majority of cases the administration process was straightforward, and procedures were correctly adhered to. The e-assessment team contacted centres in instances where the documentation was incomplete, and responses were mostly uploaded without delay. There were some issues with missing authentication signatures, logs and audio files (missing, not playing or incomplete), and lack of clarity or no information about the selected briefs. Please also check dates when signing the logs off – one centre signed the candidates work off in the future!

To clarify, electronic signatures are totally acceptable from candidates and for teacher verification.

Labelling work

Some centres failed to label files appropriately, and when this was the case, examiners commented on difficulties ascertaining which audio tracks corresponded with which score. In all, there are 5 items to upload (2 audio, 3 pdf/word). May I therefore suggest the following system:

- [Candidate exam number] Log (pdf)
- [Candidate exam number] WCT brief – score (pdf)
- [Candidate exam number] Set brief - mp3
- [Candidate exam number] Free brief – score (pdf)
- [Candidate exam number] Free brief - mp3

Candidate Logs

Once again this year, examiners commented on the variety in quality (points made last year apply here also). We appreciate that the logs are not assessed and candidates may not prioritise the effort to complete the document thoughtfully or in detail – but I would like to reinforce their value as regards the information and explanation of the composing process and the recording details. This is particularly important when a live performance has been submitted, as it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the candidate's actual involvement. The most impressive logs by candidates offered clear explanation of their responses to the set and free brief, and they articulated their aims, planning, and decisions within the musical context; weaker logs lacked understanding, reasoning and sometimes the most basic details. Some logs were apparently difficult to read as they were faint – these were the handwritten documents that had been scanned in. If candidates completed the information as a word doc (downloadable from the EDUQAS website) then the file can be simply uploaded and will not require scanning. Many candidates had spent a lot of time, and put a lot of thought, into adding appropriate articulation, dynamic and tempo markings to their pieces – with explanations behind their decisions in the logs.

Best practice / guidance for the candidate....

- Make sure the selected brief is clearly stated, with details of the audience and occasion
- Use the log to support the audio submissions.
- Use the correct form (downloaded from the website), do not 'attach' additional notes in its place
- Complete as a word doc rather than handwriting the document; these were clearer to read than scanned documents
- Explain the **process** of composing and recording, and decisions made; examiners felt that continuous prose was the best way to engage with this explanation
- Proofread the log carefully to avoid inaccurate and/or unclear information

Avoid....

- ...including an analysis of the piece or simply listing devices (such details are only required as part of the lead sheet, not when the score has been included)
- ...duplicating material from the leadsheet in the log, or vice-versa
- ... presenting a list of bullet points, which lack sufficient explanation
- ...splitting the log into two separate documents (i.e. one for the WCT piece and one for the free composition).

Scores / Leadsheets

Scores were well presented and of an excellent standard when exported as a pdf from Sibelius, Musescore or similar. Scores in Logic (though useful) were considered to be less clear and not always legible; many examiners felt that more information was required when Garage Band had been used. Leadsheets were generally informative, with many candidates having made a determined effort to present the necessary and required musical information and explanation. In order to assist the assessment process, a number of examiners have requested that titles, candidate and centre names and numbers should be detailed on the scores / leadsheets, and that instrument names are inserted on scores. Some candidates embedded images/illustrations/musical examples into their lead sheets, which resulted in a cohesive supporting document which clearly exemplified the process.

To reiterate: a screenshot with basic annotation is not considered to be sufficient.

Candidates must include a structural outline, and details of the harmonic progressions and rhythmic and melodic details (plus devices used).

Occasionally there were no titles for compositions. Some titles given to pieces were not appropriate for examination purposes.

Recordings

Recordings were, overall, of an excellent quality with many having been exported as an audio file from Sibelius (or similar). Occasionally, there were some problems with the balance of parts, usually because dynamics were missing, or because of poor positioning of recording equipment (it was felt that some recordings did not do justice to the work). A few centres seemed to rely on recording the compositions using a mic whilst the music was played from a computer via speakers. This sometimes resulted in a poor quality audio file - with hiss and background noise - and meant that the finer details of the compositions were not audible.

In some cases, live performances were not without errors (or poor tuning), and gave the impression of perhaps a rather rushed preparation for performance. The realisation of compositions through live recordings was felt to be beneficial especially in pop/rock songs, and many A level candidates demonstrated an excellent handling of music technology to enable them to realise first class recordings of their popular style pieces, with some verging on professional quality.

Examiners realised that some centres are unfortunately running old software where the quality of instrumental MIDI sounds is not as strong as up to date software. Similar comments were made about other such programs; for example, Musescore - whilst an excellent free resource - does not always provide good quality sound recordings, with the details of lines often being lost and a lack of balance meaning that melody lines did not always come through. There were many instances where audio recordings stopped midway, or the tracks were defective (e.g. only being able to hear one line in a larger ensemble piece). It is imperative centres check the audio tracks before uploading to ensure that all parts can be heard (e.g. a ensemble score was received where you could only hear one line in the recording).

Timings

Most compositions submitted fulfilled the time requirement of this component but some individual compositions were shorter than expected; this generally impacted on any real development of the musical material. Conversely, some candidates submitted very long compositions and it is up to the examiner whether to view all work – in all cases this year, it seemed that examiners were more than happy to listen to the whole portfolio (in one centre, all candidates presented folios of well over 10 minutes). It was often felt that in overly long compositions the structural focus was lost and the thematic material was overly repetitive. Please remind all future candidates that each composition is assessed independently, therefore it is within their interest to produce two compositions of equal worth; spending more time on one composition is likely to impede their overall mark. Penalties were imposed when the submission did not fulfil the minimum time requirement. [Information on penalties may be found in the specification].

General Observations

Generally speaking, candidates who wrote for their own instrument(s) or for instruments (including voices) of which they have experience, tended to produce more successful outcomes as they were able to compose more idiomatically.

N.B. the use of repeat marks: there is no benefit in including repeat marks solely for the purpose of extending the piece. Some were included for no obvious structural reason, and contributed nothing extra. Even when they have been included, as expected, in a certain structure (such as Binary Form), the repeat is not counted within the total time allocation.

Western Classical Tradition compositions

The better candidates wrote clearly and convincingly in WCT style, gaining top band marks; these were compositions with excellent use of harmony, structure, texture, musical devices and other compositional techniques. Most centres have clearly spent time developing a sound understanding of the style of the WCT, including the study of harmonic and textural procedures; this has had a positive impact on candidates being able to access the higher assessment bands for composition 1. Good examples were stylistic, demonstrating melodic fluency and conviction, effectively structured above appropriate and well varied harmonic structures. There were some truly impressive pieces with clear processes which displayed mature, creative and musical imagination, demonstrating a controlled use of elements, varying the use of texture, and incorporating interesting yet appropriate rhythms, syncopations and performance directions. Candidates demonstrated their musical understanding by writing melodies with antecedent and consequent phrasing, their harmonic awareness through use of cadences, 7ths, inversions, pedals, modulation and circle of 5th progressions. Some candidates used Neapolitan 6ths and diminished 7ths with success (although in a minority of cases they did feel a little shoe-horned in!).

The shortcomings included structural understanding and knowledge of instrumental and vocal techniques; more often than weaknesses occurred due to a lack of melodic conviction, phrase structure and direction. Poor word-setting was also something that let candidates down. Many appropriate and interesting WCT influences were indicated in the logs; however, while some candidates did not state any WCT influences, others referenced totally inappropriate 20thC/modern influences.

As stated above, most pieces reflecting the WCT met the minimum time stipulation, with stronger candidates making a pleasing effort to impress and go the extra distance; the majority of successful pieces were longer than one minute, giving the candidate more of an opportunity to display their composing skills. (Having said that, some pieces just over a minute also ticked the boxes very well, so it is according to the content).

Please note - examiners expressed the following concerns:

- Details of the selected brief were sometimes missing from the first page of the log. Sometimes the brief was evident on reading the explanatory content in the log – but not always. Candidates must remember that the response to the brief is directly assessed in the first column ‘Creating Musical Ideas’; it is not the job of the examiner to seek out this information when there is clearly a place for it to be indicated in the candidate log. Where this was totally unclear, marks were affected.
- When the style is not a convincing reflection of the WCT. In a number of cases, this tended to be when the outcome was rather too ‘film-like’. According to the musical content, some work was either considered to be a ‘limited’ response, or in the worst case scenario was awarded 0 as there was no evidence of an attempt to reflect the required style. Unfortunately there were some candidates in this position, who received no credit for their first compositions.
- When some candidates seemed aimed no further than the ‘minimum’ time requirement – linked with minimum and repeated substance, this frequently resulted in the minimum assessment.

Though the WCT style was met well in the majority of compositions, all examiners expressed concerns about the quality of the melodic / thematic content in some work. This appeared to be the result of a procedure when candidates build chord progressions first, then create very angular melodies, starting with simple rhythmic values, then adding semiquavers, triplets, quintuplets and sextuplets at often rather random moments – which made the outcome far too busy and muddled. The balance of phrases was also sometimes awry. Some candidates just didn’t know when to stop, ending up with a meandering and overly-long, rambling outcome. Some examiners felt that, on occasion, the WCT compositions were too similar to the pieces they had been influenced by.

Harmony was sometimes excellent, demonstrating sensible and interesting progressions and phrases, concluding with clear cadences. However, initial melodic material was often compromised by static and repetitive use of simple chord and rather unrelentless triadic movement.

Some final advice for candidates

- Research the technical abilities and styling for the instruments/voices used in your piece, and be thoughtful when writing for these instruments (e.g. examples were noted of one trumpet playing a chord, 6 notes in one hand for the piano, a flute playing loud in its lowest register...pizzicato for brass instruments....writing for piano and harp was often unconsidered)
- Aim to create a ‘coherent’ piece (i.e. subsequent sections were often so contrasted to the opening section, the result felt like a few different compositions strung together)
- Take time to plan – keep a clear structural focus at the forefront of your thinking
- Remember that the **use of direct repeat marks** is **not** counted in the overall time allocation for a piece

- Keep strictly to the WCT musical traditions (avoid influences of musical theatre / folk / inappropriate chords *etc*)
- When writing in a minor key, remember to deal with the leading note correctly (in many cases the failure to raise the 7th resulted in much modal writing)
- Work to create balanced phrases and a fluent melody line – this offers potential for a more effective development of ideas. Don't constantly keep introducing new material!
- Ensure a range of textures in the compositions, without overly relying on homophonic passages (even though you will find WCT pieces like this, you need to impress with your knowledge in an exam)
- Put careful thought into adding or describing the appropriate articulation, tempo and dynamic performance markings to compositions (and give explanations for such decisions in the logs)
- Don't listen to 20th C works in preparation for the composition in WCT style....showing a disregard for the conventions of the WCT will lose marks

Response to the set briefs

The set briefs allowed candidates quite a lot of freedom and there were many interpretations in terms of the particular style, ranging from Bachian counterpoint to Chopinesque-style pieces. Responses to briefs 2 and 4 were, predictably, the most 'structurally sound'. Here also, some had completed the incorrect briefs, choosing the WJEC rather than the Eduqas. Centres need to check this in a timely manner, preferably as soon as the briefs are released (September).

Brief 1: [Compose a musical prelude as incidental music for a County Youth theatre production of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'].

There were some excellent responses here, with a good number of candidates choosing to write for large symphonic and chamber orchestral forces. At times, such resources were handled extremely well, but other candidates were out of their depth. The strongest outcomes in this category were equally impressive, with the most effective noting the themes from the play and composing accordingly, as leitmotifs were featured and used to structure the working. It was clear that many candidates had done a great deal of personal research and investigation into the plot of 'Macbeth' and had successfully associated their thematic ideas to represent different plot lines and/or characters in the play.

There were instances when compositions had clearly been 'forced' into this brief, as candidates attempted to adapt their work to fit. Many of the pieces were 'programmatic' in nature, whilst some were structured in sonata or ternary form. There was a definite leaning towards a Romantic style, but some were considered to be too film-like / 20th C in style. One candidate submitted a composition which was totally 20thC in style – this was considered totally inappropriate (even though it would have scored well as the 'free' composition). Such outcomes were not considered as convincing (or even appropriate) responses to the brief as in some cases, the outcome bore little resemblance to the ideas of the play. This affected the assessment.

Brief 2: [Compose a piece in ternary form intended for inclusion in a chamber music concert at the local music college.]

Unsurprisingly, this was the most popular choice of brief (possibly suggesting that candidates felt more secure relating to a set form or structure. Selected instrumentation covered string and wind ensembles of varying types, orchestra, and ensemble with harpsichord; noted influences ranged from Purcell, Bach, Telemann and Vivaldi through the Classical, and to the Romantic eras. The best responses were excellent, organised, mature and extremely musical, while less convincing pieces were simplistic, repetitive (especially the 2nd A section), and harmonically restricted. Some candidates found it difficult to create a successful contrasting B section, and this affected the coherency of the outcome; in other compositions, the repeat of the A section tended to bear no resemblance to the first A section, which was even less convincing. Some candidates opted to write in sonata form / modified sonata form – with mixed results: the best work displayed mature handling of harmony and tonality, excellent development of thematic material and idiomatic writing for instruments; at the other end of the spectrum, the work lacked distinctive thematic material which then impacted on the potential for further development. Some candidates chose to write in Minuet and Trio form, which perhaps prevented some candidates from developing the material as much as they could have done; while demonstrating a good understanding of the form and WCT style – the work lacked musical maturity.

Brief 3: [Compose a choral piece for an Easter or Spring concert].

This was the least popular choice, and despite weaknesses of word-setting and lack of sensitivity when writing for vocal ranges, the efforts were mostly suitable and demonstrated appropriate control. Some candidates had undertaken thorough preparation to research appropriate text here. Certain examiners felt that some candidates seemed to write the music first and then attempted to fit the text in afterwards...not advisable!). Compositions were mainly directed at SATB groups, though some added obbligato parts for flute or violin – other pieces were accompanied by basso continuo or organ, some were unaccompanied. It would appear that one centre approached this as a class task, which included them setting the same text and writing in the same style; whilst there were some very good outcomes, overall, they were considered to be a little unimaginative and lacking individual creativity. Examiners reported of some impressive live performances of the choral pieces, where the harmonic content, textural variation, management of vocal resources and control of phrases and word-setting was skilfully handled – well done!

Brief 4: [Compose an instrumental piece in theme and variation form, to be performed by instrumentalists in a Young Composers competition organized by the County].

This was another fairly popular choice, with many different types of groups and solo works, having been influenced by a diverse range of composers across the WCT. Candidates were required to compose their own theme – unfortunately a number of these were overly complicated and lacked a solid music idea; owing to this, they latterly faced difficulties in terms of the variation. Some did not necessarily follow typical variation techniques to produce a suitable outcome in line with the WCT style, others offered rather unusual interpretations of the brief. Mozart' Piano Sonata no.16 had been stated as an influence on many candidates' work.

Reminder: Any composition **not** in the WCT for the set brief was awarded **0 marks**. (This year we received examples of film, rock, pop, jazz....) – and some compositions unfortunately fell into this category. **Other compositions lost marks as they offered no more than ‘a limited response’**. The lack of awareness of the correct styling for the WCT inevitably had a knock-on effect for assessment in the ‘Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements’. There were also a small number of candidates who listened to too many 20th century works for inspiration (as noted in their logs and including such examples as Tippett, Shostakovich, Britten and ragtime), resulting in an ‘inconsistent’ response to their chosen WCT brief.

Free Composition

The free compositions were outcomes which reflected the candidates’ musical interests – always good to see. In this first year of awarding the new specification, the compositions seemed to cover all kinds of music and occasions, instruments and influences. Types of instrumental groups included orchestra, jazz ensembles, solo piano and solo instruments accompanied by piano, brass quintets, an ‘Elf’ overture for sleigh bells and glockenspiel, the usual rock/pop/jazz ensembles, and a recorder quartet – to identify just some. The occasions noted were inventive and included a radio station, musical theatre, film music (including sci-fi, adventure and mystery), music for the Royal Court, numerous concerts (including the jazz and Latin variety), a church organ recital, a ballroom dance, a reggae festival and 80s synth pop. Notable influences included all the twentieth century ‘isms’, as well as Miles Davis, Bob Marley, Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone, John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Latin American music, Albeniz and De Falla, Copland, Vaughn Williams, Poulenc, Messiaen and Varese, Blondie, Thin Lizzy, Gary Numan, Ultravox and Oasis! The music was sophisticated in many compositions, with elements of thematic organisation and sensible development – skilful, coherent and imaginative work which was a pleasure to listen to.

The more successful compositions showed a good understanding for their chosen instruments and genre, fluency and direction in their melodies and effective development of both thematic and textural ideas – such outcomes were easily commensurate with top band assessment. However, the weaker or mid-range compositions tended to be either too simplistic or lacking in phrase structure and sensible harmony, presenting rambling melodies and offering little in the way of development.

A number of examiners felt that the general standards in the free compositions were of a higher quality than the WCT pieces – others would disagree! Though some of the pieces at the very top end of the assessment banding had tiny moments of inconsistency, there were many pieces which accessed the top band of marks with ease. From choral and solo vocal music through to chamber music and orchestral writing, there was a wealth of imaginative and creative ideas in evidence, backed up in many cases by a competent and often sophisticated control of resources. Obviously, many centres allow their candidates to be creative and play to their strengths, yet still offer sound support and guidance/scaffolding for candidates that require it. A few centres, however, still set the same brief for all candidates in their classes and this occasionally resulted in work which shared similar ideas and working.

There were some truly outstanding Musical Theatre songs which wouldn’t sound out of place in the West End, some very successful rock, pop or folk songs and choral works. Soul/country songs were often excellent, and there were a number of candidates who described themselves as ‘singer songwriters’ who moved away from their usual vocal and guitar/piano/ukulele and produced some excellent ‘backing tracks’ to sing to. Lyrics were mostly suitable, although there were a few instances of language considered inappropriate for examination purposes.

There were lots of piano solos (e.g. Waltzes, Nocturnes and other 'miniatures') where, as with the WCT pieces, examiners noted a clear sense of the chosen style, competent handling of harmony and a pleasing attempt to develop ideas. There were also pieces where the ideas were good but quickly became repetitive in terms of texture (often pieces that candidates had stated were influenced by Impressionist Music or Einaudi).

There were some impressive jazz/ funk style compositions where candidates demonstrated an excellent knowledge of jazz harmonization and rhythm (a minority of similar pieces were heavily reliant on the 12 bar blues progression with no clear variation from this). Equally, a large number of candidates chose to write in a film music style – often with successful results, though some fell into the trap of over-using basic repetition. The strongest film music pieces had detailed explanation of the plot/action outlined clearly on the score and on the log. There were candidates who offered a youtube clip to accompany the score, which was very helpful in the examining process. It was clear in these cases that the candidates had thought carefully about the images and action they were trying to depict, and therefore the material was appropriate and of better quality. A generic 'film music' brief usually resulted in a less successful outcome.

For candidates following the extended composition, results were varied; it seems that some follow the unit through the genuine interest and ability in composing, and others because they perhaps couldn't complete an extended unit in performing. However, most of these candidates were genuine and successful in their attempt to compose logical and relevant compositions, with many scoring within the top band. Only very few remained in band 3 or 2 generally.

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COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

Centres are to be congratulated on their successful completion of the first year of the A level qualification. It is appreciated how much work goes into the preparation of candidates for this component, and the comments in this report are intended to give feedback and help centres prepare for future examinations.

Overall, the average (mean) mark for questions on AoS B (Rock and Pop) was lower than that for AoSs C (Musical Theatre) and D (Jazz), which were quite similar.

Area of Study B: Rock and Pop

This AoS was least frequently answered out of AoSs B, C and D, perhaps owing to its relatively wide span of time compared to the others.

- Q.1
- (a) Time signatures were generally found, including the irregular 7 beat one.
 - (b) Many identified Saxophone, but failed to include Tenor, thereby not gaining the mark.
 - (c) Many correctly identified Minor (or Modal).
 - (d) Answers were not specific or indeed, accurate enough here, candidates not homing in on precise features of the music itself, but describing general bass playing techniques instead.
 - (e) Candidates found this question challenging, answers on harmony needing more precision and accuracy. When the Blues idiom was recognised, suitable chords were included, but unfortunately, some answers were not on harmony at all.
 - (f) This was usually answered well, responses being within the 10-year time span granted.
- Q.2
- (a) This time signature was correctly identified in the vast majority of answers.
 - (b) The number of chords used (four) was less successfully identified.
 - (c) This was usually accurately answered.
 - (d) Surprising few answers correctly identified Triplet, answers often not describing a rhythmic feature as requested in the question.
 - (e) Whilst some answers identified where backing singers occurred, they did not describe their use as asked in the question. Alternatively, sometimes answers correctly described the backing singing (Gospel, and even specifically mentioning Hare Krishna), but failed to support observations with line numbers as requested.

- (f) This question was disappointingly answered, candidates not pinpointing detail of the music played by upper or lower strings and at what points. Answers were very general.
- (g) This was well answered, most candidates identifying Gong or Tamtam.
- (h) Whilst there were some convincing answers, a recurrent fault was that responses failed to do what the question asked: compare the **second** version with the first. Instead, candidates often spent time simply describing features of the extracts, or comparing the first extract with the second instead. Where no comparison was included, answers could not access the full range of marks available.

An example of good answering practice would be “the sound is more ‘produced’ in the second extract”. This way of answering gives a comparative response, giving detail of the second extract and does not focus on the first extract.

It is possible to answer this question in tabulated form, bullet points or prose as long as the above approach is fulfilled. Answers which did not score highly often did so because:

- They were very generalised and narrative, with little concrete information
- They focused on a few points only obsessively
- They listed every possible musical feature, sometimes contradicting themselves and not referring to line numbers to clarify.

Further practice in answering technique for this question would be helpful. Where comparison answers did concentrate on extract two, some perceptive details of style were noted.

Area of Study C: Musical Theatre

This was the most frequently answered AoS between AoSs B, C and D.

- Q.3
- (a) Many accurately identified the irregular time signature.
 - (b) The Tenor (or Baritone) voice was usually identified accurately.
 - (c) Answers did not home in on melodic features as requested here, not being precise or detailed enough.
 - (d) Many correctly identified the sequence (or circle of fifths).
 - (e) There was much to point out in the piano writing and where precise detail was highlighted and accurately located with line numbers, answers scored well. Unfortunately, there were some answers that were too general or identified accurate features, but did not say where they occurred, thus forfeiting the marks.
 - (f) This was well answered.
 - (g) A wide variety of people were suggested here (including one that suggested ‘Julian’ Lloyd Webber!) but pleasingly many did identify Schwartz.

- Q.4 (a) (i) & (ii) These were generally well answered., the time signatures identified.
- (b) Many answers identified sequence correctly.
- (c) This was well answered, with candidates pointing out a variety of rhythmic features.
- (d) Well answered, the major tonality being identified.
- (e) This question was not so successfully answered, responses lacking precision and line references. Candidates sometimes looked for changes to minor, where it was modulations to higher or lower major keys that needed identifying.
- (f) Years from quite a wide time scale were offered, though only answers within a 10-year span around the correct year, 1981 were accepted. Candidates should guard against writing answers such as “1980s”; a specific year is required.
- (g) As with the comparison question on AoS B, whilst there were some convincing answers, a recurrent fault was that responses failed to do what the question asked: compare the **second** version with the first. Instead, candidates often spent time simply describing features of the extracts, or comparing the first extract with the second instead. Where no comparison was included, answers could not access the full range of marks available.

An example of good answering practice would be “more use of extended ‘jazz’ style chords with added 6ths and 7ths in extract 2”. This way of answering gives a comparative response, giving detail of the second extract and does not focus on the first extract.

It is possible to answer this question in tabulated form, bullet points or prose as long as the above approach is fulfilled. Answers which did not score highly often did so because:

- They were very generalised and narrative, with little concrete information
- They focused on a few points only obsessively
- They listed every possible musical feature, sometimes contradicting themselves and not referring to line numbers to clarify.

Further practice in answering technique for this question would be helpful. Where comparison answers did concentrate on extract two, some perceptive details of style were noted.

Area of Study D: Jazz

This was the second most frequently answered Area of Study out of B, C and D and generally engendered good responses overall.

- Q.5
- (a) Quite well answered, though some did not pick up on the 12-Bar Blues format and its characterising harmonies.
 - (b) Where marks were lost here, it was usually because the type of saxophone (tenor) was not specified.
 - (c) Many correctly identified the interval as a 6th.
 - (d) Some perceptive comments on the piano playing were made, though some answers scored less highly because they did not include detail – e.g. which hand had the melody.
 - (e) Many correctly identified the style as “cool Jazz”. Not quite so many gave a convincing reason why it was though.
- Q.6
- (a) Not many picked up on the pentatonic scale used.
 - (b) This was well answered, many identifying the use of sequence of circle of fifths.
 - (c) Again, marks were lost by the omission of “alto” in the answer “alto saxophone”.
 - (d) This question clearly asked candidates to corroborate their observations by referring to specific line numbers. Answers that failed to do this could not earn the marks. Lack of precise detail and location resulted in many general responses which did not score highly.
 - (e) Quite a few spotted the use of AABA form, but very few indeed did what the question asked and identified the form of the whole song, which was AABA AABA BA.
 - (f) As with the comparison question on AoS B and C, whilst there were some convincing answers, a recurrent fault was that responses failed to do what the question asked: compare the **second** version with the first. Instead, candidates often spent time simply describing features of the extracts, or comparing the first extract with the second instead. Where no comparison was included, answers could not access the full range of marks available.

An example of good answering practice would be “a smaller orchestra (quintet) used in extract 2”. This way of answering gives a comparative response, giving detail of the second extract and does not focus on the first extract.

It is possible to answer this question in tabulated form, bullet points or prose as long as the above approach is fulfilled. Answers which did not score highly often did so because:

- They were very generalised and narrative, with little concrete information
- They focused on a few points only obsessively
- They listed every possible musical feature, sometimes contradicting themselves and not referring to line numbers to clarify.

Area of Study E: Into the Twentieth Century

By far, this area of study was the most frequently answered out of the choice of AoS E or AoS F. However, the standard of marks gained was similar.

In general, the level of detail required for the highest answers on the prescribed works (Debussy and Beamish) was more than candidates seem to realise. As a score is available for reference in the examination, and the work has been studied over the past two years, it is to be expected that answers should demonstrate precise detail supported by bar/beat references, accurate technical terminology and clear analytical awareness. Whilst there were some very convincing responses that conveyed thorough understanding, there were quite a lot that were too general, only highlighting the most obvious features.

- Q.7 (a) Some convincing answers highlighting the use of 6/4 and 4/4, syncopation and unusual groupings, but it was not sufficient just to state that the music used triplets. There appeared to be some confusion in candidates' minds as to the difference between metre/rhythm and tempo, some erroneously making points about the latter.
- (b) (i) Most answers identified the correct location for the previous appearance of the melody, though some misread the question and stated where it first appeared rather than where it appeared in the form asked for.
- (ii) This question was not very well answered on the whole, candidates not homing in on the comparative detail in the accompaniments of the two sections and how they differ. There was sometimes a lack of clarity as to which section was being referred to.
- (c) Most answers correctly identified fragmentation; less identified appoggiatura.
- (d) This was generally well answered, candidates showing a convincing awareness of what features help create a sense of "coda". As there were three marks available, it was always a pity when only one or two facts were included.
- (e) It was clear that candidates had an idea of the different ways in which this movement could be considered, structurally, most referring to aspects of "rotational form" and/or ternary form. The detail to which these structures were supported by accurate detail varied widely though. Full mark answers revealed a secure grasp of where the internal sections were, how they were constructed, the relationships between the sections and how Debussy's use of these structures differed from accepted norms. Low scoring answers often dwelt on programmatic links or erroneously stated Debussy did not use any form.
- Q.8 (a) Surprisingly few answered this correctly, seeming not to hear the opening's monophonic texture.
- (b) Many answers were restricted to differences between major and minor tonality without giving any further detail (such as use of chromatic harmony, dissonance, cadences).
- (c) There was generally successful identification of instruments, though not complete security in differentiating between tuned and untuned percussion instruments.

- (d) Answers lacked precise, accurate detail here with very few gaining three marks. Most referred to the greater emphasis on woodwind (though not always stating which) instruments.
- (e) This was not well answered, candidates failing to identify a precise feature, or stating a feature that was not present, often a perfect cadence.
- (f) Most correctly identified the composer as Prokofiev.
- (g) This was a question that engendered the full range of answers, though few that scored full marks. There were a number of reasons why answers did not score higher:
 - They did not discuss form/structure
 - They referred to a work that was different in style from the extract given
 - They referred to a work that was outside the time period (e.g Haydn Symphony 104)
 - They did not specify what work or movement of the work they were referring to

It would be well for further practice to be undertaken on this question which asks candidates to refer to the treatment of an aspect in a work studied (not a set work in future) in either neo-classical, impressionist, expressionist or serialist style.

Area of Study F: Into the Twenty-First Century

- Q.9
- (a) Most, but not all, correctly identified the section.
 - (b) There were some accurate answers to this question.
 - (c) Most answers gave a convincing feature about the violin melody.
 - (d) This question was not very well answered, candidates often not showing a harmonic understanding that reflected detailed study.
 - (e) This was quite well answered, most scoring at least one of the two marks available, mostly for 8ve/unison rather than free inversion.
 - (f) Answers here lacked precise accurate detail being generally quite cursory and not reflecting the depth of analytical understanding one would hope for in responses after two years study of the work.
 - (g) Few answers scored the highest marks available, many not including enough points on metre/rhythm or erroneously discussing tempo instead. Some identified examples of syncopation, but few picked upon the precise nature of the irregular groupings of beats within bars.
- Q.10
- (a) Surprisingly few identified the use of mutes here.
 - (b) This question was not strongly answered, candidates not picking out precise features of harmony in the section asked for, unfortunately.
 - (c) Again, whilst there were general comments, there was a lack of precision and detail evident in descriptions of the melodic line played by the woodwind. Some answers were not relevant to the particular part asked for.

- (d) Rather general responses which did not home in on specific differences between the two sections asked for.
- (e) Again, whilst there were some pleasing answers which highlighted details (such as the connection with motifs heard earlier, or subsequent statements moving downwards) other answers tended to describe playing techniques rather than describing features of the music itself.
- (f) Not many correctly identified the work as a symphony.
- (g) This question was not strongly answered on the whole, though there were some very pleasing exceptions. Some reasons why answers failed to gain marks were:
 - They did not discuss form/structure
 - They referred to a work that was similar in style from the extract given rather than different as asked in the question
 - They referred to a work that was outside the time period (e.g Haydn Symphony 104)
 - They did not specify what work or movement of the work they were referring to

It would be well for further practice to be undertaken on this question which asks candidates to refer to the treatment of an aspect in a work studied (not a set work in future).

Area of Study A: The Western classical Tradition

This AoS was well answered overall with the majority of candidates answering on Haydn for the analysis question rather than Mendelssohn. It was evident that candidates had often gained a very secure understanding of their symphonic set work and there were many very good answers.

- Q.11
- (a) This proved to be the worst answered question in the whole paper! There was only a handful of candidates that correctly identified the V9 chord here.
 - (b) There was a range of marks here, as is usually the case with dictation. However, as there are equal marks available for both pitch and rhythm, it does behoove candidates to ensure that the rhythms they write add up to the correct number of beats.
 - (c) A range of responses were present here too, with the identification of the rhythmic error generally more frequently correct than that of pitch. It should be borne in mind that it is usually two notes that are affected if one note value is changed, and both need to be identified and corrected by the candidate in order to gain the maximum marks – one for identifying the erroneous notes and one for correcting them accurately. As there are four marks available for this question, it is certainly worth practising technique.

Haydn Symphony no 104, movement 3.

- Q.12 (a) Many answers correctly identified the form as rounded binary.
- (b) The key of B minor was usually correctly identified.
- (c) Not many candidates found the correct location for all three features. It is important to remember to give the ending bar/beat numbers as well as the starting ones for features such as circle of fifths or hemiola.
- (d) This question was well answered, responses showing a convincing grasp of the stylistic differences between the minuet and the trio sections. The best answers were detailed, points made supported with precise locations where possible.
- (e) For those candidates that had studied the harmonic analysis of this section, it was a straightforward question, requiring candidates to name the chords used with detail and accuracy. There were many very high scoring responses. Unfortunately, it became clear very quickly, if students had not developed a secure grasp of the harmonic content, with answers not identifying individual chords or progressions accurately. Some answers lost marks unnecessarily by failing to support answers with precise bar/beat numbers as asked in in the question.

Mendelssohn Symphony no 4, movement 3.

- Q.13 (a) Many answers correctly identified the section as the codetta.
- (b) The key was usually correctly identified.
- (c) Most answers identified at least one of the features but for answers requiring an ending point too (e.g. circle of fifths), answers that only gave the start were not convincing. The position specified in the question needs to be heeded too.
- (d) This was well answered overall, candidates highlighting differences between the minuet and trio in many areas such as tonality, texture, sonority, melody, rhythm and structure.
- (e) There were varying answers here, with some responses conveying a secure grasp of harmonic content, whilst others were less convincing. Some answers identified individual chords accurately but failed to put these into context by seeing them as part of specific progressions. General comments or answers unsupported by bar/beat numbers did not gain credit.
- Q.14 Examiners reported reading some very informative essays which showed accurate knowledge about technical developments in wind and brass and how these affected the music written for them. The best answers demonstrated a good balance of contextual understanding (in this case, including reference to natural brass, the rise of subscription concerts and increase in the size of ensembles) and also a secure knowledge of precise details from a range of symphonic works covering the entire period.

In some cases, essays were imbalanced due to candidates spending too long on the earlier symphonies, running out of time to discuss later Romantic works. Some answers contained a disproportionate amount of detail on the Haydn and Mendelssohn set works at the expense of other works. Indeed, in a few cases, only the set works were discussed.

Candidates need to guard against spending time discussing repertoire that is out of the time period. Whilst some reference to Baroque precursors was understandable, to describe such repertoire in detail is not relevant and often took up valuable time, meaning later repertoire was not included.

There were some responses that were very general, not referring to any specific music or indeed composers. There was also evidence of “learned” answers which, whilst containing some accurate information, did not answer the particular question set, missing out vital points about the development of wind instruments and how this was reflected in the music. Such answers did not score well.



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