

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Music

A Level

Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

The 2025 Eduqas A Level Music Principal Examiners' Report provides comprehensive insights into candidate performance across the three assessment components: Performing, Composing, and Appraising. For Component 1 (Performing), most candidates gave confident live performances, often supported by skilled accompanists, and demonstrated strong musical engagement. However, issues persisted with adherence to minimum time requirements, misjudged backing track usage, and programming choices that occasionally lowered difficulty ratings. Exam administration was generally smooth, although some centres submitted incomplete or incorrect paperwork, and inconsistent standards were noted in the quality of musical scores and equipment setup.

Component 2 (Composing) revealed a broad range of creative output, with many candidates producing imaginative and stylistically aware pieces. Compositions responding to the Western Classical briefs showed marked improvement, though some submissions diverged into unsuitable modern genres, undermining their responses. Logs were mostly thorough but often missed detailing candidate influences or the development journey. Problems also surfaced in mislabelling compositions and uploading inaccessible or incomplete files. The strongest compositions demonstrated coherent structure, mature use of musical elements, and clarity of purpose, especially when supported by live recordings and annotated scores. However, candidates sometimes submitted pieces lacking development or stylistic understanding, and brief writing for free-choice works was frequently vague or omitted.

Component 3 (Appraising) presented a varied picture, with some candidates excelling in specific areas such as set works and essays, while others struggled with unprepared listening and aural dictation. The compulsory Western Classical Tradition area saw most candidates opt for Haydn, though performance across questions remained inconsistent. Common errors included imprecise identification of melodic intervals and chord types, vague descriptions of texture or sonority, and a tendency to focus on irrelevant features. Comparison questions highlighted a lack of specificity in responses, especially regarding melodic detail and structural awareness. Essays demonstrated a full spectrum of quality, with higher marks awarded for detailed engagement with repertoire across the full 1750–1900 range, while weaker essays lacked breadth or misunderstood key musical concepts.

Across all components, administrative challenges included misclassification of candidates between Option A and B, failure to upload correct materials, and incomplete documentation. Knowledge gaps were evident in areas such as stylistic awareness, musical terminology, and contextual understanding, and some candidates displayed limited compositional or analytical skill. Despite this, the overall tone of the report is encouraging, recognising impressive work and providing targeted recommendations to support future improvements.

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COMPONENT 1: PERFORMING

Overview of the Component

Component 1 is assessed by Visiting Examiners who visit centres between March and May, assessing live performances.

Candidates in A Level Option A must perform at least 3 pieces giving a combined total of 10-12 minutes, and candidates in A Level Option B are required to present at least 2 pieces giving a combined total of 6-8 minutes.

The standard level of difficulty is Grade 6 at A Level.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Once again, a warm welcome was given to all examiners. The majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live.

Timing:

There were still some issues with candidates not performing for the minimum time again this year. Please note that the visiting examiners time from the start of the candidate's first note to the end of the candidate's final note of each individual piece performed. Short rests, which are written into the work by the composer in order to give the performer a rest, would be included in the time. However, if there were long periods when the candidate was not performing (eg) a DC return to a long introduction, a 2nd verse in a duet which is sung by another singer, or a 32 bar break for solo piano in a jazz piece, or other long interludes when the candidate is not performing, these would not be included in the time. Centres should carefully check the timings of each piece (allowing for a slightly quicker performance on the day due to nerves) but should not enter these timings on the mark sheet. The visiting examiner will be responsible for timing the individual pieces as they are performed, live. Please note that, when using a Backing Track, the length of the candidate's performance is not the total length given of the track.

I should also like to mention the following when giving consideration to the candidate's choice of programme:

Live accompanist v Backing Track:

In most cases, and if at all possible, the flexibility and support afforded by a live accompanist, is preferable to using a Backing Track. Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

Missing Backing Tracks:

On a few occasions this year, candidates have chosen to perform pieces which require a backing track WITHOUT the necessary Backing Track, resulting in the candidate accompanying a vocal which is not heard or resulting in some silences which would be filled by the track. This is musically unsatisfactory.

Performing Extracts:

Performing extracts of pieces can be musically unsatisfactory and can devalue the concept of the recital.

Page turners and audiences:

Do arrange for a page turner if this is necessary or helpful to the candidate. There is no restriction on others, whether members of staff, students or parents and friends, being in the examination room as long as all mobile phones are turned off, and the examiner is not overlooked and can conduct the examination properly. Nobody, other than the examiner, is permitted to make any recording of the examination, and there must also be no “live streaming of performances.”

Unaccompanied pieces:

Once again, the physical support given by an accompanist is preferable to a candidate being “out on their own”. Whilst we realise that unaccompanied pieces, in particular, studies, often form part of the repertoire of many public exam boards, these are not always suitable for this examination. There are exceptions, of course, such as the JS Bach unaccompanied violin or cello works, but these should only be programmed by the most accomplished candidates.

Performances given from memory:

Although this is to be commended, it is not a requirement of this exam. The examiner will allow a restart but not a second attempt. If a breakdown occurs well into the performance, “picking it up” is sometimes an issue when there is no score to refer to.

Second instrument or voice:

As this is not a requirement of the exam, there is no advantage to be gained by performing on more than one instrument or voice. Candidates should only perform on more than one if both are of an equivalent standard.

Administration, Paperwork and Preparation:

In most cases, the administration and timetabling of the examinations was excellent with many centres providing running orders. In the case of longer sessions at colleges and where there are consortium arrangements between centres, please continue to build into your timetables comfort breaks for the examiners. Allowing 15 minutes, possibly 20 minutes for the longer recitals, for each candidate seems ideal in most cases. Please be aware of school bells and tannoy announcements which may impact on your candidate’s performance. If at all possible, please timetable AS and A level examinations separately.

Please note that examiners may arrive up to 30 minutes before the examinations are due to commence in order to set up and ensure a prompt start. Thank you for reserving a parking space for the visiting examiner, especially if you are aware that parking is an issue at your centre.

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.

Candidates’ full names, rather than shortened forms or nicknames, should be entered on the forms. 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 include the names of composers, in addition to the titles of the pieces to be performed.

Examination rooms were, on the whole, fit for purpose. Please ensure that the instruments used, particularly the pianos, are in good working order (including the pedals) and have been recently tuned and take care with the positioning of upright pianos. 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.

Most candidates provided copies of their music for the examiners. Photocopies of the originals on A4 paper need to be made as the examiners will take these away at the end of the session. Please ensure these are complete and in order, and 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 melody line has been added to lead sheets rather than just 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. When using a backing track, please ensure that the track is a true backing track, with the candidate's part omitted, not a complete recording which includes the part the candidate is performing. Backing tracks should not be streamed live from the internet but should be downloaded and checked. In some instances, extracts from works were performed. It should be noted that the playing of extracts will, in most cases, lead to **a lowering of the level of difficulty** for the work performed.

There is no requirement to perform an ensemble at AS or A level but some candidates choose to include an ensemble piece in their programmes. 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. Teachers and candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.

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. Audible click tracks are not permitted. However, if a backing track is used by the candidate, through headphones, it must also be audible to the examiner (without the click). 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. Best practice includes rehearsing the performances "in situ", giving careful consideration to the position of the candidate in relation to the accompanist and the examiner. Try to create the sense of occasion by involving other students and use this as an opportunity to check all the equipment which will be used. Give careful consideration to the position of an audience if present on the day, behind, and not encroaching on, the examiner, especially considering the recording equipment the examiner is using. As per examination guidelines, there should be no mobile phones present in the examination room (other than that being used by the examiner as a timer, which is preset to Airplane Mode.)

Please carry-out sound checks in advance of the examination

In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound-checked in advance allowing the examination to proceed without hold-ups. Take care with the positioning of microphones and consider carefully whether microphones need to be used for an acoustic performance, especially in a small room or classroom.

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.

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COMPONENT 2: COMPOSING

Overview of the Component

Component 2 assesses AO2 in its entirety. The total mark for option A is 72 and learners submit two compositions which must have a total duration of between 4 and 6 minutes. One composition is in response to a brief set by Eduqas. Where a learner does not respond to this brief, demonstrating clear aspects of the Western Classical style, the composition will be unlikely to achieve the higher mark bands as it will not be an adequate response to the set brief. Learners set their own brief for the other composition, which must contain details of either the occasion or the audience for which the piece is being composed and extra musical information. The total mark for option B is 108 and learners submit three compositions which must have a total duration of between 8 and 10 minutes. In addition to the requirements of option A, learners must complete an additional composition which reflects the musical characteristics of a different area of study. Each composition is marked out of 36.

Learners are advised to consider the requirements of the marking criteria when planning and composing their music. The following are assessed:

- creating musical ideas (including musical ideas, structure and the response to the given/chosen brief)
- developing musical ideas (including organisation of thematic material, use of compositional techniques and the combination of musical elements to provide a coherent result)
- technical and expressive control of the musical elements (including communication of ideas, musical understanding and the control of chosen resources, including the use of music technology where appropriate)

The overall standards of candidates' work this year spanned a broad range and there were a large number who deserved full marks for their innovation, imagination and musicality. Only some compositions contained limited musical content and a lack of organisation regarding musical development. Some of the compositions included had inconsistent musical ideas and required more organisation in order to demonstrate worthwhile development. These band 2 compositions showed some expressive control and musical understanding but it was felt by all examiners that more stylistic awareness was required for these pieces in order to enhance the use of elements of music. Many mid-range submissions were well-structured and employed a variety of compositional techniques. There were also many impressive compositions which showcased excellent musical ideas, organised development and refined control of the musical elements. Centres must highlight the marking criteria bands at the start of the process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Uploading Work

It is essential that centres double check that work is accessible before uploading to surpass which will help the examining process. In addition, this year, some candidates were entered for option A instead of option B or vice versa – please check the information carefully with examination officers before uploading to surpass and that each candidate has completed the correct log form. Overall, the administration was quite good this year but there were still a large number of files that were either missing or would not open and some compositions were labelled incorrectly. It is important to note that composition one is in response to the set brief and composition two is a free choice piece for option A learners. For option B learners, composition one is in response to the set brief, composition two needs to be linked to a different area of study and composition three is a free choice piece.

Candidate Logs

The main requirements of the log are to outline the process of development and refinement on the composing journey. The examiners need to understand the creative process of the composition which should include the reasons for musical choices and advice provided by the teacher in order to track progress. All examiners stated that a large number of candidates did not mention influences in their logs which can give insight into the thought process of the candidate. Most logs were completed to a high standard and the vast majority of all teacher and candidate signatures were authenticated. Many logs featured overly detailed analysis of the compositions with diary-style explanations but sometimes these did not always equate to high quality compositions. A minority of candidates included hardly any information about the composition process and it was difficult to assess at times. For additional compositions, candidates must remember to write their own brief(s) in the correct place(s) in the log. Part of the criteria for this unit is how effectively the candidate has responded to briefs so they must be specific and should include style, ensemble, mood, type of work *etc.*

There were a minority of candidates who used material already in existence without citing this in the log document. It is essential for candidates to provide details of any musical ideas which are not their own work and to explain how the recording was produced accurately. It is positive to seek inspiration from other composers but please remember that the first column of the criteria is about creating musical ideas and it must be noted that if an existing theme is used in a composition, it will have an impact on the final marks achieved (e.g. for a theme and variation piece it would be beneficial to compose an original theme). More information is needed for live performances of compositions where a score is not provided. Candidates, where appropriate must explain clearly how they taught the music to other performers and an additional guide track or keyboard guide must be submitted with the clear intentions of the candidate being assessed. There were some instances where the candidate told the performer to play along and embellish or improvise which cannot be included in the marking process as it is not the work of the candidate. Examiners can request Eduqas to contact the centre for further information if the role of the composer is unclear.

Scores and Recordings

Lead sheets were of a good quality this year and helped the examining process overall. Scores or written descriptions should be uploaded as an additional file and not copied into the log. A minority of candidates submitted scores which lacked musical detail regarding performance directions (e.g. dynamics, tempo, articulation). It was also commented by examiners that many compositions did not even have a title which is necessary in order to establish the context for certain pieces. Most candidates, however, provided clear scores or commentaries and it was pleasing that there were more examples of screenshots which were more efficiently annotated this year. Often, instrument names were not specified on the score and at times these had to be identified from the logs. Many scores included helpful labelling of sections, compositional techniques and motivic development above particular bars but this is not a requirement for this unit of the qualification. Please remember that if a score is not provided, the candidate needs to complete a written description of the composition accompanied by an outline of the melody and chords used (i.e. a screenshot from Garageband does not help the examining process without annotated information).

There were more examples of live realisations this year but it is important to clarify that the compositions were assessed and not the performances, hence audio containing inconsequential errors in pitch and rhythm for live realisations were not taken into account when assessing. It is interesting to note that some candidates uploaded live audio and computer-generated audio as a choice to ensure the realisation was as accurate as possible. While there is no need to perform compositions live, it brought the pieces to life. Candidates are applauded for their extra commitment. Examples of songs where the voice was generated from a computer programme had less impact than live songs and it was felt by examiners that candidates should have added a recording of the vocals over the computer audio for a more enhanced outcome. The quality of recordings was generally excellent but there were some issues with the balance of individual parts at times so it is advised to check recordings before uploading the work. In addition, audio files from certain centres were very quiet and it was difficult to listen to the track.

Composition Briefs in a Western Classical Style

With one exception, candidates selected one of the four A level set briefs and the majority of candidates composed in a Baroque, Classical or Romantic style. This was a big improvement from previous years. However, there were still a minority of candidates that used influences by 20th century and 21st century composers to create a piece in a modern style. This resulted in the response to the brief being inadequate and did not illustrate the understanding of the musical language, techniques and conventions of either the Baroque, Classical or Romantic eras. Some compositions were quite cinematic and could be classed as late romantic but others were submitted in rock, pop and musical theatre styles which caused issues for examiners. Some compositions included unstylistic use of harmony which detracted from the idiomatic quality. It is important for candidates to research the stylistic features of specific eras and then candidates should create pieces using their own independent ideas. Creativity always flourishes when candidates choose their own briefs from the set list each year. It was sometimes noticeable that all candidates from individual centres selected the same brief. While it is understandable that teachers may want to focus on one specific brief as a teaching tool, outcomes are significantly better when candidates compose to their strengths (e.g. instruments, voices, styles etc.). We had several single pieces this year with durations of over 7 minutes which equated to the requirements for the whole option A folio. Though many of these compositions achieved full marks, there were a number of compositions which lacked clear focus and direction as the piece progressed. If shorter pieces contained advanced musical content, then the marks would not have been affected – there were excellent examples of a fugue which were quite short but were impressive when assessing with the composing criteria. No folios were considered to have been under time.

Brief 1: Create a piece of music demonstrating prominent use of anacrusis and polyphony to be performed at a gala concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London.

This was the least popular brief this year and it was felt that some compositions failed to pay enough attention to ensuring anacrusis and polyphony were a feature throughout the music. Some pieces were predominantly homophonic and opportunities were missed to include dialogue between the different musical parts and general contrast in the layers. There were some fugues for solo instrument and orchestral pieces presented which were fantastic, showing sophisticated understanding of these types of work and the thoughtful development of ideas were credited positively.

Brief 2: Compose music to be played at the start of a university graduation ceremony.

A large number of candidates chose this brief but it was less successful for candidates who composed in a cinematic style. Sometimes material deviated from the Western Classical style and some used familiar characteristics from film genres. Unfortunately, at times, melodic content had no fluency and there was a sense of rambling and monotony. Overall, this seemed an attractive and approachable brief to many candidates, the more competent of which utilised textural contrast and motivic development effectively to portray the grandeur of the ceremony. In many of the logs there were explanations of the ceremony at the start of the graduation which reflected on highs and lows with visions for the future of graduates. Other pieces failed to include suitable variation and development to fully enhance their compositions. Many candidates composed fanfares which fulfilled the composition criteria in a positive manner, however there were many who based fanfares on predictable tonic and dominant harmony only and were quite limited when developing thematic material throughout. Some candidates struggled to compose for large ensembles and often the writing for instruments was uncertain and insecure at times. Some of these ceremonial pieces were heavily influenced by composers such as Elgar in terms of style and structure.

Brief 3: Compose a choral piece with accompaniment to be performed at York Minster. You must include the words ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo’.

Text setting needed more care in these compositions and for many candidates, voice writing was entirely syllabic throughout. There was insufficient attention to the metre of the text and its stresses. There were missed opportunities to develop vocal writing as pieces could have progressed further using rhythmic and melodic innovation. Popular accompaniments included piano and organ but there were some excellent examples of orchestral accompaniments which added colour to the composition. Many piano accompaniments needed more detail in order to enhance and complement the choral content. There were more opportunities to use the designated words ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo’ more often in some compositions. A minority of compositions sounded too modern with post-1900 clashes between melody and harmony. Many centres spent the time recording live audio with their choral ensembles and this must be congratulated – please remember that live realisations are a choice and not a requirement – in exceptional circumstances, some candidates should have uploaded the computer-generated audio if it sounded more effective than the live version. It is always important to think about balance between vocal and instrumental accompaniment parts in the composition. Some compositions resembled a hymn structured with melody dominated homophony and were either in strophic form or too repetitive which limited the effective contrast throughout. It would have been more advantageous to write a new section, for example, in a different tonality with a more rhythmic melody and some use of countermelody.

Brief 4: Write an instrumental solo with accompaniment to be performed at the BBC Young Musician competition.

This was also a very popular brief. There were a range of instrumental combinations used but sonatas were the most popular with a piano accompaniment. Initial melodic ideas and harmonic progress within a clear form were executed productively from some candidates. Material was idiomatic of the Western Classical style and melodic content was very good from a number of candidates. Examiners felt that the accompaniments needed more colour at times; these pieces used a limited number of chords in root position and in addition some writing for piano was not particularly pianistic. Several compositions displayed virtuosic writing for the solo instrument and expressed high levels of musical understanding throughout the piece of music. Writing was exciting by several candidates and many included well planned cadenzas and very decorative ideas in a lyrical manner. More contrast was required from some candidates to vary sections with a wider range of compositional techniques and sufficient development.

Own Choice Briefs

It is important to raise the issue of some candidates either not writing a brief or not being specific of their intentions in the log for their 'own choice' composition(s). An important part of the composition criteria is to assess each candidate's response to the brief. Candidates must be clear about their own brief and give as much detail as possible to assist the examining process (e.g. style, theme, mood, occasion, audience etc.). There were a wide range of styles examined with some candidates preferring to write another piece also in a Baroque, Classical or Romantic style. Many free compositions were imaginative, and often scored higher than composition one, especially when candidates composed confidently in their preferred styles. Candidates should write to their strengths rather than conform to a limited choice of styles or genres in which they have no experience in performing or appraising. Once again, there were a wide range of styles included for the other composition(s), the most popular including heavy metal, rock, pop, world music, musical theatre, jazz and themes for television programmes and films. Music for video games was extremely popular this year and ranged from mature and exciting content to overly repetitive fragmented work. There were also interesting examples of candidates choosing other unique styles such as: folk, samba, big band, ragtime, fusion and electronic dance styles. Many candidates wanted to highlight climate change and the natural world in their pieces and one piece in particular used a section from a David Attenborough programme to bring certain animals to life with innovative musical ideas. Other candidates wrote in expressionist and impressionist styles and it was felt that the candidates should have researched the characteristics of this music in greater detail to ensure that, for example, melody, harmony, structure, texture and part writing was appropriate to the style. There were occasional positive outcomes from minimalist pieces but they sometimes lacked variety and sufficient development to access the higher mark bands in the related criteria. There were some sophisticated compositions created in experimental styles and the intentions were detailed in the log which was very helpful. Some candidates wrote briefs which did not help the examining process at all (e.g. compose a string quartet to be performed at a church). More details were required to describe the style, mood or structure so that effective judgements could be made regarding the response to the brief. There were some very well balanced and coherent compositions which showed excellent instrumental variety and interesting thematic material. Harmonic language was appropriate and melodies were fluent and lyrical within a coherent structure. Musical elements were effectively combined to produce competent compositions and there was effective control, as well as good responses to the chosen briefs. At times, when composing songs in a popular genre, a minority of candidates displayed material which was simplistic and overly repetitive throughout. The candidates composing the most successful examples of songs made every effort to add additional layers and enhance repeats of sections by using interesting developmental techniques.

It is not advisable to add countless repeat bars to sections because it can often highlight development in a negative manner. When creating drum kit and percussion parts in popular music, it was felt that there were countless patterns repeated and there were times when fills, breaks and other varied material could have been employed or even sections without percussion in contrast.

Once again, it is so important to write aims and objectives in the log so the examiner can understand if the response to the brief was effective (e.g. some examiners were assessing 'own choice' compositions in a Classical style and they were very dissonant which caused some questioning). Note in the log what is intentional. There was an element of predictability in some compositions, and also some erratic moments, where the music veered off in various directions, without reaching a sensible conclusion. Candidates must refer to Appendix B and Appendix C in the A level specification to encourage full understanding of the musical terminology in order to impress.

Option B Compositions linked to a different Area of Study

A number of pieces were highly mature and showed an excellent musical understanding of the different styles studied. There were effective musical ideas included and control of the musical elements for the rock and pop, musical theatre and jazz areas of study. More focus was needed on varying texture, appropriate harmonic progress and general development. For pieces that were composed in a twentieth/twenty-first century style it was agreed at times that more understanding of the genre was required to access marks in the higher bands. Candidates cannot compose three Western Classical pieces for option B. Some candidates chose Neo-Classicism as their focus for this composition but all of these pieces needed clarity and more emphasis on harmony and rhythm to fulfil the brief. Always research styles of music thoroughly before starting any compositions so you can plan accordingly. It is important for the centre to determine if candidates specialise in performing or composing in order to ensure the highest possible marks overall.

Assessment Criteria

Creating Musical Ideas

Generally, the structure of most pieces provided an adequate foundation for the piece of music. The effectiveness of the brief was successful when focused listening and research took place by the candidate as clearly noted in the influences mentioned in their logs. There were a minority of compositions where the piece of music did not match the brief in any way and in these very few cases higher mark bands were not accessible. Composing initial melodic ideas caused problems for a number of candidates. It is so important that a melody is fluent and organised well as it is central to the overall success of the piece of music. Candidates should listen to some of the most famous works in Western Classical styles to acknowledge the quality of their pleasing melodic shape. Many melodies lost direction and lacked fluency and phrasing was occasionally imbalanced. Melodies were overly disjunct, and in some compositions only used notes from the supporting chords. When constructing rhythms, compositions with varied treatment of straight, dotted, triplets and syncopation were effective.

Developing Musical Ideas

Additional interest will freshen the composition and this can be achieved by using a wide range of compositional techniques. Some techniques for developing ideas more effectively could be decoration, ornamentation, imitation, sequence, textural variety, countermelody, modulation, augmentation, diminution, inversion, fragmentation, alternative harmony and thematic transformation. Development is the bringing of something to a fuller or more advanced condition. This could, for example, have been achieved by varying the melody, rhythm, texture or timbre. It is important, especially when themes are repeated, to include subtle differences such as varying the instrument performing the melody, the addition of a countermelody, thoughtful modulations or varied dynamics and articulation. These musical elements would be combined effectively to produce a coherent outcome.

Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements

Individual musical elements and styles needed more revision and rehearsal for the actual composition process. It was felt overall that a greater variety of chords and inversions were required in many compositions, as well as strong cadential progressions and modulations. Many candidates excelled when using, for example, suspensions, tierce de Picardie and Neapolitan 6th chords. Texture needed variety as it was often overly homophonic. Additional features could be employed such as imitation and enhanced development of accompaniments. Clear thought is required to the practicalities and possibilities of music, in particular the attention to attractive individual lines, phrasing, range of instrument/voice types and suitable selection of music technology resources, where appropriate. Dynamics and articulation also add colour to any score and/or audio.

Summary of Key Points

- It is essential that centres show candidates the composing criteria at the start of the process so that aims and objectives are established in a positive manner.
- Compositions need original ideas to be able to fulfil the criteria as arrangements of an original piece of music limit the initial creation of ideas.
- Contrast is needed in all compositions which includes avoiding copying and pasting sections. There are several ways in which the music can be varied or developed to give it more interest.
- All pieces submitted without a conventional score must include a commentary with additional explanatory notes.
- Live recordings, where the candidate is not performing all parts need more information in the log regarding the role of the candidate and other performers. If the candidate taught musical parts to others a guide track should be attached to the submission.
- Logs do not need to be a full analysis of each composition but an outline of the process focusing on development and refinement and where appropriate, how support was given by the teacher.
- More research is needed about the main characteristics of chosen styles for composing and a focus on how to use the main elements of music effectively to create successful outcomes.
- The recommendations above for the assessment criteria will support centres to continue to improve the standards of composition folios for this unit in the A level qualification.
- Composition one must be selected from the published briefs for Eduqas and needs to be composed in a Western Classical style which illustrates the understanding of the musical language, techniques and conventions of the period (that is, Baroque, Classical or Romantic) and more examples of works from these eras need to be researched to enhance outcomes, for example, instrumentation and vocal writing, harmonic progressions and other characteristics appropriate to the style. For option B learners, composition two should be a piece from a different area of study.
- Take time to review work at the end of the composition process to ensure all work meets the requirements and criteria.

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COMPONENT 3: APPRAISING

Overview of the Component

Performance on this component was very closely aligned with the previous year. Candidates have different strengths and the balance of marks within the paper varies enormously. Some, for example, find the aural dictation component very challenging (scores of 0 are not unusual) where others excel at this skill, gaining full marks. A number of candidates show particular strength in the unprepared listening questions, where others gain most of their marks in those parts of the paper that are easier to prepare for, in particular set works and the essay. It is not until you get up above the A boundary that you tend to see candidates performing equally strongly across the whole paper.

For this component, AO3 (demonstrating and applying musical knowledge) and AO4 (using analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music) are tested.

The content included one compulsory Area of Study: AoS A The Western Classical Tradition, and then candidates had a choice of one of either AoS B Rock and Pop, or AoS C Musical Theatre, or AoS D Jazz. In addition, they had a choice of either AoS E Into the Twentieth Century or AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century. For the compulsory AoS A, candidates had a choice of answering on either Haydn's Symphony 104 or Mendelssohn's Symphony no 4.

The vast majority of candidates answered on Haydn rather than Mendelssohn for AoS A. Similarly, most candidates answered on AoS E Into the Twentieth Century, rather than AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century. For AoSs B, C and D, the numbers were fairly similar.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Note on melody questions in AoS B, C & D

Every year there are a number of questions in Areas of Study B, C and D that require candidates to describe the melody. The same issues tend to arise so, in addition to comments about individual questions, the following statements tend to attract marks:

- General type of movement; but don't say 'conjunct' unless there are hardly any leaps, and don't say 'disjunct' unless it is notably lacking in steps. Sometimes neither of these statements will be sufficiently true. If a melody is **mainly** conjunct or leaps in a particular segment, the answer needs to be qualified accordingly.
- Specific type of movement; e.g. 'starts with ascending arpeggio on line...' or 'goes up a major scale in line...'
- Prominent intervals e.g. 'rising fifth at the beginning of line...'
- Shape e.g. 'leaps up and then comes down by step'
- Repetitions e.g., 'lines... are the same' or 'the four-note motif is repeated many times in a row'.
- Syllabic or melismatic descriptions do not gain marks; they are aspects of word setting not vocal melody.

Note on comparison questions in AoS B, C & D

The last question in Areas of Study B, C and D is always a comparison question, requiring candidates to note similarities and differences across a pair of extracts. The following are some general observations and guidelines for answering this type of question:

- It is a **comparison** question, so marks are not earned by simply giving information without comparing.
- **State the obvious.** If the melody, harmony, structure etc. is the same, then state this in similarities before going on to more granular observations.
- Remember you need to compare extract 2 with extract 1, not the other way around.
- Do not spend time just describing extract 1 on its own; there are no marks for doing this.
- Tabular form answers are fine as long as they still compare extract 2 with extract 1.

Area of Study B: Rock and Pop

Q.1 (a))Most answered correctly.

- (b) Many did not focus on the most important aspect of the sonority, which was that it was a group of unaccompanied voices. As well as the correct technical term (a cappella), examiners accepted 'unaccompanied voices' and other equivalents, but many were too vague with answers such as 'vocal', 'voices' and 'harmony' offered.
- (c) Many candidates underlined the correct answer of 'parallel motion'
- (d) **See note on comparison questions in AoS B, C & D.** Descriptions might include comments on the type of scale (in this case pentatonic) and general rhythmic features, but many of the marks available are for describing specific details of the pitches such as 'starts on the dominant' or 'four-note phrase repeated 3 times'. 'Conjunct' was not sufficiently true to get a mark and it was necessary in this case to qualify this statement with 'mainly'
- (e) A large range of incorrect intervals was offered for this question.
- (f) Marks were awarded for either guitar techniques such as 'overdrive', or specific features of the melody itself such as 'sequence' or even 'improvisatory'. Many identified at least one of these correctly. Common wrong answers included techniques not used such as 'palm muting' or imprecise descriptions of the melody such as 'ascending pattern' without qualifications like 'chromatic' or 'at the end'.
- (g) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1978 was accepted and many were close enough. Some put dates that were in the 1990s.

Q.2 (a) Many candidates answered this correctly.

- (b) A fair number got this mark, but many offered 'major' of which the correct answer 'pentatonic' is a subset.
- (c) Quite a number of candidates gave the correct interval of a third or another plausible interval such as sixths or octaves, but it is worth bearing in mind with this type of question that these three are much more common in parallel than others. It was unlikely, for example, to be in sevenths.

- (d) Candidates find this type of open 'features' question a challenge. General descriptions such as noticing the voice is no longer falsetto, that syncopation is present, or that music from the introduction is used were accepted but other more specific features needed to be framed carefully. For example, it is not true that lines 17 and 18 are the same but it IS true that the first phrase in 17 is repeated at the start of line 18. This type of qualification of answers is often the deciding factor in awarding marks. Simply mentioning repetition without any qualification was quite common and not enough for a mark. It is rare that mentioning an instrument alone is enough of a feature, For example. if strings or brass are mentioned, some description of **what** they were playing is needed.
- (e) Many candidates recognised this as disco and gave straightforward, correct reasons to do with instrumentation or rhythmic features.
- (f) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1977 was accepted and many were close enough.
- (g) **See note on comparison questions in AoS B, C & D.** Many of the best answers gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged them to give a lot of peripheral detail while missing the main, obvious points. An example of this is that a substantial number of candidates did not mention the important fact that extract 2 used substantial samples from extract 1.

Area of Study C: Musical Theatre

- Q.3
- (a) **See note on melody questions in AoS B, C & D.** In this case, candidates were credited for noticing that melody was similar in lines 1 and 2 but many of the possible marks were for locating repeated notes and parts of phrases more precisely, or making very specific observations such as the fact the melody starts with a major second.
 - (b) Some candidates chose the correct answer of 'irregular' which means either a metre which has an irregular number of beats (in this case 7/4) and/or when the time signature constantly changes (also the case here).
 - (c) Many candidates answered this correctly.
 - (d) Most candidates gave a plausible answer for this question, although fewer selected the correct type of cadence, which was perfect.
 - (e) Many candidates suggested the correct interval between the voices, which was an octave. Others offered plausible but wrong alternative such as thirds or sixths but too many candidates suggested unlikely intervals to hear in parallel in this style of music, such as sevenths or seconds.
 - (f) Many found this question tricky. While few correctly identified the correct metres and their changes, there were marks for correct observations about the metre changing between compound and simple time. It is always worth describing what you can hear as precisely as possible. Partial answers identifying the more obvious 4/4 at the beginning and end of the passage still gained one of the two possible marks.

- (g) A good number correctly identified Stephen Schwartz. Listening to lots of relevant repertoire will make candidates more likely to be able to identify the prescribed composers.
- Q.4 (a) More gained a mark for identifying the G chord in the fourth box than the previous chord, for which candidates needed to include at least one of the extensions (i.e. 7th 9th or 13th not just C on its own)
- (b) **See note on melody questions in AoS B, C & D.** Some general observations such as describing the melody correctly as pentatonic or syncopated were credited, but many other marks were for very specific repetitions and precisely located features (e.g. 'starts with a repeated note').
- (c) Some answers were too general (e.g. 'transition') rather than describing the fact that the music modulated here.
- (d) There were a large number of possible answers to this question, but candidates who were very specific about differences in rhythm and/or the sonorities tended to score more highly.
- (e) Many candidates who correctly identified Bernstein then gave an implausible decade for this musical. It is worth knowing when these composers did their main work in this genre.
- (f) **See note on comparison questions in AoS B, C & D.** Many of the best answers gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged candidates to give a lot of peripheral detail while missing the main, obvious points. In this case this included such observations as them both being in a jazz style, featuring female soloists (but with chorus in the second extract) and featuring chromaticism and extended chords.

Area of Study D: Jazz

- Q.5 (a) Not many described the double stopping present on the double bass in section 1.
- (b) Many achieved at least one mark. Candidates need to identify the **type** of saxophone correctly in this type of question, in this case an **alto** saxophone.
- (c) Many candidates suggested the correct interval, which was an octave. Others offered plausible but wrong alternative such as thirds or sixths but too many candidates suggested less likely intervals to hear in parallel in this style of music, such as fourths and fifths.
- (d) There are a large number of features to describe here and many picked up at least one mark. If the question asks candidates to describe the music, it will not usually be enough merely to name instruments (which are playing the music) or generic playing styles such as staccato and legato.
- (e) Marks here were largely awarded for describing features of the saxophone and trumpet parts, including quite general points about them playing different lines and noticing that the sax part is more improvisatory.

- (f) Most candidates picked the correct date or the next nearest to it.

Q.6 (a) Some candidates correctly identified the ensemble as a septet.

- (b) Candidates who could accurately describe the most common accompaniment functions in jazz (like piano comping and double bass playing walking bass) scored well in this question.
- (c) It pays to know the relatively restricted number of standard jazz structures, in this case 32-bar song form.
- (d) There are many possible features of the alto saxophone music in this section, including relatively generic ones such as syncopation and blue notes. Knowing the technical terminology for common features helps enormously for this type of question.
- (e) Many achieved at least one mark. Candidates need to identify the **type** of saxophone correctly in this type of question, in this case a **tenor** saxophone.
- (f) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1946 was accepted and many were close enough. However, candidates are not credited for giving a decade (e.g. 40s) when a year is asked for.
- (g) **See note on comparison questions in AoS B. C & D.** Many of the best answers gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged candidates to give a lot of peripheral detail while missing the main, obvious points. In this case this included such observations as the music being based on the same melodic and harmonic material and therefore sharing the same tonality and time signature. The best answers gave real detail about extract 2.

Area of Study E Into the Twentieth Century

Q.7 (a) Some answered correctly but a wide range of keys was given. Candidates would be well advised to learn the main keys of sections in these works as these types of simple, factual questions are quite common.

(b) This is a very similar question to 7a above.

(c) Many achieved a mark for noting that the texture here was (melody dominated) homophony. These general technical terms for overall textures should be well known by candidates at this level. The other mark was for describing a detail of the texture, which many did not do precisely enough. It is important to remember that texture answers generally need to refer to the **relationship** between parts and/or their **role in the texture**.

(d) Candidates answering in short, factual bullet points that located features clearly with bar and beat numbers scored higher marks. Answers describing the harmony need to involve an element of **analysis** so just naming simple chords will rarely get a mark. The following types of analytical statements were sufficient to gain a mark:

- a chord with correct Roman numerals (e.g. V7)
- a more interesting chord (e.g. a 9th or a diminished 7th)
- a chord progression (e.g. the G7 resolving to C)

- a cadence
 - a harmonic feature (e.g. dominant pedal)
 - specific features of the harmony in a particular bar (e.g. based on the octatonic scale)
 - specific features of the harmony in the passage more widely (e.g. the fact tonic chords are never in root position)
- (e) Candidates were awarded marks for presenting specific features of the melody clearly located with bar and beat numbers. Comments on the type of figure (e.g. alternating semitones in b. 31) were credited, as were observations about material repeated from earlier in the movement. Some candidates offered observations about other aspects of the music, which were not credited. For example, marks were not awarded for identifying what instrument played a melodic idea (this is **sonority**) or for pointing out that melodies were played in octaves in bar 35 (this is **texture**).
- (f) Many correctly identified the devices heard. It is important to be clear precisely what this type of technical term means. A number of students incorrectly ticked 'dominant pedal'. This term refers to a held note against **changing dissonant harmonies** and a quick glance at the passage reveals that when notes are held in this passage this is not the case.
- Q.8 (a) Many answered this correctly, but a range of other intervals were suggested. Octaves and unison were accepted in the place of the strictly correct two octaves.
- (b) Some students answered this question correctly. Students need to listen to a range of music using non-standard scales and accustom themselves to the sound worlds they create. It was possible to discount whole tone and pentatonic, which have distinctive colours and then it should have been a decision as to whether this had the specific inflections created by the octatonic scale. The frequent occurrence of minor thirds and semitones in the melodic writing might have helped point students in this direction.
- (c) In unfamiliar listening, credit can be gained in this type of question by making quite simple observations, so long as the instruments (or instrumental families) are clearly identified. Students were awarded marks, for example, for 'scallic passages in woodwind' but general comments like 'starts with brass' lack sufficient detail.
- (d) More candidates spotted similarities such as the homophonic chords than managed to identify differences, which were a little bit more subtle. Some candidates offered that there were 'different instruments' in section 3, which is not sufficiently detailed at this level, but also was not true.
- (e) (i) Some candidates heard the dotted rhythms, which was the most obvious rhythmic feature. Others offered plausible but wrong alternatives such as 'triplets' or 'syncopation'. Some suggested 'staccato' which is an articulation not a rhythmic feature

- (ii) There are a range of textures in this passage, the most obvious being melody dominated homophony, which is augmented by the addition of an extra melodic part and antiphony at the end. Few candidates mentioned this, opting instead to describe the texture as 'polyphonic', a common mistake to make when there is rhythmic complexity in an accompanying texture. Polyphony refers to a texture constructed from a number of rhythmically independent melodic lines.
- (f) A reasonable number correctly identified the perfect cadence (although the true answer is actually slightly more complex as explained in the MS)
- (g) Identifying the form of an unfamiliar extract is always quite tricky. Although the answer is properly theme and variations (and was duly suggested by some), examiners awarded marks to candidates who noticed that the first and third sections were similar with more contrast present in the middle section, suggesting either a rondo or a ternary form.
- (h) There are a number of potential pitfalls in this question, which takes the same form each year. Candidates are asked to explain the use of a given musical element in a piece of their choosing. Important points to note include:
 - This is NOT a comparison with the given extract, just an explanation of the chosen piece.
 - If candidates choose an inappropriate piece they score ZERO:
 - the question asked for a piece in a DIFFERENT style from the extract (sometimes it is similar). The given extract was Neo-Classical so any candidates who wrote about music by Stravinsky, Poulenc or Prokofiev scored no marks. When a different style is asked for, it is worth trying to write about a piece that is as different as possible from the extract.
 - the piece must be selected **from one of the 'isms' prescribed for this area of study**, namely impressionism, expressionism, serialism and neo-classicism. Pieces in other styles even if they are by prescribed composers were not accepted (e.g. Stravinsky's Rite of Spring)
 - the piece must fall within the timespan of this area of study (i.e. 1895-1935)
 - the piece must not be a set work (so not Debussy *Nuages* or Poulenc Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano)
 - the piece must be clearly identified

Candidates who scored highly wrote succinct answers (in prose or bullet points) that clearly identified the form of the piece and then offered some specific details within the structure. It was not very helpful to choose a piece and then only offer that it did not really have a clear structure.

- Q.9
- (a) Many answered this correctly as would be expected from candidates who have studied this piece.
 - (b) There is a long list in the mark scheme of features of this development and any correct description that was sufficiently technical was credited.
 - (c) Many commented correctly that the material here is based on material first heard at various earlier points including bars 25 and 41, but the second mark proved elusive for some candidates. The processes involved need to be thoroughly absorbed and learnt as there is not time to work out what is going on in such a large and complex score on the fly.

- (d) Candidates did not always go for the simplest answers, which were to do with polyrhythm and the use of simultaneous metres.
- (e) More candidates correctly identified differences such as the use of glissandi in the trombone and the continuous (as opposed to intermittent) brass parts. Fewer candidates pointed out obvious similarities such as that they are based on the same material (i.e. the passage is a varied repeat) or that they both have polyrhythms.
- (f) Many answered this correctly as D minor. Examiners credited D on its own as it is a loose tonal centre, but D major was not accepted.
- (g) Apart from commenting on new material, candidates most often gained marks for outlining extended playing techniques used in 116 that are not previously present. It is important in the exam to latch onto these relatively easy wins as other contrasts were more technically involved and therefore harder to describe correctly.

- Q.10
- (a) Many picked out the string tremolo correctly but few students commented on the different sized drums or low register employed in the strings and clarinet. Some candidates did not seem to know that sonority refers to instrumental tone colours.
 - (b)
 - (i) Many candidates who scored marks on this question noticed either the major chords or the slow harmonic rhythm. Candidates did not get marks simply for saying it was consonant or dissonant without any qualification. A number of candidates suggested the extract was modal, but this is not the case.
 - (ii) Many candidates gained marks for mentioning the trumpet melody and the string tremolos. References to the presence of strings or brass were not credited unless there was some indication of what they were playing OR their role in the texture.
 - (c) Students overcomplicated this question with surprisingly few mentioning the octaves or the broken chord / arpeggio. There wasn't a glissando in this section.
 - (d) There are a number of potential pitfalls in this question, which takes the same form each year. Candidates are asked to explain the use of a given musical element in a piece of their choosing. Important points to note include:
 - This is NOT a comparison with the given extract, just an explanation of the chosen piece.
 - If candidates choose an inappropriate piece they score ZERO:
 - the piece must fall within the timespan of this area of study (i.e. after 1980)
 - the piece must not be a set work (so not Adès *Ecstasio* or Beamish *String Quartet No. 2*)
 - the piece must be clearly identified

Candidates who scored highly wrote succinct answers (in prose or bullet points) that clearly identified the form of the piece and then offered some specific details within the structure.

- Q.11 (a) Many scored well on this question. It is important that the circling of the error is as precise as possible and remember that there is another mark for correcting it, which can be done by writing on or above the score, or describing the error in words.
- (b) There were quite a number of full mark answers which is commendable, though it is clear and understandable that many do find this dictation question challenging. Candidates are advised to use the rhythm in the rest of the extract to help them work out what the dictation rhythms are. Also, it is important to make sure that the rhythms written add up to the right number of beats.
- (c) The expected answer was 'tonic pedal' but many candidates heard the prominent Ds in the harp in particular and were credited for 'dominant pedal'. When asked for a **precise** description, 'pedal' on its own is not enough.
- Q.12 (a) Many lost marks by **not being precise enough with their bar and beat locations**. Examiners cannot award marks to answers that are untrue even if they know what the candidate means. The Neapolitan chord, for example, is only on the fourth beat of bar 15 so no credit could be given for answers that gave the whole bar.
- (b) A large number of candidates correctly identified the codetta here.
- (c) Many candidates identified the key correctly, but at this level 'A' must be qualified by 'major' in order to be credited.
- (d) This was not always answered well. The use of melodic material in the development section of a sonata form cannot sensibly be discussed without referring to its location in the exposition. Candidates have studied this piece and should be able to identify material as 'S1', 'motif y' or at least 'the material from bars 3-4'. Again, many lost marks by **not being precise enough with their bar and beat locations**
- (e) Candidates generally scored much higher on this question, identifying various textures within the passage. Ideally textures should be located by giving the bar number **where they begin**, but any clearly correct description of textures or textural features were credited. Some candidates were not clear about the precise meaning of technical terms, with nonsensical offerings such as 'monophonic chords' where perhaps the term 'homorhythmic' was intended.
- Q.13 (a) Many lost marks by **not being precise enough with their bar and beat locations**. Examiners cannot award marks to answers that are untrue even if they know what the candidate means. The diminished seventh chord, for example, is only on the second beat of bar 17 so no credit could be given for answers that gave the whole bar.
- (b) A large number of candidates correctly identified the codetta here.
- (c) Many candidates identified the key correctly, but at this level 'E' must be qualified by 'major' in order to be credited.

- (d) This was not always answered well. The use of melodic material in the development section of a sonata form cannot sensibly be discussed without referring to its location in the exposition. Candidates have studied this piece and should be able to identify material as 'S1', 'S2a' etc. Again, many lost marks by **not being precise enough with their bar and beat locations**
- (e) Candidates generally scored higher on this question, identifying various textures within the passage. Ideally textures should be located by giving the bar number **where they begin**, but any clearly correct description of textures or textural features were credited. Some candidates described the accompanying figures passing between instruments as antiphonal but this, like some other observations, is based on the visual appearance in the score rather than how it actually works in the music.

Q.14 There were examples of essays across the full range of the marking bands from 'very limited to 'highly perceptive'. In general, the best essays cover the whole date range from 1750 to 1900, making equal references to works from different periods. Weaker essays tend to focus on set works or to leave large sections of the period unaddressed, commonly stopping at Mendelssohn or Berlioz. It is important that students give precise details of works referenced, in this case correctly identifying features of third movements. General discussions of contexts or symphonies as a whole where this was not relevant to the questions scored lower marks. It is not a good use of the time available to foreshadow or recapitulate information in the main body of the essay in long introductions and conclusions. The beginning and end of the essay can be approached by way of a relevant example (e.g. Stamitz and Tchaikovsky or Mahler).

Some common problems and misconceptions in the discussion of this particular essay question on third movements were as follows:

- candidates frequently did not address the question either by knowingly discussing second movements (because they were minuets or scherzi), or by confusing which movement was which (particularly in later symphonies). It is important to read the question and answer it directly, rather than answer a question that the candidate would prefer to be asked (in this case one on dance movements).
- many candidates seemed convinced that audiences routinely got to their feet and danced to minuets and waltzes. Some candidates were overly focused on the suitability or otherwise of this music for actual dancing when they are only **in the style of** earlier or contemporary pieces that were written for this purpose.
- many students discussed Berlioz as a late Romantic composer when actually he was writing early in the period
- very few students referenced Brahms, who wrote many interesting third movements
- some candidates spent too much time discussing tone poems. It is legitimate to point out briefly that single movement works do not have a third movement, but this is not worth a long discussion and several examples when there are so many other things one might discuss in the later Romantic period
- the terms minuet and waltz were often used interchangeably, with many candidates describing classical minuets as waltzes when this type of dance does not appear until much later in the period
- some candidates discussed Mannheim as if it were an actual school rather than a court at which a group of composers worked in a similar style

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