



**GCE**

**Music**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE A Level **H543**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2018**

## About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2018 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including **reviews of results**
- Link to **grade boundaries**
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

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## H543/01-02 Performing A and B

### 1. General Comments:

Centres are to be congratulated on a successful first year of the A level Performing Units for this specification. Examiners commented on much very positive achievement and are grateful for the care and time taken by teachers both in preparation of candidates for their performances and in the supporting administration of this unit.

Most centres uploaded their candidates' work to the Repository with some work being sent in alternative formats such as on CDs, memory sticks or SD cards where this was not possible. When submitting work for this unit, it is very important that all three elements – the recording, scores of the music and cover sheet – are included for each candidate. **NB: if the coversheet is not included, it is impossible to know what the Focus Study is for H543/02 and the work cannot be marked until this is added.**

When uploading work, centres should check that it is added in the correct area on the Repository as some Performing submissions were uploaded to the Composing section and vice versa, and occasionally into the Administration section by mistake. Centres are advised to check performances before submitting them, as there were examples of incomplete recital or ones that would not open/play and a few broken CDs.

When uploading items, it is very helpful if they are compressed files, as this helps both the upload and download in terms of size and time. When uploading music scores centres are encouraged not to upload each page separately. It is also very helpful if the pages are in the correct order and the right way up.

There was a wide range in the quality of recordings presented. Many were of a professional standard with well-balanced sound, and the candidate clearly visible. Unfortunately, there were some recordings where the microphones had not been suitably placed, resulting in poor or distorted sound quality. It is also not advisable for candidates to be positioned a long way, with their backs to the camera, or behind music/piano stands so that they cannot be seen at all.

The venues chosen also made a difference: the majority were situated in halls, large rooms or even churches. With appropriately placed mics, this afforded a fine performing venue, candidates being able to benefit from the sense of space this created. In addition, there were often audiences present, which added to the sense of occasion in a most positive way. It was gratifying to see how some centres had turned the recording session into a concert or recital in which there was a clear sense of performance and enjoyment. Recitals given in very small practice rooms, often with the candidate themselves recording them did not always achieve the same sense of communication or sound quality.

Centres are reminded of the need to identify candidates on the recording when they are part of a duet or larger ensemble. The part they are playing (e.g. primo, tenor) in an ensemble also needs to be stated. This can be done on the cover sheet or score. Some centres helpfully included announcements to this end; although announcements are not necessary

As ever, a huge thank you goes to accompanists who provide such crucial support for the candidates.

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## 2. Comments on Individual Questions:

## Recital:

A wide range of styles and instruments was in evidence, ranging from Steel Pans to Music Technology, with similarly wide and varied repertoire. Centres are reminded that in order to access the full range of marks available, repertoire equivalent to grade 6 or above of published examination bodies (such as ABRSM, Trinity, Rock School etc.) needs to be performed. As stated in the marking criteria for this unit, where the level is below grade 6, candidates are not able to access all the marks available for technical control. In addition, centres need to be reminded that recitals do need to demonstrate “a sustained level of demand throughout the recital”. This is pertinent to recitals where the candidate is performing as part of an ensemble (e.g. jazz group) where they may not perform for significant portions of time.

It was most gratifying that recitals were of the required amount of time – minimum 6 minutes for H543/01 and minimum 10 minutes for H543/02 – so that no zero penalties were incurred. There were some examples of very long recitals. This can lead to the candidate tiring and performing less convincingly as the recital progresses. The requirement to include at least two contrasting pieces in Section 1 was fulfilled in the vast majority of cases.

Where candidates are performing with a backing track, it is very important that the resulting levels and balance of the candidate’s part with the music on the backing track is checked on the recording itself. This is an aspect that forms part of the assessment criteria, and in some cases, the backing track could not be heard, affecting the candidates’ performance.

## Section 2 (Performing B)

Centres have clearly taken on board the requirements of the Section 2, Focused Study, and there were many highly successful submissions. Centres’ attention is drawn to the requirements of the specification and assessment criteria for this part of the unit though. As well as being assessed on their understanding of the music and how it relates to their instrument – ie their knowledge and fluency, technical control and realisation of performance markings/conventions – in addition for this aspect of the unit, candidates are assessed on their interpretative understanding and communication – ie how they communicate their interpretation to their audience. This is where the additional emphasis is for the Focused Study. Candidates playing with a clear sense of performance and audience, communicating their intentions and musical interpretation with authority, scored highly in this area of the assessment criteria.

## H543/03-04 Composing A and B

### 1. General Comments:

The first year of the new specification for Music A Level Composition has posed a number of challenges and opportunities for candidates, both in terms of responding to the briefs and in allowing themselves to be creative.

Most work was successfully uploaded to the repository from where it was accessed by examiners. Examiners did however find many examples of incomplete submissions, or instances where sound files could not be accessed, which placed undue delays into the system. For future years, it is imperative that Centres thoroughly check quality and completeness of submissions before and after uploading the work.

Generally speaking, the quality of audio, scores and written work was very clear. Candidates are required to produce a score, written description or lead sheet for each piece of work. Unless very detailed and accompanied with explanation, screen shots are not appropriate for this purpose. There were some very high quality live recordings and virtual instrument rendered audio realisations, which encapsulated and communicated the work very clearly. As it is the realisation through sound, which is assessed, rather than the score, the composer's intentions need to be clearly audible to obtain marks in communication. This was a rather variable element of the submissions and candidates had not always clearly expressed detailed performance indications, articulations and dynamics. Examiners will use scores and written work only to clarify the knowledge and intentions of the candidates work, but these will not be given credit alone. In realisations, which were rather one-dimensional and colourless, communication was affected adversely, as the style, mood and character was not evidently springing from the page. Many works were given imaginative or traditional titles, which showed an encouraging engagement with the task; however, in some cases, a lack of title robbed the music of any intended character. Candidates are not required to provide a written commentary in addition to the score, lead sheet or description.

All candidates adhered to the minimum time requirements, but some overly long commissions became rather cumbersome or diluted in ideas.

Please be reminded, that compositions must be completed in the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification.

Most marks are awarded for the *Response to the Brief*; here, examiners were looking for a well-defined composition, which met the terms of the brief with regard to audience, style, instrumentation and suitability for occasion. Appropriateness of overall structure, stylistic conventions and language were considered. Many candidates met this challenge very ably and were particularly successful where the music bounced off the stimulus and reverberated back in a characterful way.

In *Technique*, examiners were looking at how well candidates managed the nuts and bolts of the work; for example, use of motifs, melodic writing, word setting and harmonic understanding, as well as how the piece was put together structurally.

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Communication, as already mentioned, was variable in success, and it was felt that not all candidates had considered the overall impact of dynamics, articulation and tempo in response to the actual brief. For example, were the dynamics meaningfully placed and did they impact on the trajectory of the music: were the articulations stylistically and instrumentally idiomatic, and was the tempo appropriate for the music intended by the brief.

## 2. Comments on Individual Questions:

### Section 1:

Candidates were required to produce a composition from an OCR set brief. Released in September 2017, candidates were asked to respond to a particular brief and its *Area of Study*. This commission led to some very focussed and accomplished work. Many candidates appeared to be enthused and inspired by the task in hand, producing works with imaginative titles and detailed content. All briefs were embraced warmly by candidates, with the most popular being the classical variations from Area of Study 1, the jazz fusion piece from Area of Study 3, and the Tone Poem from Area of Study 5. There were, however, splendid examples from each Area of Study.

**Area of Study 1:** The brief to write a set of variations with an original theme encouraged a wide range of responses. The most successful examples had a more simple theme as a basis. Over-complicated and unbalanced phrasing often undermined weaker examples, together with unrelenting full textures and weak harmonic underpinning. However, many examples were varied and captured the style very well. Some candidates approached this very successfully with a more neo-classical slant, which is perfectly acceptable. However, examiners felt that the celebratory style outlined in the brief was sometimes overlooked. Although most candidates opted for a string quartet, other instrumental combinations, such as wind quartet, were also appropriate. Some of the work for this brief was quite formulaic, but candidates were nevertheless able to demonstrate some knowledge of the language and structural requirements.

**Area of Study 2:** This was a relatively open brief in which candidates were invited to compose a piece, which fused elements of jazz with other genres or styles of the candidates' choice. There were some very creative and controlled examples of work here, with many candidates enjoying the melding of different cultures and styles. The better examples demonstrated a spontaneous feel, with vibrant rhythms and melodies. More contrived fusion of contrasting styles tended to become rather mosaic-like however, with little overview of the overall effect, whilst others relied heavily on repetitive rhythms and riffs, showing a rather superficial understanding.

**Area of study 3:** Candidates were required to compose a song for a musical celebrating the life of Frank Sinatra. There were different approaches to this brief, most of which were valid. For example, some chose to write in a swing style reminiscent of 1950s jazz, whereas others took elements of the swing era and placed them in a more contemporary musical setting. The brief could be successful in a variety of ways, and many candidates composed with excellent understanding and creativity. Some less strong examples were unable to reference jazz styles or the work of Frank Sinatra in a meaningful way, or wrote in a more formulaic pop song style.

**Area of Study 4:** The da capo aria brief produced some very stylish pieces of work. There was a very good understanding of the instrumental sound world to accompany the aria together with appropriate harmonic structure. Not all candidates fully grasped the importance of the overall architectural requirements of the piece, and some were rather staid in nature. However, there



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were many very worthy examples, often sung live and with creative decoration at the da capo – an essential element of the style.

Area of Study 5: The brief required candidates to write a tone poem using appropriate instrumentation for the period. They were also asked to choose a poem or book as a stimulus. Candidates were particularly enthused by this brief, and it was pleasing to see an eclectic breadth of literature used as the narrative element. Some candidates authentically captured the nineteenth century colours and orchestration, with expressive writing and romantic harmony and gestures. However, in some cases, candidates used contemporary instruments such as vibraphone or drum kit. In this particular brief, candidates were expressly asked to write for instruments appropriate to the nineteenth century, and so marks were impacted negatively here. Others took a more filmic approach to the writing, which although not wholly inappropriate, sometimes had a less narrative sense than was required of a tone poem. Furthermore, some of the music became overly long, as candidates tried to include too much of the storyline. The best examples were quite concise and colourful, although it is appreciated that the brief could be suggestive of a feature-length approach.

Area of Study 6: The brief, to write an impressionist piece in homage to Debussy, delivered some very attractive and colourful pieces, many for solo piano. Some candidates demonstrated highly skilled harmonic and textural tone colours in pieces, which were well structured and imaginative. Many of these had compelling titles and an understanding of the impressionistic sound world. Other candidates who chose this brief wrote in a more simple style; these often had impressionistic gestures, titles and harmonic features, but often did not knit together to create a cohesive piece.

## Section 2:

The work in this section was variable, and the outcome largely depended upon the quality and impact of the learner brief. There were examples of excellent briefs; these were detailed, pithy, imaginative and succinct. Centres are advised to use the OCR set briefs as a guide in terms of length and required content. Candidates should not, however, copy the ideas of the OCR briefs. Furthermore, candidates are highly encouraged to create an individual brief, which shows their own interests and strengths.

Some Centres produced very similar briefs for all their candidates; this often resulted in overly repetitive or formulaic compositions and steered away from the spirit of the specification; it is hoped that Centres will encourage candidates to produce something inventive and of particular interest to them in Section 2.

Many candidates wrote very long briefs or commentary type pieces of work. Sometimes, their intentions were defined within the writing, but the details had to be prized out from copious tautological text. Other candidates wrote a broad brief in the correct style, but were lacking in detail and imagination. These often proved to be a less convincing springboard for the compositions.

The best briefs included intended style, instrumentation, occasion, venue and stimulus. These nuggets of information were contained within two or three succinct sentences. Where the brief was strong, the resulting composition often had much clearer vision and overview. This, in turn, led to well structured, perceptive pieces of work, often creatively conceived and with individual ideas.

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There were many examples of excellent work, and candidates drew on a variety of ideas to achieve this; from pastiche, type works to highly original contemporary style compositions. The best works had clear structures, style and originality, and showed depth of knowledge through appropriate harmony and stylistic conventions.

Middling work was usually secure in structure and style, but lacked originality and spark. Less strong work emerged where candidates were less at ease with the building blocks of composition, such as the construction of melody or harmonic understanding, together with a lack of familiarity with a range of repertoire and styles. This resulted in rather one-dimensional work, confused ideas or pieces of work, which lacked an architectural overview.

Section3: (Composing A )

Candidates were required to write three short exercises from an Area of Study of their own choice, and with a focus on either Pitch, Rhythm or Texture.

The time limit of 40 seconds was mainly adhered to and most candidates fulfilled the requirements. The three exercises must all be from the one area of study chosen, and there should be three of them. Candidates were penalised if these basic requirements were not met. The majority of candidates choose Bach chorales as their area of study, with given melody and short incipit. This is perfectly acceptable; however, candidates who elected to write their own chorale melody for this area of study, were neither advantaged nor penalised. However, on balance, the focus areas of Texture or Rhythm for the chorale choice, presented fewer options and less potential for development.

Many candidates composed their own exercises in a particular style; serialism and minimalism were popular choices. There were also solid responses using texture as a focus, particularly for the nineteenth century area of study.

## H543/05 Listening and Appraising

### 1. General Comments:

The majority of candidates appeared to be well prepared for the first Listening and Appraising paper of the new specification. All candidates were able to achieve some marks in the unprepared listening of Section A. Answers showed that candidates had benefitted from the extended study of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven in Area of Study 1 and of Popular Song in Area of Study 2. The shorter questions in Q.1 (Mozart Serenade) were a challenge for some candidates, and a few were not confident in attempting melodic or bass dictation. In Section B, the prescribed works by Beethoven and Ella Fitzgerald had been carefully studied, with very few instances of questions unanswered. Many performed particularly well in Section C, which gave them the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of repertoire in their selected Areas of Study, although some candidates had to rush essay questions in order to finish. Other candidates appeared to leave Section A or B to the end and write their essays earlier in the examination. Over the whole paper, most candidates managed their time successfully and were able to complete all the questions.

### 2. Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Section A

##### Q.1(a)

Eb major was usually correct.

##### Q.1(b)

French horn was the most common answer. Candidates should be able to recognise instruments used in both Areas of Study 1 and 2.

##### Q.1(c)

The bass dictation was a challenge for most candidates. Answers are marked by 'relative pitch': each pitch should be correct in relation to the note before and after it. There is some credit for notating the general shape, even if the intervals are incorrect. Centres are referred to Appendix 2 of the Mark Scheme for more information.

##### Q.1(d)

'tenths' was chosen quite often, although sometimes candidates incorrectly underlined thirds (not recognising the compound interval).

##### Q.1(e)

This was a challenging question, but a number of candidates managed to identify the chords and the bass. 1 mark was awarded for part-accuracy on two incorrect chords.

##### Q.1(f)

Candidates were more confident with dictation in the treble clef. A pleasing number of candidates scored two or more marks. The Mark Scheme allowed one error for full marks, which helped candidates who forgot A naturals (two or three missing A naturals were counted as one error). Many candidates worked out the ascending sixth accurately. The chromatic descent in bar 402 was treated as one error providing it descended in step.

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## Q.1(g)

Candidates should expect Section A to include at least one question on musical, historical or social context. Centres are encouraged to teach a general overview of the music and related background in both Areas of Study. Further examples may be drawn from the AS level papers for 2017 and 2018, which included questions on the characteristics of Sturm und Drang, performance on period instruments, recording technology in the 1930s and the background to the Foxtrot.

## Q.2(a)

Examiners were looking for evidence that the candidate knew a specific song by their chosen singer. Frank Sinatra was the most popular choice. Some candidates restricted their mark by listing basic similarities ('they have a similar range and sing smoothly'). Better answers also explored differences and referred to examples from both songs.

## Q.2(b)

Candidates should be taught how to analyse song structures, often expressed in letter format (A, B, C etc). Most candidates were able to identify the return of the opening melody, but there was no credit for describing them as 'verses' or for attempts to explain the structure as AABA song form. Good answers recognised the different material (B, C, D) after each return of A and that the song has an irregular structure (dividing neatly into seven 8-bar phrases). Candidates were able to secure full marks for a precise combination of letters: ABACA1DD1. For safety, many wisely added a description of the key points and were credited for these even if the letters were not quite right.

## Q.2(c)

Many candidates were able to comment confidently on Billy May's arrangement. Most commented on instrumentation but were sometimes careless with details, referring to 'brass' without distinguishing between trumpets and trombones, and to 'percussion' or 'drums' when timpani or drum kit was more specific. The best answers were able to give a number of examples, linked to bar numbers and lyrics, and to draw general conclusions about the virtuosity and wit of May's arrangement.

## Section B

Introductory sentences (and concluding ones) are not required in Section B. Bullet points may be used if preferred.

## Q.3(a)

Most candidates were familiar with the Beethoven passage and were able to comment in some detail on rhythm and melody. There were some very good explanations of rhythmic diminution, syncopation and hemiola. Not all were clear on the difference between quavers and semiquavers. Some candidates found it hard to resist discussing important features of dynamics, harmony, tonality and instrumentation. While these contribute much to the musical effect of this passage, this was not answering the question: Examiners were only able to credit remarks about rhythm and melody. A few candidates lost marks by writing about the build-up but not about the release of tension at the end of the passage.

## Q.3(b)

Candidates commented effectively on the differences in the performances in Extract 3a (Barenboim) and Extract 3b (Furtwängler). Examiners were encouraged that most candidates were prepared for this type of question, which was a regular feature of the legacy G353 AS level

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paper. Candidates will benefit from the opportunity to discuss different performances of the prescribed works, including ‘period’ and historical performances.

The recording quality was much discussed and often related to the age of the recording. Good answers made up of a number of correct, general statements were unlikely to be awarded the higher bands of marks unless there was evidence of detailed listening. Detailed and precise listening was best described with bar numbers. For example, candidates demonstrated the inconsistent tempo in Extract 3b by noting the *accelerando* in bars 9-15, and the loud timpani by referring to the very loud semiquavers in bar 23.

There were varied judgements on the effectiveness of the performance. For some Extract, 3a was too slow and Extract 3b was more *Allegro con brio*, as the composer intended; for others the performers in Extract 3a found time to bring out details of expression and articulation, while Extract 3b was untidy and rushed. Either view was acceptable: the marks were allocated for evidence of detailed listening in support of the opinion, not the opinion by itself.

## Q.4(a)

Most candidates were able to write in an informed way about Ella Fitzgerald’s performance in this song. The best answers were able to find examples to illustrate their knowledge of her vocal style, often using lyrics to locate the examples. A few referred to qualities in her singing that were not relevant to this song, for example her vocal range of over three octaves and her ability to scat.

The understated nature of Fitzgerald’s performance – the lack of any obvious virtuosity or display – made it more challenging to comment on the vocal performance, but candidates were well prepared for this and were able to focus on various details of technique and expression. However, a few candidates were reluctant to comment on expression or the emotional effect of the singing and instead made a list of technical points. Answers in the highest band of marks were able to write in detail about (i) the qualities of the voice, (ii) the application of musical techniques, and (iii) relate these convincingly to the success of the performance in interpreting the song for the listener. Centres should note the phrase ‘engagement with the solo performance’, which begins the descriptor for each band of marks (see the published Mark Scheme).

## Q.4(b)

Most candidates were generally familiar with the background to the album and its importance in her career. Some correctly pointed out that she was already famous before the recording but that the Cole Porter Songbook opened up new audiences for her and led to a series of other songbook albums. There were useful, precise references to the role of Norman Granz and Verve Records, but details of the beginning of her career were limited in relevance.

## Section C

Examiners were pleased at the responses to Areas of Study 3-6. It was clear that many candidates had gained both depth and breadth of knowledge in their choice of repertoire. Many were able to write about the music in detail and reference a range of works. Examiners were encouraged by the variety of music chosen for study in Section C. Many works appear in the lists of ‘Suggested repertoire’ in the specification or in resources published by OCR and others, but there were other appropriate, often imaginative choices. It was pleasing to note the impact on learners when Centres have been able to introduce them to memorable and stimulating repertoire.

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Knowledge of 'conditions and context' was sometimes limited and rather general. The specification includes a bullet list of some of these issues for each Area of Study. Where possible Centres should consider how their choices of repertoire support these. For some music, candidates should know specific background details, as may be expected, for example, in programme notes for a concert audience. Examiners hope that over time Centres will develop specific resources in their chosen Areas of Study, which address the issues of audience, working conditions, transmission of music and other topics.

The questions should be read carefully, at least a few times. Candidates should pay particular attention to the opening word. They should note the differences between 'Describe,' 'Explain,' and 'Evaluate'. A careful reading of the question will often show a number of issues which need to be addressed in the answer. In Section C, Examiners are moving away from essay questions, which ask candidates simply to describe in detail. Candidates must use their knowledge of the repertoire and its background to make evaluative and critical judgements, an important feature of the new specification. It is understood that candidates hope for questions that match the music and background information that they have revised, but, at times, Examiners felt that some candidates were rushing to write everything they knew about a chosen work without considering how much of it was relevant and whether they were actually answering the question.

Examiners were pleased by the quality of writing and extended responses, which forms a part of the assessment. The majority of candidates wrote accurately, in a fluent and logical style, with ideas grouped into paragraphs. Introductions and conclusions were appropriately short and to the point. Better answers moved decisively from one point to the next, avoiding undue repetition and meaningless generalisations. They showed technical knowledge of the music and demonstrated their understanding of its purpose and effectiveness. They made convincing references and relevant comparisons to other music, demonstrating their breadth of knowledge. Weaker essays tended to be repetitive and easily distracted from the question.

Concise answers are preferred. Familiarity with the music should be demonstrated in a paragraph rather than in a page. One example in detail is preferable to generalised statements about a whole work. There should be clear evidence of thought and the development of a sustained argument. The top band of marks is reserved for answers, which focus consistently on answering the question. Such answers are not necessarily the longest but build a logical argument based on well-chosen evidence. This is a different approach to that expected in writing about the prescribed works in Section B, in which candidates are usually expected to write as much relevant detail as possible.

A few candidates were disadvantaged by writing about works, which lie outside the dates of an Area of Study, or the date specified in a question. Debussy's *Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune* (1894) was used to illustrate both melody and thematic material (Q.10) and Impressionism (Q.11). Whilst this work was too early for Area of Study 6 (Q.11), it was appropriate for Area of Study 5 (Q.10). However, later works by Debussy were permitted for both Areas of Study (*La Mer*, for example, dates from 1903-05). This year, where they could, Examiners made some allowance for relevant material, but there were restrictions on the marks available for essays based on works from outside the scope of the Area of Study or the question itself (for example, see the guidance in the Mark Scheme for Q.12). Centres are asked to remind candidates to be certain about chronology, changes over time and the dates of compositions.

Centres will be able to use the Mark Scheme for these questions to help inform their teaching for the future. Candidates are not required to mention everything in the Mark Scheme in order to get full marks, but it is a useful guide to aspects that may be considered.



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## Q.5

The music discussed should have been instrumental jazz, not songs: information about Ella Fitzgerald was not relevant. Candidates were usually knowledgeable about recording techniques in early jazz. There was detailed discussion of studio conditions and the difficulties in recording around a single horn. Some answers lacked accuracy with chronology: recording first, radio from the 1920s, bebop after 1940 (too late for this question), vinyl LP not until the 1950s (also not relevant). Many answers featured the music of Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, but there was often an incomplete discussion of the relationship of these important figures with radio and recording. The best answers showed a confident grasp of context, such as being able to discuss specific details of Ellington's early recordings, the radio broadcasts of his band from the Cotton Club, and the band's successful tours of Europe, where they were already famous because of their records.

## Q.6

There were a number of informed discussions of jazz-rock fusion, with detailed examples from Miles Davis, Weather Report, the Mahavishnu Orchestra and others. Ornette Coleman's free jazz was another popular topic. Better answers communicated their understanding of the music, often illustrating general points with specific detail on passages of the music. In the absence of notated scores to comment on, Examiners expect to see evidence of engagement with music as it is heard on the recording (or live, where appropriate). Candidates who chose to discuss rock music were disadvantaged if they were not able to show a clear link with jazz, for example, through jazz musicians adopting elements of rock music.

## Q.7

There were a few candidates who wrote detailed summaries of the characteristics of church music in England or Lutheran Germany, with musical examples from a Purcell verse anthem or a Bach cantata. Many of the answers seen were too general. Candidates were usually aware of the principles of the Reformation and understood that Latin was replaced by the vernacular. After that, there was little knowledge of how the music supported worship or the structure and organisation of musicians in Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal or in Leipzig. The Mark Scheme shows some of the issues that could be addressed. A few answers gave detail on Handel's oratorios or coronation anthems, but this was a limited way of illustrating 'music for worship'.

## Q.8

Candidates had no difficulty finding two works to illustrate dramatic or expressive harmony and tonality. A number of answers were too general and lacked any specific understanding of harmony. For this type of question candidates needed to know a few short passages in detail. Individual movements (often recitatives) from Bach's St Matthew Passion were commonly chosen, with precise detail of music and text. Handel's Messiah and Zadok the Priest were also popular choices, although some answers went no further than discuss the choice of keys. Earlier composers, such as Monteverdi, Carissimi and Schütz, offered the potential of a good contrast with Bach and Handel. Effective answers demonstrated detailed knowledge of specific harmonic devices in these works, successfully linked to the meaning of the text, enough to persuade Examiners that the candidate had absorbed the music in a meaningful way. Examiners are grateful for the efforts of Centres in widening the experience of Baroque music beyond Purcell, Bach and Handel.

## Q.9

Candidates should be familiar with at least one programme symphony. In the specification, this genre is given a bullet point on its own. A number of essays were based on examples of other

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forms – overtures and symphonic poems. Some credit was given for relevant information, but such answers did not usually go above the 11-15 band of marks. Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* was by far the most popular choice. Many answers were able to describe how the composer realises the programme in the music, such as devising music to represent character or situation. There were fruitful comparisons between works, which depicted a series of events (*Symphonie fantastique*, Strauss's *Don Quixote*), and those (such as Liszt's *Faust Symphony*) which took a more general, 'poetic' approach. Some explored the challenges of structure, orchestration, getting the work performed and gaining public or critical approval.

## Q.10

This was the most frequently attempted question. Candidates mostly responded well to the challenge of surveying melody across three different works. Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn and Smetana were well represented, but it was refreshing to read about works by other composers. There were detailed descriptions of the music and its associated programme, with most candidates understanding the role of melody in representing characters, scenes or ideas in the programme.

The best answers were able to make relevant observations on melody and thematic material in the period as a whole. Answers in the higher bands of marks tended to find similarities in composers' approaches to thematic material or comment on contrasting approaches. There were some perceptive comments on the long romantic melodies in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* or Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*. Others commented on thematic transformation and recurring themes. Middle band answers often simply listed the musical features of each work in turn, with little discussion in relation to the question. Weaker answers tended to be distracted by long descriptions of the programme, not always clearly related to melodic or thematic material.

## Q.11

There were several detailed comparisons of the contrasting styles of the early twentieth century, many illustrated by well-chosen works. Most candidates made what might be termed 'safe' choices of repertoire to illustrate the respective styles: often Debussy (which had to be post-1900) for impressionism, Schoenberg for expressionism and Stravinsky for neo-classicism. The best answers had a confident grasp of the artistic approaches of the respective composers, successfully relating the music to other art forms and to social and intellectual trends of the times. Above all, candidates conveyed an immediate and engaging appreciation of the music, making it obvious that they had listened to it and could remember how it went. In general, candidates who wrote about impressionism were better in choosing examples and communicating their ideas about the music. Accounts of expressionism could be rather dutiful and lack evidence that the candidate had listened in a meaningful way to the music. Discussion of Schoenberg's 'Peripetie' (from *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16) tended to be rather basic at this level of study. Better answers were more attuned to the emotional intensity and extreme contrasts of Schoenberg's music; his style was compared successfully with the coolness and precision of Poulenc or Stravinsky.

Centres and candidates are allowed some flexibility in interpreting the style headings in the specification. Examiners do not wish to restrict the choice of music unduly. A case can be made for Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* as impressionist, Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* as expressionist, and any Shostakovich as neo-classical. In particular, 'neo-classical' should be regarded as including a wide range of tonal/neo-tonal music, not only works in the spirit or style of earlier composers. The Mark Scheme includes a brief list for each style, which may assist Centres. Not all the music chosen made appropriate examples: Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*



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was used as representative of all three styles, with limited success. However, above all, whatever examples are chosen, it is hoped that candidates will write intelligently about the music, highlighting one or two passages which show the characteristics of the chosen style.

**Q.12**

Candidates showed knowledge of a wide variety of repertoire in this question. Reich's *Different Trains* and Stockhausen's *Stimmung* were popular choices. Q.12 asked candidates to 'Evaluate the success of ...'. The best answers managed to discuss the roles of timbre and texture in communicating with the audience. Other answers tended to be a little technical and avoided making a judgement on the effectiveness of the music. A few chosen works were written before 1960; other music written after 1960 did not really show 'imaginative and innovative use of timbre and texture'. A few candidates chose examples of rock music, not automatically ruled out but sometimes limited by superficial ideas about the music. Discussion of timbre and texture in electric guitars needed to go beyond basic strummed chords and amplifiers and begin to explore virtuosic techniques and exciting aural effects that enabled the music to communicate effectively with the audience. Examiners gave credit where possible but expect that Centres will refine their choice of music over time to meet the requirements of these questions.

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