

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates 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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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Advanced GCE Music (H542)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Music (H142)

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Overview

Last summer the Chief Examiner's Introduction drew the attention of candidates and centres to the need for candidates to be able to demonstrate depth of study, knowledge and understanding at A2; this year the focus of the Introduction is on the issue of perspective, particularly in relation to the progression from GCSE Music, through AS level to A2.

The OCR Music specification aims to be accessible to candidates who have not taken the subject at GCSE level, but it does assume that candidates who choose to study this subject at a level commensurate with GCE examination start the course with at least some performing ability on a musical instrument and have a basic awareness of music theory, including facility in the reading of standard Western Staff Notation.

A clear understanding of the relationship between GCSE, AS and A2 in Music is vital among candidates and centres in the light of recent government changes in the nature of GCE examining. The removal of a re-sit opportunity for units G353 and G356 in January now means that candidates who misjudge the progression in terms of the change in level of demand from GCSE to AS at the end of year 12 will have no opportunity to improve on their initial performance other than to re-take the G353 unit alongside other A2 units at the end of year 13. A further complication for candidates and centres is caused by the fact that for G353 this will no longer represent a genuine re-sit: one set of repertoire items for Sections B and C of the unit will change each year, necessitating the provision of study courses to cover the new prescribed repertoire for candidates who choose to re-sit this paper the following June.

Clearly the best approach is for candidates and centres to have a very clear grasp of the standard and level of demand at AS level at the start of the course, so that candidates are enabled to perform to the best of their abilities at their initial sitting of AS units and the need to re-take units is minimised. Centres need to be proactive in this respect: without guidance in this area it is unlikely that candidates will appreciate for themselves the significant step up in the level of demand from GCSE to AS level, or from AS to A2.

AS Music is an examination that tests the security of candidates' basic skills, which they will need to apply more independently and in greater depth to perform well at the higher A2 level. It is vital, therefore, that centres and candidates appreciate fully the need to be able to demonstrate their ability to discuss music (both verbally and in written form) in some depth, using specific and appropriate subject terminology, to create and develop musical ideas showing an awareness of composing techniques and devices, patterns of musical extension, development and structure, and to engage with the essential underlying harmony of music, again using appropriate and specific terminology.

It is sad that examiners see so many otherwise able candidates who are not hitting the top mark bands because their responses concentrate on generalities rather than specific detail and whose understanding and use of subject-specific terminology is either imprecise or incorrect. Award of credit in the highest mark bands always demands reference to relevant and precise detail, yet this is so often missing in the responses of many able candidates.

Similarly, performance discussions need to focus on precise details of performance choices, aspects of execution, tonality and articulation in order to be able to demonstrate to an examiner a level of skill and understanding appropriate for award of a mark in the highest mark band. For example, in the written papers a string of relevant generalisations supported by detail that lacks a clear focus will secure some credit, but will not achieve the maximum marks available, and this can be an important factor in determining a candidate's aggregate unit and qualification mark.

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Unless candidates are able to master the basic skills required at AS level in the first year of a two-year A-level course, they will find it difficult to proceed effectively to the A2 units, which presuppose a secure working understanding of the musical competencies tested in the three AS units.

From this summer, if candidates wish to re-take units in which their marks are lower than expected, they have no option but to do this alongside A2 units at the end of Year 13. Such a pattern will inevitably present them with additional pressure on their time in Year 13, and a heavy level of demand in terms of coursework submissions and (in the written papers) learning of additional material in order to meet the changed requirements of prescribed repertoire in G353. Centres and candidates need to be very clear about this as the courses commence this autumn, in order to devise the most effective method of securing the best aggregate outcomes for individual candidates at both AS and A2 levels.

As in previous years, examiners have been most impressed by the overall range and quality of material presented by candidates: in a climate of much media criticism, the evidence seen at standardisation meetings and at awarding proves that today's candidates are working hard and producing quality material that belies any notion of a dumbing-down of standards or lack of academic rigour. Of course the tasks examiners set for candidates are rigorous: this is a public examination upon which admission to university courses and other post-18 employment can depend, so it is right that GCE Music should be searching and academically demanding in order to ensure public confidence in the examination, and to provide candidates with a properly-respected qualification that recognises their efforts and rewards their achievement.

Senior Music examiners (most of whom are engaged actively as teachers in schools) are always keen to learn of candidates' views of the A-level specification, including any comments or suggestions that might be helpful in shaping a revised GCE Music specification at some point in the near future. The OCR website will provide help in directing any comments to the appropriate individuals, and these will be considered carefully by examiners in framing any changes that will take OCR A-level Music forward into the future, while maintaining a high level of subject challenge, appropriate scholarly academic rigour and access to candidates coming to A-level Music from a wide range of backgrounds.

G351 Performing 1

OCR is mindful of the amount of preparation that goes into a visit from one of our examiners and for this we are very grateful: teachers, accompanists, administrators and parents all contribute to the event, whether for a few hours or several days. The help our examiners receive extends from the date of first contact (to discuss dates), through the provision of programmes and music (including timings and grades) in advance of the examination, to the smooth running and hospitality on the actual day.

From the many high-standard performances that were heard it was evident that many centres had practised and prepared their performances well in advance, often aided by supportive and skilful accompanists. While few centres opted to have an audience present for the performing aspects (it is not allowed for the Discussion or the improvisation option) in many there was a sense of occasion.

All sections of the examination are recorded and, as part of the monitoring of examiners' work, in some cases a Team Leader will accompany the examiner.

Section A

There was a wide range of instruments and styles presented again this year, usually with careful regard to the stipulation that the programme "should last no longer than eight minutes" and also demonstrating "a range of techniques". Care is needed that the music selected is not too difficult since the candidate should be able to show "secure knowledge...and fluency of the programme". In some cases opening sections of pieces were confident but poise, accuracy and technical control lapsed in later sections or when the piece changed key or texture.

Backing tracks should be audible to the examiner, and not just the soloist, and levels for amplified instruments should not be set and controlled by teachers or other candidates during the recital – these remain the responsibility of the candidate, assessed under "Aural and Stylistic Understanding".

The examiners would like to see the pieces/songs presented as a set – the examiner will not ask for the performance to be paused while s/he writes comments. The candidates should feel free to pace their presentation and their transitions between items. This is a recital performance with a sense of occasion and ideally with as little disruption between items as possible. There were some disturbances caused by things such as missing music, or an absent page-turner.

Pieces written with an accompaniment or backing should be performed that way to ensure an understanding of the full texture of the music and a cogent 'whole' is presented: playing only piano accompaniments or guitar accompaniments with no solo/vocal line will not achieve this. Downloads from the Internet or copies from guitar magazines should be marked up as fully as possible, with stave notation alongside tablature.

Section B: Discussion

This will usually last between five and ten minutes, be conducted *in camera*, and will focus only on the pieces presented immediately before in Section A. Candidates should be prepared to discuss aspects such as preparation of the pieces, the choice of expressive aspects such as tempo, phrasing, dynamics and colour; and technical aspects of their performance (such as bowing, amplification, breathing, fingering, pedalling and so on). They should also be able to appraise the effectiveness of their decisions in the performance. One of the AS Areas of Study is "The Expressive Use of Instrumental Techniques" and this will very much drive the discussion.

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Candidates may refer to the music at any time (but not to other notes) and also illustrate if they wish.

Some candidates were unable to go much beyond a broad discussion on tempo and volume – others were able to justify their decisions much more decisively in several parameters of the music, showing their individual response to the score and its challenges.

Section C

The commonest options in this section were second instrument and duet/ensemble, with relatively few examples of option 3 (composing) and option 4 (improvising). There were some stunning ensembles presented here – ranging from piano quintets to vocal trios, from guitar bands to saxophone quartets. Again OCR is grateful to those supporting players (whether peers or teachers) who come in to support the candidates in their ensembles or accompanying, and also recognises that often the logistics of arranging larger ensembles can take some preparation in advance.

G352 Composing 1

General Comments

Centre submissions this year provided a varied selection of exercises and compositions or arrangements. The amount of work in completing these is always appreciated - especially from the larger centres. The presentation of the work was mostly very good and there were fewer bulky folders included.

The required paperwork was generally completed accurately with helpful teacher comments. Some comments identified areas of weakness, but this was not reflected in the mark by the centre. There were some clerical errors of additions that could have been avoided.

It was pleasing to find that so many centres swiftly responded to queries from moderators concerning problems with centre submissions.

Section A: The Language of Western Tonal Harmony

The requirements of the specification states that candidates should submit six exercises, undertaken during the course, and one exercise completed under supervised conditions. Candidates who included one or two draft copies were able to improve their exercises with careful teacher guidance. Some candidates were given too much specific help with their work and this was not always taken into account by the centre in the final assessment of the work. The specification recommends that the exercise completed under supervised conditions should be undertaken towards the end of the course.

Choice of exercises

It is recommended that centres use a variety of genres when choosing the exercises, which will enable the candidate to access the full range of marks available. It is a requirement that at least two of the exercises are in full-texture and one minor tonality (preferably not a modal folk song). Some submissions included many more than the required number of exercises. It was felt that candidates who selected their six best exercises were generally awarded higher marks. It is not a requirement to use open-score exercises - it was felt that some candidates struggled unnecessarily working in this format.

Some centres included 2-part textures, chorale/hymn style exercises, exercises that required a simple piano accompaniment, Gershwin songs and Beatles songs. Some included Schubert songs and it was felt these were too difficult for most candidates, and are not a requirement for this unit. A range of exercises, with a varying degree of difficulty, should be made available to candidates in order that they choose a level to suit their individual abilities.

It is important that the exercises are sourced from real music - some were made up by the teacher and this is not appropriate. The exercises need to clearly show the title, composer and date of completion by the candidate. It is not sufficient to include an index of the exercises, covering all candidates, with only a month date specified.

If candidates choose to submit three or four hymn/chorale style exercises they will not be able to access the higher marks in Harmonic Rhythm and Texture. Cadences are often too similar in these styles.

Most candidates were able to include a minor tonality exercise. The best candidates completed these in full-texture and were able to demonstrate a real understanding, including the correct treatment of the leading note. Exercises in 2-part are generally unable to do this.

Harmonic Language

Candidates were often able to demonstrate a good understanding and correct use of Primary chords. Dominant 7ths were evident at cadential points, and were sometimes used incorrectly in between main markers. In order to gain marks in the top two bands of the assessment, candidates need to also demonstrate an understanding of cadential and passing 6/4s and supertonic 7ths. The best work included all the above.

It is a requirement of the specification that 2-part textures must also include chord labelling. Some candidates were able to demonstrate a real understanding of progressions here with the use of coherent language. Too often, the misuse of chords III and VII was evident in these exercises, where it was felt too many were completed by ear and labelled afterwards. It is good practice for candidates to also label chords in full-texture.

The recognition of correct Harmonic Rhythm is very important in this section. By studying a variety of genres, candidates will be able to recognise the required Harmonic Rhythm, which in turn will make the choice of language easier and more accurate.

Technique

It is important to choose correct incipits for the exercises. They should be at least 2 bars long, in full or complete 2-part texture. Candidates should then be able to continue the given texture and the more able candidates were able to change the texture as indicated by the melodic material. Sometimes too much given material has been included in the exercise at key points - a modulation or the beginning of a sequence. More able candidates should not require this help, but if given to the less able candidates, centre assessment needs to take this into account when awarding the final marks.

Modulations were often recognised well by the candidates, and the more successful work demonstrated accurate treatment here. When using guitar symbols, candidates need to be encouraged to clearly identify the modulation – this was not always apparent.

Bass lines were often shaped well when correct inversions and passing notes were included. Root position and block chord textures limit assessment both here and in voice leading. Many candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of the correct resolution of V7. However, too many were encouraged to use a 'Bachian' solution with a falling leading note – stylistic writing such as this is not a requirement for AS level.

Notation

Notation was mostly clear and legible – a lot of care had been taken with some of the hand-written exercises. The more successful candidates took the following into account: mislabelling of chords (especially inversions), misalignment of notes, untidy rests, stems, incorrect notation, missing pauses and the correct treatment of the anacrusis. It is expected that candidates will submit original copies of their work – not photocopies.

The Timed Test

The following points should be noted and should clarify any uncertainties regarding this test:

- This test should be undertaken in one hour and clearly dated and sourced. It should not be returned to the candidate to make any changes.
- It is recommended that the test is completed towards the end of the course. The more successful candidates demonstrated skills learnt through the course.
- Candidates can complete different exercises, although they should not have access to the Timed Test material, as again observed in some submissions this year, during the course.

- The Timed Test should not be a familiar piece of music or too similar to other exercises in the submission.
- The materials should not include too much repetition, especially from the given incipit.
- The Test should reflect the ability of the individual candidate and should demonstrate the knowledge learnt by the candidate during the course. Some candidates struggled with tests that were too difficult and others could have demonstrated better knowledge.
- When re-submitting work for a re-sit, a new Timed Test must be completed if any of the other exercises have been re-worked.
- This Test is a mandatory requirement in the specification. It needs to be included with each portfolio and the teacher must sign the authentication statement within the Coursework Cover Sheet to verify that this has been completed.

Section B: Instrumental Techniques

There were some excellent submissions in this section. Some candidates were able to further extend their knowledge of performing skills by writing for their own instruments, or ones with which they were familiar. There were many idiomatic compositions that had been shaped in similar styles to ensembles in which the candidates had first-hand experience. Musical character was very evident in some; the more formulaic approach to composition was disappointing at times.

Compositions were still more popular than arrangements. However, there were some very good arrangements where candidates were able to include as much creativity as that found in the compositions. Transcriptions were still evident and were too similar to the original lead-sheet. The most successful arrangements used lead-sheets with melody and chord indications only.

Materials

There were some very good commentaries completed by the candidates. The most successful were able to demonstrate real aural awareness of their chosen genre that had been influenced by relevant listening material. An over-lengthy analysis of the compositional process, together with screenshots of the candidate's own submission, is not required.

Use of Medium

The majority of submissions were able to include the correct number and acceptable type of instruments. Some candidates chose to use the voice or synthesized instruments - credit cannot be awarded in this section when using these. Some candidates were able to include a voice but also made sure that the additional instrumentation was idiomatic and contained an equal amount of material and techniques as the voice.

The more successful candidates were able to demonstrate the use of instrument-specific techniques and a good understanding of the expressive capabilities of the instruments, both individually and as part of an ensemble. Some candidates created the sound-world relating to their genre, but lacked sufficient understanding of the chosen medium. Some ensembles were too large and this resulted in sparse textures and excessive doubling.

Technique

It was evident that the more successful candidates were able to extend and develop their initial materials without excessive use of repetition. A sense of pace is needed, and although many submissions included modulations and metre change, ideas need to unfold with the use of instrumental forces being employed correctly for this to happen. There were several programmatic compositions this year that lacked any melodic development or even melodies at times.

Communication

There were some very detailed scores submitted this year. The best work included appropriate tempo markings and instrumentation, dynamics were consistent, phrasing and articulation reflected the chosen genre. When these performance directions are included, the recordings – whether live or computer generated – give the music a strong sense of expression. The limitations of software do not prevent high marks being awarded when used correctly. Conventional notation is still required and Tab notation should not be included.

Most centres included individual, audio-formatted CDs for each candidate. The recordings were often very effective and the time taken to include live recordings was appreciated. Some recordings, both live and computer generated, were rather imbalanced and lacked communication with the listener.

It was felt, overall, that there have been a lot of improvements in the work undertaken by the candidates. The more successful work demonstrated a clear understanding and delivery of the requirements of the specification.

G353 Introduction to Historical Study in Music (Written Examination)

General Comments

A few candidates this session achieved overall marks that were close to the maximum for this unit, but examiners remain very concerned that only a relatively small percentage of scripts secure marks that are into the high 70s or above 80.

A solution to this problem would be to make questions less demanding, but this would have the effect of diluting the standard of the examination, and examiners are resolutely opposed to any such action.

The onus is on candidates to meet the demands of this paper by demonstrating secure performance across all three sections of the unit. Previous Principal Examiner's Reports have commented on the uneven profile of achievement across the unit, frequently indicating less detailed knowledge and understanding in relation to the prescribed repertoire of **Section B**. Centres and candidates have the advantage of being able to prepare this section in advance.

Questions that carry several marks are generally assessed by examiners in relation to mark bands, and in almost all cases the descriptors for the highest mark bands make use of phrases such as "specific detail", "detailed understanding" and "precise identification". This means that if candidates are to do well in these questions, their responses must venture beyond basic identification of surface features in the music and basic descriptions of the sequence of events. The writing must demonstrate understanding of the way in which the music works and be presented in a way that reveals secure control of appropriate musical terminology.

There are some encouraging signs: accuracy of melodic dictation (including bass line dictation) is improving steadily, most candidates now appear to understand how to tackle the comparison of performance recording in **Section B** successfully, and essays in **Section C** are showing a greater degree of focus on the contextual aspects identified in the wording of the question.

A significant number of candidates continue to answer extracts on both **Extract 1A** and **Extract 1B** in **Section A**, thereby restricting the amount of time they can devote to answering questions in the remaining sections of the paper. Examiners advise strongly the setting of a mock examination of the unit before the day of the examination, in order that errors such as double-extract selection in Section A can be addressed before candidates sit the actual session paper.

OCR apologises for an error in the wording of **Question 2** on this series' paper. The question required candidates to complete the melody from bar 4² to the end of bar 7, but the wording erroneously stated that the melody was played by the violin, whereas the only melody line at the prescribed point in the passage was played by the piano right hand. As the report below makes clear, this question was answered well in general, and most candidates appear to have completed this almost in "automatic pilot" mode, seeing the given rhythm above the blank stave. Scripts that completed the melody in the score from bar 12² to bar 15 (where the same theme is played by the violin) were marked as correct, and the handful of scripts that offered no answer for **Question 2** or contained some comment in the paper or Insert concerning the instrumentation were all scrutinised individually by senior examiners in order to ensure that no candidate was disadvantaged as a result of the inaccuracy in the wording of this question.

The demise of the January series means that one set of prescribed repertoire (orchestral scores or instrumental jazz) will change each series. Centres are advised to check the OCR website in order to ensure that they are covering the correct prescribed repertoire for each series. OCR will not provide alternative questions on previous repertoire to centres that have not prepared the correct specified items.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Extract 1A BEETHOVEN, *Piano Trio in c, op. 1 no.3, Theme (bars 0²-32¹ & Variation V & Coda. The Florestan Trio (2004), Hyperion CVA67466, track 2, 0'00" – 1'04" & 5'18" – 7'01" [Total length of recorded extracts: 02'47"]*

- 1) The opening question offered a multiple-choice question on structure as relatively straightforward task at the start of the paper. The recorded extract reinforced the clear binary structure set out in the score, so examiners were surprised that a large number of candidates failed to select the correct option as their answer.
- 2) Accuracy of melodic dictation by candidates appears to be improving, and examiners were delighted to see so many completely accurate answers to this question. Common errors included the omission of a chromatic move in bar 5 and failure to appreciate the leap of a 5th upward at the end of the group of four semiquavers at the start of bar 7.
- 3) Many candidates recognised the perfect cadence at bars 7-8, but few answers identified the tonal centre securely as the dominant key of B^b major.
- 4) Almost all candidates were able to place at least one chord accurately, but a relatively small number of scripts placed all four chords accurately. The most common error involved the incorrect placing of chords **IIb** and **IVb**. Careful listening would have helped candidates to differentiate between these two chords, with the minor sound of the chord at the start of bar 23 indicating the use of chord **II** rather than the major sound of chord **IV** (at the start of bar 21).
- 5) Many answers to this question were entirely correct, reflecting an improvement in the accuracy of bass dictation that was welcomed by examiners. Many near miss workings failed to include a flat symbol in front on the final quaver (D) in bar 28.
- 6) Many candidates recognised the use of a pedal, but the two-mark maximum for this question should have alerted candidates to the fact that examiners were looking for further detail and accepted only dominant pedal for full marks in this question.
- 7) This was a fairly straightforward question with a clear answer, but examiners were surprised that so many scripts gave “acciaccatura” and “suspension” as answers, when an appoggiatura was so clearly present in the recording.
- 8) Many candidates correctly identified a perfect cadence in answer to this question.
- 9) In general, answers to this question suffered from a lack of specific detail. Many scripts noted the use of chromaticism, but few answers gave specific references to the score, and only a small number of answers extended the range of examples to include aspects such as texture, tessitura and articulation.
- 10) Many candidates described the Variation and the Coda rather than just the Coda in their answers to this question. This resulted in the inclusion of irrelevant detail that could not be credited. Only attentive listeners referred to the manipulation of the motif derived from bar 3 of the Theme in the final section of the Coda.

Extract 1BKEN HOWARD & ALAN BLAIKLEY, *Miss Marple*— Main theme (Axle Music, 1984), Original recording - unnamed orchestra (1984), EMI Records Ltd, 7243 8 28038 2 9 (1993), track 8,00'00" - 01'47" &01'48" – 02'23" [Total length of recorded extracts: 02'23"]

11) The presence of a low bass line (played by 'cellos) and addition of a harpsichord to the ensemble were the two most popular items of musical evidence offered in this question, which was answered well by most candidates.

12) This question was answered accurately by many candidates. The distinctive sound of the oboe was appreciated by most listeners, although a large number of candidates offered "Clarinet" as an incorrect response.

13) Relatively few candidates managed to gain full marks for this question. Most scripts were able to place the **C** chord accurately, but there was confusion over the position of the **F/A** chord (major) and the **Dm** (minor) chord. Attentive listening to the sound of each chord would have helped candidates to place these correctly.

14) This question was answered well, with a large number of candidates achieving full marks. Almost all responses demonstrated an awareness of the overall melodic contour, and the most prominent source of error was the misjudging of the interval of a 7th at the start and end of bar 9.

15) Instrument identification is an area in which candidates generally produce strong responses, but at AS level, identification of instrumental sound has to be precise. Many candidates correctly identified the use of a glockenspiel, but examiners also saw far less secure responses such as "triangle", "tubular bells" and "xylophone".

16) This question was answered with many candidates identifying accurately an imperfect cadence at bars 19-20.

17) Most candidates demonstrated an awareness of the melodic contour of the bass line, but many responses failed to perceive the initial stepwise movement of the line (bars 21 & 22, with bar 21 repeated at bar 23) and/or the arpeggio figuration in bar 24.

18) This question was not well answered, and most responses failed to include sufficient detail. Many answers did not venture beyond a list of instruments heard, and only attentive listeners were able to refer in detail to the antiphonal treatment of the two-bar melodic units or the doubling of the melodic line (at a distance of a 3rd/10th in the case of the trombone).

19) Many candidates identified the binary nature of the passage, with more detailed answers making clear the **ABAB** pattern of motifs. Examiners were surprised that few responses referred to the presence of an Introduction or to its return before the reprise of **A** material.

20) Most scripts made reference to the changes in the Introduction to the Passage, but few answers referred to the truncation to two bars. Many answers contained too much descriptive detail (frequently concentrating on instrument use) at the expense of detail relating to aspects such as rhythm and tonality. Given the very unusual aural nature of the ending, examiners were very disappointed that only a few candidates accurately perceived (and were able to discuss accurately) the unexpected modulation to the subdominant key (F major) at the end of the passage.

Section B**Extract 2 HAYDN, *Symphony no.103 in E flat, Hob.I:103*, 4th movement, bars 158 to 182¹.**

Extract 2A: Beecham, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (1960), EMI Classics 5-85513-2 (2003), CD1, track 12,02'13" – 02'34" [Length of extract: 00'21"]

Extract 2B: Norrington, London Classical Players (1994), Virgin Veritas/EMI Records (2010), CD2, track 8, 01'58" – 02'18" [Length of extract: 00'20"]

21) This predictable question clearly caught many candidates unawares, and examiners were disappointed that so many candidates appeared not to be aware that the time signature represented two minim beats in each bar.

22) This question was designed to test candidates' knowledge of the type of instruments that would have been used by Haydn in his orchestras. Some candidates failed to focus on relevant detail, but those who had studied the horns available to Haydn were able to refer to the limited range of notes available and to the way in which Haydn wrote for these instruments to work as a pair within the orchestral sound.

23) Examiners saw many completely accurate answers, suggesting that most candidates understood how to tackle this mechanical transposition exercise. A common error was to miss the natural (\natural) sign required before the note A in the 1st clarinet part at bar 7. It was disappointing that some candidates still appear to have little idea how to write a given instrumental part at sounding pitch.

24) This question was answered quite well by most candidates, although examiners expected some engagement with the harmonic content of the passage for the award of full marks. Many candidates were aware of the antiphonal nature of the passage, and those who knew the music in detail were able to refer to the truncation of the 1st Subject. Mention of the inverted pedal in the oboe was a common feature, but only the strongest answers attempted to engage with the harmony of the underlying V7d – Ib progression.

25) The performance comparison question was quite well answered, but too many candidates resorted to generalities rather than referring to specific points in the score. This limited access to the higher band of marks. Candidates must focus clearly on specific detail in the performances in order to gain high marks in this question. General descriptions of the music are not sufficient to go beyond the middle mark bands. The best answers were able to refer in detail to aspects of tempo, articulation, instrumental balance and pitch, providing close references to the bar numbering of the printed score. Examiners urge candidates strongly to make effective use of the 15 minutes of preparatory listening for this Unit to familiarise themselves with the aural detail of the two performance recordings for comparison.

26) This question was not well answered by most candidates. Too many candidates attempted to describe the structural context of the passage, placing it within an overall structure, whereas the question asked for a description of the musical detail that preceded the printed extract. Many able candidates lost valuable marks on this question as a result of not considering the wording of the question carefully.

Extract 3 DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA, *Ko-Ko* (1940), from *Duke Ellington, Classic Recordings Vol.7, 1940, Cotton Tail*, Naxos Jazz Legends 8.120738 (2004), track 3, 0'50" – 01'08". [Length of recorded extract: 00'18"]

27) (a) The first two parts of this question were answered accurately by most candidates.
 (b) The sound of the trombone was well recognised, and most answers demonstrated awareness that the instrument had been muted.

27) (c) Some answers to this question suggested a degree of confusion in candidate understanding. The most common error was to describe the use of a wah-wah mute rather than mention the highly unusual "ya-ya" vocalisations used in the recording.

27) (d) Candidates who had a good working knowledge of the complete recording knew that the "ya-ya" sounds occurred in the previous solo section (Chorus 2), but too many answers suggested a very sketchy understanding of the sequence of events in the music.

28) As with **Question 26**, many candidates failed to gain high marks in this question because they had not directed their answers toward the aspect of the music identified in the question. Examiners credited valid references to ostinato patterns in the performance, but too many answers gave only vague general descriptions of the music, often identifying instruments heard but failing to show how they made use of repetitive motifs within the extract.

29) Answers to this question needed to concentrate on the accompaniment in the latter part of the recorded extract, but many candidates gave general descriptions of musical events throughout the extract as a whole, resulting in a lack of clear focus in their answers. Candidates who listened attentively and knew the detail of the music were able to refer to the more active piano part (and provide appropriate detail) or to the ways in which the previous walking bass performed by the double bass changed towards the end of the extract.

30) Most candidates were able to provide some accurate detail in answer to this question, but it was clear that some candidates had very little idea of the sequence of musical events within the complete recording. This type of contextual question occurs frequently in this Unit, and in order to achieve high marks candidates must be able to convince the examiners that they know the music well by referring accurately to specific musical detail at the point in question (in this case, after the recorded extract).

31) Although examiners saw some answers that were very wide of the mark, most candidates knew that the performance was recorded in 1940.

Section C

Candidates' answers to this section need to be produced within a short amount of time, and it is important that the writing achieves a clear focus on the aspects of knowledge and understanding identified in the question. Too many responses open with lengthy background that often does very little to address the question set by examiners. However accurate, this type of preamble cannot be credited in the award of marks.

The best answers achieve a consistent focus on the demands of the question, revealing close familiarity with relevant music and detailed understanding of context. Less strong responses may provide a more general description of relevant detail with at least some (general) references to relevant music examples. Unfocussed writing that lacks clear knowledge of the music is unlikely to meet the standard expected at AS level.

32) This question was generally answered well, and many candidates were able to use detailed knowledge of the two works to illustrate general points of background. Detail relating to the Vivaldi concerto was very successful, but that relating to Beethoven's violin concerto tended to be less secure. The best answers provided accurate references to specific points in the both scores. Weaker candidates were able to make general points about the size of the orchestra in Beethoven, but were not able to give examples of instrumental use.

33) Candidates who selected only one of the works identified in the question tended to answer this question well. Unfortunately, many candidates felt they had to mention both works and it soon became clear that they could find a lot more to say about Ellington than Davis. This led to an imbalanced essay, which lowered the overall mark.

Answers that focussed on *Ko-ko* usually showed a strong level of appreciation of Ellington's technique of arranging. Most candidates tended to focus on the solo writing, sometimes at the expense of instrumental techniques. Answers which featured *Boplicity* were often less successful, with few candidates able to make more than basic observations on the composition of the nonet, or the simplicity of the solos in cool jazz style. Stronger responses frequently commented in detail on the significance of Gil Evans, and/or the music's effective and distinctive use of the French horn and tuba timbres.

34) This question was a popular choice for many weaker candidates, but they often ignored the beginning and early development of recording in favour of describing the developments of the last 20 years. Covering such a small section of the topic resulted in low marks.

Many answers revealed some knowledge of recording technology, but few candidates were able to provide much information on its effects on music and its transmission to audiences. The chronology of recording technology was frequently confused by weaker candidates.

Some centres appeared to have devised a prepared essay on the development of recording technology, but some candidates lacked the ability to use their knowledge of this subject to respond directly to the question as it was set by examiners.

G354 Performing Music 2 (Interpretation)

General Comments

Once again, it has been a pleasure and privilege to listen to candidates' G354 recitals. For many, this aspect of the A level course represents the culmination of many years of dedicated study and practice. Examiners acknowledge this, as well as the continued support given by teachers and parents.

Examiners are very grateful for the preparation and organisation that occurs both before and during the examining days. Whilst in the vast majority of cases all runs smoothly, centres are reminded of the following requirements:

- Timetables with candidate names and candidate numbers, details of repertoire (including levels) and music should be sent to the examiner at least one week before the examination.
- Each candidate should be timetabled for about 35 minutes.
- Candidates need to provide their own accompanists.
- There should be no overlap of repertoire presented for G351 and G354 in the same series.
- Recitals should last up to 15 minutes.

Section A: Recital

In last year's report it was necessary to draw centres' attention to what was meant by a focus with respect to the repertoire performed for the Section A recital, as many candidates' recitals did not satisfy this aspect of the specification. The specification states "*the repertoire performed should have a focus that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of a single idiomatic style*".

This means that there needs to be a **musical** link to the repertoire performed. During this series, it is clear from examiners' feedback that this message has been taken on board and there were fewer unfocused recitals this year. However, there were still examples where the focus was not musical, with titles such as 'travelling' or 'waltzes' appearing as the focus. In other cases, though the music was related in genre, the time span it covered was sometimes too wide; for example, 'Music for Stage including items by composers ranging from Purcell to Bernstein. The music needs to be related by era too. However, there were fewer instances of unfocused recitals overall this series which is a welcome improvement, as a lack of focus affects the marks awarded in both sections of the unit.

Centres are advised to contact OCR if they are in doubt about a particular focus and once OCR has verified the focus area and repertoire, they should not then be changed for the examination.

Examiners have noted the following points about recitals, which centres are advised to adopt:

- It is a **recital performance** and should be presented as such – a continuous performance, which establishes a sense of occasion from beginning to end. At times, there was too much disruption between items. At its extreme, this involved substantial pauses whilst other players or equipment were found.
- In some cases, candidates perform music that is too difficult for them. The requisite level is Grade 6 in order to access the full mark scheme. Candidates disadvantage themselves by playing music that is beyond them.
- Levels for amplified instruments should not be set and controlled by teachers or peers during the recital. Choices of amplification are the technical responsibility of the candidate and measured as such by the criteria.
- For G354, it is not advisable to perform portions of movements.

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- If arrangements are being performed, it is important that candidates check that recordings of performances on the instrument played in Section A are available for comparison for Section B.
- **Under no circumstances** must centres divulge examiners' contact details to candidates.

A wide range of instruments was presented with an increase of singers. There was a welcome variety of instruments from different countries and, for the first time, a hurdy-gurdy. Examiners extend their thanks and appreciation to accompanists. In the majority of cases, it was clear that much practice and diligent rehearsing had taken place prior to the performance with fine professionalism apparent. However, in a few cases, sadly, some poor accompanying did not help candidates.

Intrusive noise was sometimes an issue.

Examiners reported having heard a wide range of styles of music. For rock, pop and jazz recitals, often a good selection of repertoire, accompanied by some excellent bands, allowed candidates to shine and examiners reported hearing some stunning improvisation in this year's recitals.

Very few candidates performed to audiences this series, but where this did happen, centres took care to make it a very special occasion for their candidates.

Section B: Viva Voce

Examiners noted improvements in this section of the examination this session. The fact that there were fewer unfocused recitals meant that fewer *vivae voce* could not access the full range of marks due to inappropriate listening.

Centres are reminded of the following general points regarding *vivae voce*:

- Candidates need to have listened to and compared at least two performances of music related to their focus area for the instrument on which they played in their Section A recital. NB – this does not have to be exactly the same repertoire as that played by the candidate (though it can be and often is) as long as it is clearly related to the focus area.
- Candidates need to have researched the music of their focus area so that they can discuss its characteristic features in depth.
- Candidates need to be prepared to discuss the differences in interpretation they have noted between the performances they have listened to, not only in terms of more obvious areas such as tempo and dynamics, but in other areas such as tone, sonority and touch. Performance practice and issues of nationality should be considered too.
- Candidates need to be able to explain how their listening has influenced their own interpretation, demonstrating discernment.
- Lastly, candidates should be ready to appraise their own performance in light of their comparative listening and research.

Candidates are encouraged to record their observations on the *Viva Voce* Preparation Form (VVPF) and these should be handed to the examiner on their arrival at the centre (at the latest) with appropriate time built into the timetable for the examiner to read them. The more effort and detail candidates put into their research and comparative listening notes, the more prepared they will be, and the more they will have to draw on for the discussion itself.

In many cases, examiners reported having heard excellent *vivae voce*, with candidates able to discuss their focus area with the depth required at A2. However, in order to prepare candidates to full advantage, centres are asked to bear the following observations in mind:

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- Often candidates display great enthusiasm, but this is not backed up with the appropriate in-depth listening and research needed at A2 level. Candidates need to go further than discussing the obvious features or simply stating that they liked a performance. They need to explain why in more depth.
- Research is sometimes too cursory (CD liner notes, general music dictionaries, Wikipedia).
- Information proffered about the focus area and style of music performed is not rigorous enough with too many general or generalised comments made.
- There is sometimes a tendency to talk about line-ups, arrangements and accompaniments instead of focusing on the soloist.
- There is reliance on too many un-named You-Tube performers and ABRSM performances.
- There have been instances of candidates reciting prepared answers rather than responding to the actual questions asked.

Examiners are very grateful for the welcoming hospitality extended to them and OCR would like to take the opportunity to thank centres for all they do to support candidates in this unit of the qualification.

G355 Composing 2

General

Moderators have seen a wide range of achievement this year and some progress in centres' accuracy in examining the work of their candidates. Moderation by definition is a broad overview of the centre's relative success at applying the assessment criteria for its candidates. An accurate centre assessment removes the need for moderator intervention to bring the work into line with national standards.

There is an expectation that centres will deliver a taught course for this unit. Confident teaching establishes a foundation of compositional skills and supports candidates in developing and refining their creative work. At Advanced level, candidates need to demonstrate a wider harmonic and textural vocabulary than at AS or GCSE – many did not do so.

Congratulations are due to those centres setting appropriate demands on their candidates both in terms of composing outcomes and presentation of work, insisting on grammatical notation and pride in the finished compositional artefact.

Administration

A range of difficulties arose for some centres, which could have been avoided by a careful reading of the specification.

Course work cover sheet completion was helpful in a great many instances but procedural matters in presenting work for moderation need to be adhered to. Moderators cannot make informed judgements about teacher assessment if the forms are left blank with regard to notes in support of marks awarded. Comments should show differentiation between all candidates and centres should aim to use the fullest range of marks possible.

Recordings

It was clear that many centres used the final CD recordings in their own assessment as a way of ensuring everything was working. It was extremely helpful to receive recordings of Section A exercises – serialism, minimalism, popular song, in particular.

Moderators continue to receive CDs that are not named or do not play on standard audio equipment. Contact with centres was necessary when a single recording per candidate was not provided, for broken CD replacements, or for recordings that did not match any of the work submitted.

Section A: Stylistic Techniques

Moderators continue to be concerned that fair copies of exercises with no teacher annotation (as if this was an examined unit) give no clear view of the teaching and learning process that is essential in a coursework unit. Some centres annotated work with summative comments on the work that ignored incorrect procedures made by candidates. This was worrying and seemed to be for the moderator benefit and not the candidate. Successful centres provided a range of exercises with one or two drafts and clear evidence of instruction, feedback and progress.

The following points address the main findings and recommendations of moderators:

- It is a requirement to date all exercises and the timed test.
- Candidates must be allowed 1 ½ hours to complete the timed test.

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- The timed test should not be much less demanding than the coursework exercises.
- It is a requirement to identify the composer/source of all exercises.
- Centres should use authentic incipits at all times including original instrumentation of the selected excerpts.
- Centres should check that notation of the given part is accurate and that notation files have not become corrupted over time.
- Some centres offer several Section A options – two seems to work well in providing candidate choice but offering 3 or even 4 provided evidence that teaching and learning was less effective.
- Ensure that a **range** of keys/techniques is covered in the set of exercises.

Renaissance Counterpoint

There was some care taken in the selection of exercises but centres should avoid a single diet – Morley canzonets alone, for example, provide too narrow a range.

Some work was very accomplished but where it was weaker this was due to issues such as imitation starting on an incorrect note, strings of thirds, a failure to step back ‘inside’ a leap. The suspension is a very important part of the style and candidates should master the technicalities of its use.

Two-part Baroque counterpoint

There is a great deal of potential material available in this option. It lends itself to singers and instrumentalists who can appreciate the melodic aspects of shaping within this style. Some candidates might be more effective in this option than 4-part work. Successful work was characterised by:

- the inclusion of chord symbols underpinning harmonic understanding
- the exploration of more extended examples with good opportunities for imitation and a wider range of keys enabling access to the higher mark bands
- exercises that required a demonstration of both treble and bass writing
- the avoidance of over familiar examples once the fundamentals had been mastered
- the ability to think in melodic phrases rather than working note by note.

Chorale harmonisations in the style of J. S. Bach

This option is the most popular one in centres but the range of success in candidate understanding and accuracy of teacher assessment remains insecure.

It may be helpful to consider this option as a specific style-skill – not a generalised form of vocal 4-part harmony writing. Plain, simple harmonisations may meet the third band descriptor ‘broad understanding’ but will not be able to access the higher marks.

Moderators give the following helpful insights:

- Avoid exercises that are too long or too short – 12-16 bars is acceptable because the rate of chord change is much higher than in other options where 16-24 bars is advised.
- Modal and highly chromatic exercises are **not** required to access top marks. They are best avoided.
- The sheer variety of Bach’s style needs to be demonstrated by a clear incipit, complete in all parts for at least one bar for each exercise. This is absolutely essential to allow candidates the best chance to continue the given figuration.
- Candidates this year have shown a better knowledge and understanding of idiomatic cadences and modulation but give attention too, to the ‘singability’ of inner parts.

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- Openings of phrases and the cadences were secure – but ensure candidates understand idiomatic chord progressions to move between these main markers.
- There was a pleasing improvement in the use of passing quavers and even semi-quaver use.
- Ensure candidates know how to prepare and resolve dissonance – particularly the diminished chord in the minor key.
- Suspensions are stylish but there are other possibilities in addition to 4-3 in the alto part.
- The inclusion of a triple time exercise can help demonstrate a candidate's ability to harmonise minims stylishly.
- Provide a range of extracts to suit candidates' abilities and enable them to make gradual but steady progress.

String quartets in the Classical style

Some candidates showed skill and flair in this option. Centres sometimes provided too much in the given part, not allowing candidates to make the decisions about when the interest changes from one instrument to another. Successful work demonstrated confident use of appoggiaturas and imitation and a variety of extracts, not just minuet movements. Weaker examples lacked security in harmonic outline. Some exercises were too short and limited in scope; candidates need the opportunity to handle modulation and demonstrate an understanding of chromatic harmony.

For a minority of candidates the question remains: if they are not fluent alto/bass clef users, is this the correct option for them?

Keyboard accompaniment in early Romantic style

A minority of candidates chose this option and the need for an understanding of idiomatic piano writing remains a necessity here. Some exercises did not give scope for the use of chromatic chords or modulation to more remote keys, allowing the candidate little challenge.

Popular Song

Moderators were pleased to see a good response to the advice offered in reports to centres. Only a small number of centres continue to submit exercises that cover too wide a range of styles where candidates could not demonstrate a solid and developing understanding. Care is needed in the selection of exercises – to focus on blues, for example, needs exercises across a time period to enable access to an appropriate range of techniques and language. Words to songs should always be provided in exercises as well as original instrumentation in the given incipit. Simple keyboard realisations are not appropriate.

Minimalism and Serial Technique

Whilst only chosen by a small number of centres, teachers have compiled some excellent sets of exercises based on the work of the New York minimalists and the composers of the Second Viennese School respectively. They allow a gradual approach to understand the style and techniques associated with the grass-roots of these styles. Candidates were much less able to demonstrate the required range of techniques when the given exercises were not from the works of appropriate composers. Short compositions, loosely based on the titles of the options, are unable to gain merit.

Section B Vocal Composition, Programme Music, Film/TV Composition

In this section, candidates have more compositional freedom, choosing their own stimulus for individual interpretation and response.

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There is a concern that many candidates are in danger of duplicating the style of their Section A work, particularly when a cappella vocal submissions follow a portfolio of chorale harmonisations. If the style, language and use of medium are sufficiently contrasting there may be no difficulty. The overall restriction of unaccompanied voices for an entire unit is an additional limitation that centres must reflect on carefully.

An example of duplication might include a submission of Renaissance Counterpoint exercises together with an a cappella setting of the Sanctus/Kyrie, citing Palestrina, Byrd and Bruckner as models.

Moderators encountered many rather short compositions this year. Given the difference in the broad requirement of AS (3 minutes) and A2 (4 minutes), candidates should ensure that they are demonstrating work that is commensurate with the expectations of a second year of study. It is acknowledged, however, that duration of composition is not a precise science and moderators continue to exercise informed judgement in this regard.

Moderators reported a pleasing increase in the number of recordings with live elements – and the corresponding subtleties of compositional accomplishment that often accompany this approach.

The following notes summarise the main findings and recommendations of moderators:

The Commentary

Candidates should model their commentaries on the template provided in the specification, correctly identifying the option chosen, and outlining their brief in a concise statement.

Commentaries of more than two pages in length tended to be unfocussed and rambling. The best commentaries are characterised by:

- explicit, identifiable aural familiarity evident in the commentary and the work itself
- manuscript quotations of relevant passages of scores that contribute to the explanation of relevant listening
- references to the candidate's work by bar numbers rather than the use of screen shots
- articulate descriptions of the process of engaging with the stimulus and composition rather than description of the final piece.

Vocal composition

Moderators saw some very interesting choices of text. There were some splendid examples of accomplished choral writing as well as good work from candidates clearly familiar with 20th-century English art song. Live recordings were often very impressive.

In some submissions too little emphasis was put on text setting – the backbone of work to be established here. Structure is important in solo and choral vocal music – moderators ask, “Where has it gone?” ‘Through composed’ was often seen as a handy metaphor for ignoring any sort of unifying structure, be it thematic or tonal.

For some candidates, a preoccupation with the necessity of demonstrating word painting led to a loss of focus on the shape and continuity of the vocal line.

Songs in a music theatre/popular ballad style were often unadventurous, if perfectly sound. Lack of modulation was a weakness here.

In recordings, the use of the Sibelius ‘voice’ remains difficult to understand. Sequenced recordings of vocal compositions without words lose their very heart and soul. Some recordings successfully added live singing to synthesised accompaniment or supported an a cappella setting with discreet use of the piano.

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There were still too many poor quality sequenced recordings of both choral and solo settings; where candidates provided both live and sequenced versions, the live recording was more communicative in every instance.

Programme music

Moderators saw an intriguing range of stimuli – paintings, photos, poems, myths and plays. The evidence supported that it was not so much the quality of the story/picture etc but the depth of thought and research that had gone into the preparation of the musical response that helped candidates succeed. Less assured work did not get the balance right between technical considerations (eg structure) and the programmatic element. Candidates should think carefully about appropriate language and techniques to interpret their programmatic ideas.

In use of medium it was pleasing to see less indiscriminate use of the harp – cases where candidates had not thoroughly researched the possibilities of their chosen instruments remain. The painting of mood was often effective but lack of structuring and development restricted access to the higher marks.

Film/TV composition

This is a demanding option and success was seen with candidates who engaged in a sustained programme of research in order to acquire the necessary technical and musical skills for fruitful engagement in this option.

Storyboards or DVD clips with precise timings are mandatory here. A candidate who gave a descriptive outline of 'Music for an imaginary film scene' could not achieve well under 'technique', where the specific skills of synchronisation are rewarded.

There were many successful scores to existing visual clips, often well presented on DVD with menus. Accomplished work was effective and accurate in its links with the on-screen/storyboard action, avoiding similarity of style and approach to original scores.

Some work struggled to use appropriate vocabulary to really be effective in tense moments and the clip chosen should ensure a range of materials can be generated and worked with. Candidates providing separate DVD and audio clips to be coordinated by the moderator could not access the higher marks in recording.

Assessment

The following notes summarise the main findings and recommendations of moderators:

- Listing positive observations on the CCS is important but try to give a balanced assessment.
- Use the full range of marks – not just the top of the correct band.
- In chorale harmonisations, assessment in the top mark band was unsupported by the evidence in work when centres did not take into account an absence of passing modulations, the idiomatic use of V7d and more advanced non-harmony notes, non-stylistic harmonisation of minims at cadences and an overuse of inappropriate 6-4 inversions.
- The Production commentary: this needs a significant amount of detail covering the production of a final balanced, edited mix.
- Centres were frequently generous in their assessment of scores – teachers can encourage candidates to avoid large, poorly-formatted, 1 bar-per-page type, loose sheets, unnumbered submissions.
- Encourage candidates to see the score as a precise document rather than a framework for performer guesswork – unless intentionally aleatoric.

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- Encourage candidates to learn about articulation as evidence of their knowledge of the instruments they are writing for. Assessment was generous where the markings on the score were designed for sequencing effectiveness rather than performer interpretation.
- Unedited, sequenced realisations taken straight from Sibelius without further technical intervention cannot ‘communicate the composer’s intentions unambiguously’ and centre marks should reflect this.

Assessment of the exercise completed under test conditions

Some centres achieved the ideal relationship in which this exercise matched the level achieved in the later coursework examples. In some centres, the impressive achievement of later exercises appeared in stark contrast to the considerably weaker work in the timed exercise. In assessment this cannot be overlooked and must inform final judgements.

Concluding remarks

The Report to Centres is intended to provide helpful guidance following each series. There was evidence that some centres had made considerable progress by engaging with this advice but, disappointingly, some centres appear to be unaware of previous series’ advice.

Whilst the report deals with a great many issues for consideration, moderators have been encouraged and enthused by some outstanding examples of teaching and candidate achievement. Committed, dedicated support of compositional good practice remains clearly in view.

G356 Historical and Analytical Studies in Music

General Comments

Almost all candidates were able to demonstrate some musical knowledge and understanding in their answers to both sections of the paper. Some gave detailed and focused responses, while others wrote everything they knew without due regard for the demands of the specific question. Selection of appropriate material and application of correct terminology are essential to success at this level.

Most candidates completed the paper, though time management was an issue for some – the second essay being either very short or non-existent. Writing legibly proved a challenge for some, with handwriting often deteriorating even further as the examination progressed.

Candidates need to have ample practice in writing at length under pressure during the course so that they are able to cope with this aspect of the examination.

Section A required candidates to discuss various aspects of three songs by Hindemith and all candidates demonstrated some ability to engage with the music. There were some good responses to questions concerning melody, motifs, interpretation of text and mood. The application of appropriate vocabulary, especially regarding structure, proved more challenging. While some candidates were able to discuss harmony and tonality in some depth, others were seemingly deflected by the lack of a key signature and incorrectly described the music as “in C major with lots of accidentals” or even “atonal”. Tonality is one of the two Areas of Study for all units in Music at A2 level and candidates need to acquire secure knowledge and skills in this area. They also need to develop their aural skills, so that, through attentive listening, they are better able to relate sound to symbol. Candidates need to demonstrate secure aural perception in order to gain high marks.

There were some lengthy unfocused responses in Section A. The ability to select significant information is an essential skill at this level. In most questions in this section, marks are awarded for each relevant comment and it is appropriate for candidates to write in note form rather than in extended prose. If candidates have practised writing in a succinct manner, the space allocated for each answer on the Question Paper should be ample. On the rare occasion where it is necessary to continue on extra sheets, candidates should indicate clearly that this occurs.

Section B responses included all Topics.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the works they had studied, while the very best showed real engagement with the music. There was a tendency for some candidates to write too generally and narratively without actually pinpointing relevant details of the music itself. Many candidates produced unfocused essays that represented no more than descriptions of basic aspects of the music with little or no information beyond that provided in popular study guides. While published study guides provide an appropriate starting point, in order to gain high marks, candidates need, through critical listening, to have carried out rigorous and thorough appraisal of extended sections of both the prescribed, and the chosen related, repertoire.

For each Topic there are three distinct items of prescribed repertoire, each with its own set of related repertoire from the same period. In questions requiring discussion of more than one work, some candidates found the choice of appropriate repertoire challenging and wrote about works that were out of period for the question. It is vital that candidates are able to place each work correctly within its historical context and to link it appropriately with other items of prescribed/related repertoire.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1(a) There were some detailed, accurate answers with candidates recognising the A flat tonal centre, the open fifths and the repeated nature of the motif. Candidates needed to describe the music by giving specific examples and to comment on the mood. Correct references to tonality and mood were needed to gain full marks. Some candidates commented on the mood without describing the music. Some were unable to engage successfully with the tonality.

Q1(b) The best answers were those that considered details such as the nature of the phrasing and the juxtaposition of major/minor 3rd. Some wrote about the singer's interpretation rather than about the actual melody.

Q2 Most candidates gave some appropriate response. There were some detailed, perceptive answers regarding the use of material from earlier in the song and the piano writing, though fewer gave details about the voice part.

Q3(a) Although some candidates observed the strophic nature of the song with the two verses each beginning in the same way, but ending differently, many candidates found difficulty using appropriate terminology in this question. Most were able to make some link with interpretation of the text, but often comments related solely to the piano part, thus being more appropriate to Q3(b).

Q3(b) There were some detailed answers. Many candidates were able to produce convincing links between musical details and specific features of the text.

Q4 Most candidates gave some appropriate response, and there were some perceptive comments. As with Q1(a), there was some confusion over the tonality of the song. To gain high marks candidates needed to demonstrate acute aural perception with detailed discussion of the aspects required by the question.

Q5 In order to gain marks candidates needed to focus on harmony in a song and compare it with the extract. Answers that discussed other types of work, such as whole song cycles or operas, were not credited. Specific details are needed if full marks are to be achieved. Some candidates did not accurately identify their chosen song.

Section B

Topic 1

Q6 Most candidates were able to make some relevant points with some link to the text, though responses often focused more on tonality than on details of the rich harmonic language used by Schumann. Detailed reference to the expressive use of harmony and tonality was necessary to gain high marks.

Q7 Most candidates were able to discuss the relationship between voice and instrument in the music of Dowland. Discussions of Maxwell Davies were sometimes limited to lists of instrumental effects rather than focusing on the specific question.

Q8 Some answers were rather general, with candidates writing all they knew about their chosen repertoire rather than focusing on the effectiveness of the word setting techniques. Some chose repertoire from outside the period required by the question.

Topic 2

Q9 Answers were often limited to knowledge of the main keys used at the start of movements. Better responses showed a closer familiarity with the music and were able to relate detailed examples of the expressive use of harmony and tonality to the programmatic elements of the music.

Q10 Most candidates were able to give some examples from both works. Answers were sometimes unfocused, merely mentioning instruments and effects. In order to gain high marks it was necessary to give detailed illustrations and explanations of the expressive use of instrumental techniques.

Q11 Vivaldi featured in most answers to this question often with Couperin or Biber. Many responses were limited to lists of instrumental techniques without discussion of style and wider techniques as required. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of both chosen works in order to achieve high marks. Some candidates duplicated material they had discussed in Q10, while others chose composers who were not from the Baroque period.

Topic 3

Q12 Candidates were able to write about motifs from the film and most showed some understanding of the music, although others could only name motifs without reference to their musical content. It was necessary to give detailed examples of combination of motifs and how the motifs evolve to gain high marks.

Q13 There were some successful comparisons here. Most candidates were able to discuss some appropriate aspects of the music of Herrmann, but knowledge of the expressive use of harmony and tonality in the music of the other chosen composer was often very limited. Detailed illustrations from the music of both composers were necessary to gain high marks. References to music that was not of the same period as Herrmann were not credited

Q14 Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the music of their chosen composers, but answers were often limited to discussion of instrumentation. Most answers included the film music of Glass often with Shore or Zimmer.

Topic 4

Q15 There were some very successful responses. Most candidates had some understanding of the vocal writing found in *Stimmung* and were able to discuss examples from the music. Specific, detailed illustrations of the effectiveness of the vocal writing used in the musical interpretation of belief were needed to achieve high marks.

Q16 Many responses were limited to knowledge of the tonality used at brief moments in each work and few got to grips with the contrasting harmonic and tonal processes involved or were able to give detailed examples from the music. Answers needed to focus closely on the required features to gain high marks.

Q17 Most candidates were able to demonstrate some relevant knowledge. Works discussed included *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt* among others. Some answers were rather general and did not always focus on the expressive setting of text.

Topic 5

Q18 Most candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge of the work, but did not always focus their answer on the use of vocal timbres and textures for dramatic effect. Some referred only to the music written for Dido, thus restricting their response. Answers needed to refer in detail to aspects such as the use of recitative, aria and chorus in at least two extended sections to access the full mark range.

Q19 Candidates showed some knowledge of the music, but essays were rarely able to go beyond basic descriptive accounts of the two composers' styles and lacked any reference to text. Other candidates gave information found in a published study guide without being able to show that they actually knew the music and could focus on aspects of dramatic interpretation of text. In order to gain high marks candidates needed to know the works in sufficient depth to be able to draw upon relevant detail in response to the specific question.

Q20 Most candidates chose *West Side Story* and were able to demonstrate some relevant knowledge. Understanding of the other work chosen for discussion was often superficial and limited to knowledge of a few brief moments in the music. Some candidates restricted their answers to discussions of harmony and tonality. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of the contrasting musical features in both chosen works in order to achieve high marks.

Topic 6

Q21 Most candidates were able to make some comment about the musical techniques found in the album, though some restricted their response solely to technology. In order to achieve a high mark there was a need to focus on how a range of techniques was reflected in the music.

Q22 Many responses were limited to knowledge of the tonality used at brief moments in each song discussed and few were able to give detailed examples of the expressive use of harmony. Relevant knowledge of the music of the second chosen artist was often very superficial. It was necessary to make comparisons between the music of the two singer-songwriters to achieve a high mark.

Q23 Most candidates chose to discuss the music of Queen often with David Bowie or Led Zeppelin. Many responses lacked musical detail, merely listing production and recording techniques used. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of how the use of the techniques enhanced the music and lyrics in the two chosen albums in order to achieve high marks. Some answers discussed music that was not from the 1970s.

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Registered Office: 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
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