

GCE

Music

Advanced GCE A2 **H542**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H142**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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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G351 Performing Music 1

General Comments:

After another enjoyable year of assessing performances, OCR is again grateful for the help received from centres in organising examiners' visits : the timetabling of recitals and organising duet partners, ensembles and accompanists was approached with care and much skill, as was the provision in advance of copies of the music performed and details of recital programmes; other help included the provision of directions to centres, and allocated parking spaces. Venues included school halls, abbeys, cathedrals and churches, studios, and even drawing rooms.

As in previous years, the panel heard and enjoyed a wide range of music in the performances, ranging from Justin Bieber to J.S.Bach, and Rodgers and Hammerstein to Gilbert and Sullivan, with instruments and voices of all sorts.

Administratively, the following points need to be remembered:

- Centres are asked to complete the VAF (visit arrangement form) offering at least three possible examining days in different periods for examiners to choose from
- Copies (photocopies) of the music to be performed, with grades indicated, along with candidate names and numbers, should be sent to the examiner at least one week before the examination
- A timetable for the visit, (allowing up to 40 minutes per candidate and sufficient time for stage management/tuning) should also be sent to the examiner at least one week prior to the examinations
- Centres should provide accompanists/backing tracks as needed
- Examiners will bring their own recording equipment

Comments on Individual Sections:

Section A/C: Recital/Further Performing

The Visiting Examiners' panel enjoyed hearing young musicians performing live – in solos, duets and ensembles - in this most communicative and wide-ranging of art forms. Centres' appreciation of what this element of the qualification provides was again apparent from this year's visits, and candidates' performances in a "live" setting reflected what occurs in a centre's calendar of concerts, workshops, gigs and recitals.

Many recitals had clearly been rehearsed and presented with great care and offered clear range in Section A, and extension in Section C. Some candidates did offer music that was rather too demanding for them, especially as a piece went on or modulated and fluency and control became much less secure.

There were again one or two overlong recitals for both sections A and C this year (the maximum is 8 minutes for section A and 4 minutes for section C), in some cases with fatigue playing a role in the outcome. Examiners will not curtail a performance, but these timings should be kept in mind when programming a day's examinations.

There was a wide range of ensembles offered for section C (option 2) including marimba groups, string trios, rock bands and barber-shop quartets.

In Section C duets, it is vital that the music presented allows duet skills to be assessed – alternating solos (in a conversational duet, for example) does not fully achieve this, and in all duets and ensembles the candidate's part "**should be clearly distinguishable from that of any other performer**" (Specification p 12).

Improvisation is acceptable in recitals where the stimulus (lead sheet, chord chart) is provided. Candidates presenting recitals of arrangements/reductions on drum kit, piano or guitar should ensure that the complete musical texture is present i.e., not offering accompaniments without solo lines. Where backing tracks are used, attention to balance is an important and integral part of the recital, as is familiarity with intros and count-ins.

Among the disappointingly small number of Own Compositions offered in Section C Option 3, there were some compositions which were for solo instrument only, whereas the requirement is for "at least one other different instrument" to the candidate's own (Specification p12) and this is reflected in the mark-scheme; a fully-notated score must also be given to the examiner before the performance.

Section B: Discussion

The Discussion must follow directly after the Section A recital and is conducted *in camera*.

The Discussion usually lasts about 5-10 minutes at this level, and is an opportunity for the candidate – in conversation with the examiner – to explain performing choices and preparation in their section A performances, and to appraise the outcome.

This year, the stronger candidates were those who were able to go beyond mentions of dynamics and *tempo* and justify choices made with regard to a wider range of musical parameters – for example: timbre, specific techniques (sticking, *vibrato*, bowing, pedalling, effects) ornamentation and historical context and titles. Some candidates did refer to recordings relevant to their repertoire (which is assessed at A2) but it is the *candidate's* judgement, understanding and decision-making that are central to the AS Discussion. Some reflection on the effectiveness of these judgements in the performance often brings the Discussion to a close.

G352 Music Composing 1

General Comments

The amount of work and preparation that goes into the compilation of portfolios is not to be under-estimated and the quality of presentation and attention to detail by Centres is impressive. Moderators are extremely praising of the rapid and helpful responses of Centres to queries arising such as missing paperwork and non-functioning CDs. This co-operation aids the moderation process immensely and facilitates a smooth running session for which all moderators are very grateful.

There was much to praise in the work of many candidates, particularly in Section B. Candidates fared best in centres where given material was carefully matched to individual candidates, and where a broad range of styles and textures were provided for the exercises. Candidates given clear objectives and realistic parameters were often at an advantage. Where material was too simple or short, or where too much centre help had been given, able candidates were unable to demonstrate their knowledge fully. Where material was too difficult, overlong and containing complexities such as open scoring, candidates were not furnished with the building blocks with which to achieve basic clarity.

Most candidates submitted compositions, and overall, there was a pleasing degree of success here. However, arrangements did not always contain the level of originality of materials and harmonic variation from the original to meet arrangement criteria. Quite often, these better resembled transcriptions of works.

The controlled assessment is a very important part of this unit, and many centres are using well-chosen material. However, some centres are using examples given to other candidates as coursework, and this is not judged to be appropriate. The exercise should be previously unseen by the cohort, although it does not necessarily have to be the same for each candidate. Indeed, it is good to see that many centres are tailoring the exercises to match the ability of individual candidates.

Section A: The Language of Western Tonal Harmony

In Section A, candidates very often worked with a wide range of material to produce exercises which were idiomatic and detailed.

Some of the work offered the full range of language, and it was pleasing to see assuredness in real progressions from a significant number of candidates. Here, a confident and skilful use of supertonic sevenths, passing 6/4s and cadential 6/4s was demonstrated. An understanding of the harmonic progressions between the main markers, although uncommon, was commendable.

The majority of candidates, however, were more at ease with mainly primary harmony and some use of dominant sevenths. This was often quite successful, and although candidates were not able to demonstrate the whole range of required language, the cadence points were usually secure. Where candidates used supertonic sevenths and extended diatonic harmony, there was often a lack of confidence in the progressions, which impacted particularly on technique. Chords III and vii were rarely successful, and in many cases were utilised in two-part work, where candidates appeared to be taking a 'best fit' approach, rather than taking a linear progression view.

Centre marking was very often generous in Harmonic Language; it is not enough for candidates to add an occasional seventh to gain full marks – for this, a real understanding of the full use of

language needs to be demonstrated, and should include an understanding of a range of language in a linear progression.

Most work was appropriately labelled; in two-part work, chords must be labelled to demonstrate harmonic intentions. Guitar tab was used in some cases, however, this is not suitable for this unit.

Approach to technique was rather vertical in many cases, with examples of crossing parts, parallel movement and augmented 2nds in minor exercises. There was often an awareness to bass line shaping, particularly in 2-part work, but understanding of the linear nature of inner parts was not prioritised in much of the work. Use of inversions was limited in some work, or else misunderstood. However, some candidates had an excellent grasp of inversions and voice leading.

Textural writing was one of the stronger aspects of much of the harmony, and candidates had often been given varied exercises in which to demonstrate invention and continuity. However, some work utilised a preponderance of block chordal writing, thus limiting scope for candidates to write in different styles. There were examples of whole folios of chorale-type exercises; though the benefit of one or two chorales is not in doubt, homophonic exercises alone do not provide candidates with the material to demonstrate the range of harmony and techniques required in this unit.

Modulations were rather variable in success and were not always clearly labelled; moderators sometimes met confusion where an ambiguous or half-hearted approach to labelling modulations occurred.

Technique was more often generously marked too, and although marking was more accurate than for harmonic language, errors and misunderstandings were not always fully considered.

Candidates grasped the use of notation software very well, and many exercises were written using a programme. Nonetheless, errors there often remained, such as a lack of time-signature, muddled rests, inconsistent use of fermata, anacrusis mistakes and accidental omissions. In handwritten exercises, it was pleasing to see candidates taking pride in the neatness and legibility of their work.

In some cases, however, Centres did not provide the required incipit – a short (usually 2 bars), but necessary example of the bass line and texture – to help candidates shape the texture appropriately. In other cases, the two examples of work in full texture required by the specification had not been supplied; furthermore, not all folios included a minor key example. In some cases, modal examples were used; these did not give candidates the full opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of minor tonality.

Some examples used were deemed too familiar to be useful as a harmony exercise; candidates with a good ear will be able to replicate the harmony of God Save the Queen or Rule Britannia, for example, which might well inhibit their creativity.

Most candidates submitted the required number of exercises – six plus the exercise under controlled conditions. A few submitted too many, while other folios were incomplete.

The Timed Test often did not demonstrate a degree of understanding commensurate with the rest of the exercises, or else was not sufficiently testing of the more-able candidates. Whilst draft copies are useful to the moderating process, it is not necessary to submit more than one or two.

Most of the work contained meaningful and supportive teacher annotations on the exercises, and this is to be commended.

Section B: Instrumental Techniques

Candidates took the opportunity in this section to be creative and play to their strengths. A wide variety of styles, structures and instrumental combinations were used, often to excellent effect. Established instrumental combinations, such as wind and string chamber groups, were very popular, and overall, were usually successful in demonstrating instrumental knowledge. Rock and Pop combinations were often successful in conveying an understanding of style and materials, but were generally more limited in range and scope of instrumental use and techniques, relying too heavily on the structure of the work.

Several works used voices or synthesisers, either wholly or in combination with acoustic or amplified instruments; however, no credit can be given to these parts (voices and synthesisers) in Use of Medium, and over-reliance on these particular forces is often self-limiting in other criteria, too.

Centre marking had often been over-generous in Use of Medium, and the above points had not always been taken into account.

Candidates often cited a range of listening; sometimes, where diverse and unconnected listening was listed, this led to a slight confusion of ideas and style, with little overview emerging. More successful works were able to demonstrate an understanding of an overarching style or concept, combining this with a good understanding of the timbral and expressive capabilities and combination of instruments.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate structural cohesion, and this was very often the strength of the works. On the other hand, Harmonic underpinning and development was often quite rudimentary, and rhythmic ideas not always consistently unfolded. However, some candidates showed a high level of sophistication of ideas, and a mature understanding, with richly developed motifs and harmonies.

On the whole, candidates had taken much pride in the presentation of their scores, and compositions were often imaginatively titled. That said, not all scores included the desired degree of detail, such as articulation, dynamics and performance directions. Live recordings were usually of a high standard, invariably helping to bring the music off the page in an engaging manner. Sequenced versions were often carefully produced, but in other examples were less polished, with little attention to balance, tempo and dynamics.

The moderating team feel there is much to enjoy in the work of this unit and the meticulous approach and support of teachers and Centres is invaluable.

G353 Introduction to Historical Study in Music

General Comments:

The final full session of Unit G353 produced a spread of results demonstrating positive achievement on the part of almost all candidates. The unit aims to enable pupils to develop and refine the aural and musicological study skills required to explore the historical study of a specified range of prescribed music and develop essential study skills that can be applied to a more in-depth study of a specialised repertoire reflecting individual interests in relation to the chosen historical topic at A2 level (in Unit G356).

The performance of candidates this year mirrored closely that of the 2015 paper, and again those who were familiar with detail of the prescribed repertoire (orchestral scores and jazz recordings) were able to build upon their demonstration of general musical knowledge and aural perception in relation to unprepared music in **Section A**. Examiners remain concerned that many candidates who demonstrate high levels of aural perception and detailed musical knowledge in **Section A** are subsequently let down by presenting only a sketchy understanding of the prescribed repertoire from one or both parts of **Section B**. Centres have at least two terms to prepare this material, and failure to do so in a methodical manner so that learning of the repertoire is spread over this extended period can disadvantage candidates seriously.

At the top end of achievement, there were many scripts that reflected much acute listening, detailed aural perception, a strong understanding of how each extract of music “worked” and a knowledgeable sense of the music’s historical context.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Extract 1A FRANZ SCHUBERT, *Variations on “Trockne Blumen” for flute and piano, D.802, bars 38-69 & bars 94-116b. Aldo Barten & Martin Helmchen, (2008), Pentone Classics PTC 5186 334 (2009), tracks 7 & 9 [Total length of recorded extracts: 03’46”]*

1 Most candidates recognised the two key centres as the tonic (e minor) and its relative major (G), but some scripts had these the wrong way round, suggesting that the first part of the answer had been completed without *listening* to the music. The notes B and E printed in the score’s melody line should have alerted candidates to the identity of the initial key, coupled with the minor *sound* of the music at the opening of the extract.

2 Very few candidates were unable to hear the change of melodic instrument from piano (right hand) to flute, and most scripts noted that the melody was played an octave higher in the second statement.

3 Many candidates identified all four chords accurately, but some experienced difficulty in distinguishing between the B and G chords, in spite of some clear evidence in the printed melody line of the score that should have guided chord choice in this answer.

4 Most candidates identified the imperfect cadence accurately.

5 Most candidates noted that the key signature had changed to E major, and many mentioned that the section ended with a perfect cadence in that key. Further detail was frequently sketchy or carelessly inaccurate, the most notable example being the identification of c minor rather than c# minor as the tonal centre in bars 27 and 28.

6 The placing of dynamic indications in relation to the printed music was often imprecise. Examiners were looking for recognition that the volume increased from the start of the system to reach its loudest point in the first half of bar 31, from which point onward the dynamic level subsided. Candidates who drew one large *crescendo* marking from the start of bar 29 to the end of bar 32 had evidently not been listening to the recorded music with the necessary degree of attentiveness.

7 “Ternary form” was a popular incorrect response to this question. Successful candidates were able to outline the three main sections of the extract, but in spite of an instruction to do so in the wording of the question, many candidates failed to provide bar number references to identify the sections precisely. Many answers noted the elements of repetition within each section of the extract. The descending sequence was recognised by most candidates.

8 Some candidates were able to secure full marks for their answer, and most managed to complete the first bar accurately. The leap up to a C followed by the rising interval of a 3rd at the start of bar 48 appeared to cause problems for many candidates. It was disappointing that so many almost entirely correct responses lost a mark as a result of omitting a sharp sign (#) before the final note D.

9 Many responses to this question simply described the music in a bar-by-bar pattern, failing to focus in detail on the relationship between the piano and the flute. Most answers mentioned some element of antiphony (there were many “call and response” comments), although only perceptive listeners mentioned detail such as the instruments joining together at cadence points, or the flute shadowing the piano right-hand melody at the interval of a 3rd.

10 This question produced a wide spread of marks. Most responses focused on the rapidly-moving octaves in the left-hand (although many described these as semiquavers rather than demisemiquavers), often at the expense of noticing important detail elsewhere in the piano writing. Attentive listeners managed to provide evidence of a range of textures and figuration in the piano part (lyrical melody, broken-chord patterns, octaves in the right-hand), but some responses provided irrelevant detail relating to the flute line.

Extract 1B ELMER BERNSTEIN, *The Comancheros* – Main Title, bars 6-42 & 43-74 (no score available). Utah Symphony Orchestra, Elmer Bernstein (1961), from *Great Composers – Elmer Bernstein, Varese Sarabande VSD 6077 (1999), track 3, 00’00” - 00’52” & 00’53” – 01’42” [Total length of recorded extracts: 01’42”]*

11 Almost all candidates identified the use of violins correctly.

12 Many candidates were able to position the F chord accurately in bar 9, but the placing of other chords appeared to cause more problems. The printed skeleton score should have enabled candidates to select appropriate chords on the basis of the melodic line, but in many cases Examiners saw chords that would have clashed with the printed melody.

13 This question was answered well, with almost all candidates identifying a roll as the technique used by the snare drum player in bar 16.

14 Most candidates were aware that trumpets introduced the new theme in bar 16.

15 Almost all candidates managed to provide a convincing sense of the overall melodic contour in their response, but the intervals between the opening three notes (two stepwise moves followed by a fall of a 3rd) caused problems for many, resulting in an incorrect pitch at the end of the phrase.

16 Identification of the glockenspiel was the most popular observation in answer to this question, and writing about features of the main melody line rather than the accompaniment

disadvantaged many candidates. Perceptive listeners commented on the nature of the new countermelody and the fact that its rhythms did not always coincide with those of the main melody. Other creditable observations included references to the snare drum roll at the start of the passage and the rising broken-chord motifs (no longer using dotted rhythms) in the bass line.

17 The technique of strumming was recognised by most candidates.

18 Most candidates answered this question correctly identifying the descending sequence. Examiners did not allow references to “sequencing” in candidate responses.

19 Many responses were able to produce the overall contour of the bass line. The standard harmonic progression of this passage (if appreciated aurally) should have guided candidates toward appropriate choices of pitch for the bass line at this point.

20 Many candidates commented on the initial F major tonal centre and noted that the passage returned to end in the same key. Stronger answers noted the series of perfect cadences (bar 61 to bar 64) and perceptive listeners referred to the extension of the final cadence by the use of “unexpected” brass chords (bars 67 and 68) underpinned by a tonic pedal in the bass and an inverted dominant pedal in the melody. Weak responses tended to describe irrelevant and basic features of the melody or the instrumentation.

21 Most candidates gained a mark by recognising that both passages contained two main themes (A + B) and a coda. More detailed answers noted the restatement of the “B” theme in **Passage 1i** but not in **Passage 1ii**, and the extension of the final note at the conclusion of the coda in **Passage 1ii**.

Section B

Extract 2 J.S. BACH, *Brandenburg concerto no.2 in F, BWV 1047, 1st movement, bars 59² to 80¹*.

Extract 2A: Karl Richter / Munich Bach Orchestra (1968), Deutsche Grammophon / Universal Music 463 657-2 (2002), disc 1, track 5, 02’20” – 03’07” [Length of recorded extract: 00’47”]

Extract 2B: Trevor Pinnock / The English Concert (1982), Archiv Produktion / Universal Music 410 500-2 (1982), track 5, 02’35” – 03’28” [Length of recorded extract: 00’53”]

22(a) This question was answered well. Candidates named the ornament or produced accurate verbal descriptions of what was performed in the recorded extracts.

(b) This term caused confusion for some candidates, who thought it referred to the use of a piano within the score. Candidates who knew the music realised that here the term was being used as a longhand version of the common dynamic indication to play quietly (*p*).

23 Most candidates were able to comment on the order in which instruments took up the main melody of the passage, and many understood that this was taken from an episode. Informed candidates were able to comment on Bach’s use of invertible counterpoint and the ways in which both the melody and its accompanying countermelody were woven into an increasing complex contrapuntal texture. Many candidates failed to secure full marks for their answers because they neglected to identify any of the key centres or refer to any aspect of tonality in the passage.

24 This question was not answered well, with many responses failing to address the relevant aspect of harmony. At a basic level, candidates needed to have appreciated that the passage contained a chain of 7th chords that imply tonal centres but do not resolve until the end of the

passage. The best responses were able to identify chords and/or implied tonal centres precisely, while less secure responses tended to refer only to the fact that the passage concluded with a resolution to g minor. A number of observant listeners also referred to the chromatically-descending bass line as a feature generating interest in relation to the underlying harmony.

25 Answers to this question tended to reflect secure awareness of the use of sequence within the passage, and a number of responses were able to provide supporting evidence such as the one-bar nature of the motif and/or its imitation of the trumpet line in bars 17 & 18. Candidates seemed to be much less secure in their understanding of suspensions within the passage. Many produced elaborate descriptions of the stages of preparation, suspension and resolution, but were unable to provide evidence to show how this device was used within the specified passage.

26 This question enables candidates to demonstrate their listening abilities in relation to the comparison of two different performances of the score. Centres are now familiar with this task, and most candidates are able to write convincingly about the two performances, supporting their observations with musical evidence. At a lower level, comments tended to refer to the most prominent differences in the performance (the tempo of each performance, for example) whereas candidates who received marks in the higher bands produced evidence that reflected careful listening and an appropriate focus on detail. The element of aural balance between the concertino instruments was a popular topic for discussion, with many commenting on the overpowering dominance of the trumpet sound in **Extract 2A** and the more equal aural balance achieved in **Extract 2B**. Examiners were pleased that so many candidates commented on the use of a recorder flute in both extracts, but many argued (incorrectly) that **Extract 2A** (1968) represented a period performance, whereas **Extract 2B** was, in fact, the more recent recording (1982) and revealed a greater knowledge of modern Baroque performance practice.

27 Most candidates gave “Ritornello form” as their answer, but Examiners were surprised by the wide variety of responses to this straightforward question on musical structure.

Extract 3 **DIZZY GILLESPIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA, Manteca (1947), from The Complete RCA Victor Recordings, Sony BMG / Bluebird 366528-2 (1995), disc 1, track 1, 01'47" – 02'19". [Length of recorded extract: 00'32"]**

28 This extract was part of a prescribed item of repertoire that candidates had been able to prepare for two terms. Examiners therefore expected the answer to this question to reveal appropriately detailed knowledge and consequently did not credit responses that failed to identify the type of saxophone (tenor) being heard.

29 This question was answered well, with most candidates being able to identify at least two specific performing techniques heard in the extract. Some candidates who listed only three techniques found themselves disadvantaged if two of those techniques overlapped (for example, *glissando* and *slide*).

30 Many candidates were able to comment on appropriate detail in the accompaniment, often making specific observations. The walking string bass was a popular point for comment, and many noted the use of chords in the brass and horns. Perceptive listeners were able to comment that these brass chords were initially detached and later became sustained.

31 This question was answered well; most candidates noted the absence of brass and horns, and many referred to the use of Cuban percussion influence at this point.

32 Most candidates referred to the return of brass and horns, and some mentioned the more homophonic texture of the music. Detailed comments frequently referred to the brass

instruments taking over the melody or the saxophone countermelody. Examiners also credited valid references to the use of antiphony.

33 Most candidates knew that Gillespie entered with the melody following the recorded extract, but some answers clearly confused this with his earlier melodic solo. The use of the high register and wide vibrato on sustained notes were mentioned by many candidates, and those who knew the music well were able to refer to specific detail such as the opening ascending leap of an octave or give specific details of Gillespie's elaborate decoration of the melody in the passage.

34 Most candidates knew that Chano Pozo collaborated with Gillespie in the composition of *Manteca*, and Examiners were pleased to see that so many candidates were aware of the less well known contribution of Walter (Gil) Fuller to the work.

Section C

In general candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the context in which the prescribed repertoire was created. General features were discussed successfully – e.g. the instrumental resources and structures used by Bach and Mozart, and the recording technologies of the 1920s and 1950s. Many candidates were weaker in relating their knowledge to the music and providing evidence from the prescribed repertoire itself. Examiners were disappointed that some able candidates revealed only limited engagement with the music itself. It was refreshing, however, for Examiners to encounter candidates who communicated their enthusiasm and knowledge through detailed and perceptive examples from the prescribed repertoire.

35 This was the most popular question choice this session, and the best essays were generally on this subject. With two concertos listed in this session's prescribed repertoire, many candidates and teachers may have expected a question of this type to appear on the paper, and it seemed that many candidates had prepared successfully for this possibility. Most candidates were able to write convincingly about the background to both works and there were detailed explanations of the instrumental resources and their use, supported by some specific examples from the music itself. The best candidates attempted to contrast the musical language in the two concertos, for example referring to North-German polyphony and the influence of Vivaldi on Bach. A number of candidates compared the dramatic and expressive use of d minor by Mozart with the movement through a range of keys in the ritornello form of Bach's concerto movement.

36 This question was the least well answered, and Examiners saw very few convincing essays here. Some candidates managed to write perceptively about drum technique in Davis' performance, but few had thought deeply about the rôle of percussion in any of the works they had studied. A number chose *Tin Roof Blues* but also stated that the drums were inaudible in the prescribed recording, so the commentary was speculative rather than based in fact. Rossini was discussed in some essay (although comments rarely ventured beyond discussion of the initial antiphonal snare drum rolls) and although there were a number of good descriptions of the use of Cuban percussion in *Manteca*, Examiners were surprised that so many responses to this question failed to mention this recording (and its innovative and distinctive use of percussion) at all.

37 Answers to this question generally achieved a better focus on the task than in previous sessions. Candidates have always responded well to the early technology but have been weaker on the development of recording in the 1950s. The best answers were able to place the prescribed jazz recordings accurately in terms of chronology, and many responses included some technical details on the nature of studio technology in the 1950s. Some candidates exaggerated the use of editing and multi tracking facilities available to (and, more significantly, used by) Miles Davis. There was a marked tendency to treat the Dizzy Gillespie and the Miles Davis recordings as one element, without recognising the rapid pace in the development of recording technology between the two performances: for example *Manteca* was recorded at a time when the 3-minute limit of shellac discs still applied, but Davis had the benefit of the longer recording time available as a result of the new vinyl discs. Sadly, too many essays referred to Miles Davis recording onto a CD medium, revealing worryingly limited awareness of relevant background context.

G354 Performing Music 2 (Interpretation)

General Comments:

Examiners were once again privileged to hear a wide range of performances reflecting often many years of study and practice. They are aware of, and grateful for, the considerable amount of time and effort put in by Centres to ensure that the examination days run smoothly. The overall standard of performance by candidates was comparable with previous years.

As this is a well-established unit, the administrative requirements associated with it were in place in the vast majority of cases, but it is worth reminding Centres that the following should be completed prior to the examination date:

- Submission of completed VAF (visit arrangement form) offering possible dates for Examiners to visit in each of the time periods stated.
- A timetable for the examinations which allows up to 40 minutes for each candidate. Consideration should be given to any stage management required, and also time built in at the start of the day for Examiners to read VVPFs (Viva Voce Preparation Forms).
- A list of candidate names, numbers, instruments, repertoire (including grades) and timings.

All the above should be sent to the Examiner at least one week before the examination date.

Comments on Individual Sections:

Section A: Recital

As in previous years, this area of the qualification sees excellent achievement. Students performed on a wide variety of instruments, sometimes achieving extremely highly indeed. Both Examiners and Centres are grateful for the opportunity for candidates to perform live as this is the very essence of music making.

This is a well-established unit, but it is worth reiterating the requirements and highlighting some of the marking criteria to ensure candidates are thoroughly and accurately prepared.

- At A level, candidates need to prepare and present a performance which is solo, as a member of an ensemble (where the candidate's part is not doubled) or as an accompanist. The recital should not be a mixture of these disciplines. Solo performances on closely related instruments (e.g. flute/piccolo, oboe/cor anglais) are acceptable, but recitals should not include a mixture of tuned and non-tuned percussion.
- Self-accompanied recitals are acceptable as long as the focus is clear.
- Arrangements are acceptable, although candidates need to check that performances are available on their instrument for comparative listening to be carried out for the section B *viva voce*. Arrangements need to include the full texture of the original music (e.g. vocal lines as well as accompaniments for guitar or drum kit repertoire).
- Where backing tracks are used, care needs to be taken over balance, as this is an area relevant to the assessment criteria.
- The repertoire should be linked by a focus theme. This means the music performed should be of the same style and time period e.g. Classical, Baroque, Blues, Music Theatre etc. Even

within such areas, (e.g. Music Theatre), it is still possible to have a diversity of music, so candidates need to choose carefully to make sure there is homogeneity of musical style in the repertoire they choose. NB: such titles as “Dance Movements Through the Ages”. If the music chosen for the section A recital is not focused, it does affect the mark awarded for both the recital and section B Viva Voce. If in doubt about the suitability of candidates’ repertoire, please contact OCR.

- In order for candidates to access the full range of marks available, the music performed needs to be comparable to grade 6 level as set by instrumental examining bodies. If the music performed is below grade 6, then the full range of marks cannot be accessed.
- Candidates do need to provide copies (photocopies are acceptable) of the music they intend to perform for the Examiners’ reference. It is in the candidates’ interest to do this so that they can access the full range of marks available for the first section of the marking criteria, Knowledge and Fluency of Pitch and Rhythm. Copies should be in the form appropriate to the instrument and style being performed, with sufficient information included for Examiners to make a judgement in the four areas of the marking assessment criteria, as detailed below.
- Candidates should be aware that their recitals are considered under four areas in the assessment criteria: Knowledge and Fluency of Pitch and Rhythm; Technical Control; Realisation of Performance Markings/Conventions; Interpretative Understanding and Aural Awareness. Examiners will consider their recital as a whole against these four areas.
- It is acceptable for candidates to include improvisation in their recitals as long as a stimulus (e.g. lead sheet, chord progression) is provided for the Examiner.
- The recital should not be more than 15 minutes duration. There is no minimum length, but it is clearly within candidates’ interest to offer a significant length of recital on which Examiners can make a judgement.
- Centres should provide accompanists, but not recording equipment/facilities. Examiners will bring their own recording devices.
- On the occasion that a candidate is presenting both AS and A level recitals in the same session, care should be taken that repertoire is not duplicated between these units.

Section B: Viva Voce

Examiners reported hearing some excellent offerings in this area. Many candidates had clearly enjoyed researching and listening to a wide variety of performances relevant to their chosen focus area. In most cases, candidates had recorded their findings and thoughts on a VVPF which was submitted to the Examiner prior to the examination. Whilst there are no marks *per se* for the VVPF, it is certainly in the candidates’ best interest to do this as it provides a useful starting point for both Examiners and candidates. Centres are reminded that candidates are allowed, and indeed encouraged to take a copy of their VVPF into the exam with them.

Some points to bear in mind regarding this section of the examination:

Candidates should be prepared to answer questions in four broad areas. These are:

- Aspects of their chosen focus area, including stylistic features of the music performed and research carried out. In some cases, this area is the least well answered. Candidates are encouraged to read established texts and not rely solely on cursory details gleaned from online sources that have not been verified.

- Awareness of different performing styles and conventions associated with their focus area as exemplified in the performances (at least two) they have cited. NB it is not necessary to compare performances of the same pieces, or indeed the pieces played by the candidate in their recital; the music just needs to be representative of the focus area chosen and on the same instrument as that performed on in the Section A recital. Candidates should be prepared to discuss more than tempo and dynamics, considering differences in approach to the more subtle areas of tone and phrasing too. You Tube is a most useful resource, but candidates need to be judicious about the performances they choose, as there is a wide range in standard. Candidates should record details of performers' names, dates and place of performance. Consideration should be given to national schools or other types of performance practice.
- Explanation of the choices they have made in preparation for their own recital and how their listening has influenced them. When candidates have carried out detailed listening to varying performances, it is highly enjoyable to witness their enthusiasm and conviction of their thoughts and reasoning in this area of the discussion. It does allow candidates to get at the very heart of performing and what has conditioned their interpretative choices. There were some extremely convincing discussions in this area.
- Self-reflection and consideration of these choices in light of their recital performance. This is an area that candidates should realise does not refer to any blemishes in their own performance – something which is inevitable in live performance – but rather a reflection on the interpretative choices made by the candidate in light of their listening and research, and whether they would retain or change these in subsequent performances.

It is the candidates' responses in these areas that Examiners will consider when assessing the *viva voce*, so preparation and practice along these lines is strongly recommended. If the candidate's recital has not been securely focused, this will affect the mark awarded in the *viva voce*, so if in doubt about proposed focus areas, Centres are strongly recommended to seek guidance from OCR.

G355 Composing 2

General Comments

Moderators have been pleased to report that standards of work and assessment seemed to have been of a higher quality this session. Whilst there were few really exceptional submissions there were also very few weak ones.

Many teachers are now experienced in the application of the marking criteria to assess their candidates' coursework portfolios, but teachers newly in post will find the following comments helpful in indicating the main features involved in the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Preparing work for dispatch

- The top copy of the MS1 form needs to go directly to OCR so that the processing of marks can begin in a timely manner.
- If addition and transfer of marks are thoroughly checked, unnecessary delay can be avoided when centres have to be contacted.
- Moderators are grateful to those teachers who wrote helpful comments in support of their assessment; those who did so were often more accurate in their marking.
- Candidates should check their recordings to ensure the complete recording is present on the CD and that every page of the score has been printed out. Memory sticks must not be sent.

Section A: Stylistic Exercises

The majority of students presented Bach Chorales in the stylistic exercises but there was also a pleasing level of understanding in terms of the possibilities for the candidates offering minimalism and popular song. The following key points should be kept in mind:

- Exercises for Section A should all come from an original source and should not be edited. Edited chorales frequently cause problems with harmonic fluency and natural phrasing.
- A suitable amount of **accurate** incipit material, complete in all parts must be provided. If candidates submitting chorales worked from a melodic line alone, this can really disadvantage the candidates who have no model from which to continue the texture.
- Where a preliminary draft of an exercise might show the teaching and learning interaction and can be helpful to moderation it is not a requirement, nor necessary, to produce multiple drafts of exercises.
- The selection of exercises should enable the candidate to show a range of advanced techniques in order to access the full range of marks.
- An indication that candidates have really understood the stylistic traits in the music of the New York minimalists, for example, would be that the stylistic differences between the representative composers are demonstrated. The music of Glass and Reich offer very different technical possibilities.

Section A assessment

In general, centres are becoming more accurate in considering the achievement in their candidates' work with fewer examples of assessment where a substantial gap between the evidence in the work and the marks awarded is seen.

Section B – Composing

There was a good range of responses in Section B, with an increase in the numbers of candidates submitting the Film/TV option with an even distribution of those choosing vocal or programmatic composition.

Centres are reminded that in regard to duration, the 4-minute guidance in the specification is flexible given the relative content of slower or faster pieces. Some candidates produced compositions that were considerably underweight, at two or three minutes in length; compositions of substantially longer proportions were often repetitive without musical justification.

The focus of commentaries should be to document the listening that has informed the composition process rather than to provide an evaluation of the composition. Whilst some reflection can be useful, candidates should avoid excessive length in commentaries that include screen shots (often lacking clefs and instrument identification) when score and bar number references will suffice.

The presentation of scores showed attention to performance detail in most cases. The weakest aspects were the scarcity of dynamic markings within phrases, needed to give them more shape and expression.

Programme Compositions

This continues to be a popular option with some outstanding pieces of programme music, which really captured the style and mood of their stimulus. Some pieces showed evidence of having been composed and then almost superimposed against a brief, which had been written after the composition. This proved to produce less effective outcomes. Some programmatic stimuli were very ambiguous and often failed to match the composed outcome by the student.

Good practice was observed in the work of candidates who helpfully provided text on the score to track the progress of the narrative.

Vocal Composition

Nearly all centres submitted live recordings of their vocal compositions showing an appreciation that sequenced audio does not always give a true impression of the composer's intentions. Many submitted a live recording of the vocal part over a sequenced backing track with considerable success.

Word setting was effectively handled and candidates employed a range of techniques within their compositions. Submissions included choral settings, and solo songs of the 'English Song' variety or settings of sacred texts. The most successful were, as always, particularly uplifting.

Some highly effective popular song settings were offered, including extended instrumental sections that allowed for a good range of compositional skills to be demonstrated.

Film/TV Composition

The most successful examples were ones that offered candidates the greatest opportunity to experiment with an unknown visual stimulus. Popular films with well-known scores proved difficult for candidates to plot an independent route.

It is important to note that Film/TV compositions must be accompanied with either a visual stimulus or a detailed timed storyboard in order for the candidates to gain appropriate credit under Technique.

Some candidates retained the dialogue and sound effects in their film clips but clarity in the balance of the audio was often difficult to achieve.

Concluding remarks

Whilst technology provides many advantages for the student-composer, not least the simultaneous hearing of several parts, the practice of composing at the computer created problems at times. Writing extremely rapid passages of music that were simply unplayable did not take into account the realistic possibilities of the chosen instruments.

Some candidates showed great skill and expertise in their use of technology, editing scores to ensure performances that were as vibrant and realistic as possible. There were some excellent, vivid live recordings, which brought scores to life, and centres are to be commended for the support given to their candidates in enabling these realisations to be so successfully achieved.

G356 Historical and Analytical Studies in Music

General Comments:

Almost all candidates demonstrated some musical understanding in Section A and were able to show some knowledge in their answers to Section B. There were some outstanding scripts. Some gave detailed and focused responses, while others needed to give much more concise, specific key information in their answers. 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. Some handwriting was neat and easy to read. Others found writing legibly under examination conditions a real challenge. 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 Bridge's setting and all candidates demonstrated some ability to engage with the music. There were some good responses to questions concerning melody, motifs and accompaniment. Questions regarding interpretation of text and performance interpretation proved challenging for some, with answers describing the music in rather general terms without focus on the requirements of the specific question. Interpretation is one of the two Areas of Study for all units in Music at A2 level and, through attentive listening, candidates need to develop secure skills of aural perception in this area.

Where questions ask for a specific number of examples to be identified, e.g. four in Question 3, only the requisite number of examples are considered when awarding marks. Thus, in Question 3, only the first four examples given by the candidate were marked. Candidates should, therefore, ensure that they consider the most appropriate examples before writing their answers. Many candidates gave more than the required number of responses to both Question 3 and Question 4.

The space allocated on the question paper should be adequate for candidates to produce focused responses – note form is fine, there is no need to write in continuous prose. On the rare occasion where it is necessary to continue on extra sheets, candidates should indicate clearly that this occurs.

Section B

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the works they had studied, with the best showing real engagement with the music. Some candidates wrote too generally and narratively without actually pinpointing relevant details of the music itself. Others were able to make one or two points about a movement/song/section of a work, but did not develop this into a detailed response. Some candidates reproduced seemingly pre-prepared answers without regard to the specific question, often including discussions of a second work where none was required, or focusing on a different musical aspect than that demanded by the question. In order to gain high marks, candidates need to know the music in sufficient depth to be able to draw effectively upon a range of musical detail relevant to the specific aspect of the chosen question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Q.1(a) There were some detailed, accurate answers with many candidates recognising the limited range, stepwise movement and syllabic writing. Some made reference to the key and to the appoggiatura. Most were able to make an appropriate reference to text setting, though some

described the mood of the text without reference to the vocal writing. There was some misuse of the term 'melisma'. Candidates needed to identify specific features in the music.

Q.1(b) The best answers recognised that, in the introduction, the opening viola motif anticipated the vocal melody and that the chromatic falling figure from the opening RH piano was played by the viola from bar 5⁴. Most candidates were able to refer to other motifs such as those appearing in the piano from bar 6. Some candidates identified the key as F sharp minor, but sometimes chords, for example D major in bar 2, were misinterpreted as keys. Correct reference to the use of motifs was needed to gain full marks.

Q.2 There were some detailed answers. Many candidates were able to produce some convincing links between specific features of the text and musical details of the vocal melody and instrumental writing. Fewer engaged fully with the use of harmony and tonality, though most identified the use of C major at bar 19. Some simply listed features of the music without reference to how these features interpreted the text. A number of candidates considered only the first few bars of the passage indicated in the question. To gain high marks candidates needed to demonstrate acute aural perception with detailed discussion of all the aspects required by the question.

Q.3 To gain marks it was necessary to identify examples of how Bridge's music for stanza two was enhanced by the performers and there were some perceptive responses. Marks were not awarded for merely describing what was printed in the score, or for examples which had no bearing on enhancement of the music. Some candidates did not *identify* examples, but made general comments about aspects such as 'vibrato' and 'rubato' without reference to specific moments in the music. Some candidates gave more than the four examples required by the question – these extra responses could not be considered.

Q.4 Most candidates gave some appropriate response to this question, though explanations of points identified were not always clear. Some candidates just wrote about the passage without any obvious reference to the specific question. As with Question 3, some candidates gave more than the three examples required by the question – these extra responses could not be considered.

Q.5 Most candidates were able to gain marks in this question, though few engaged fully with the variety of interaction in the song. Candidates needed to take an overview rather than merely repeating references to brief points in the music that had been mentioned in earlier responses. Better answers mentioned the importance of the piano as an accompaniment, both to the voice and the viola, and the melodic/motivic interaction between voice and viola as well as the way that they all interact in the first part of stanza two.

Q.6 In order to gain marks candidates needed to focus on the stylistic features of a song for solo voice and compare their chosen song with the extract. Some responses identified several features of the chosen song, but did not compare successfully with the extract. Specific details and comparison are needed if full marks are to be achieved. Most candidates chose suitable repertoire for comparison, but answers which discussed other types of work, such as whole song cycles or operas, were not credited. Some candidates did not accurately identify their chosen song.

Section B

Topic 1

Q.7 Most candidates were able to discuss some features of the songs of Dowland, though answers were often rather general and did not focus sufficiently on the aspect of the expressive use of word setting required by the specific question. Some relevant points were usually made,

but these were often limited to brief examples of word-painting. The music of at least four songs needed to be explored in detail to access the higher mark bands.

Q.8 Schubert was the composer most often chosen for comparison with Schumann in this question. The best answers compared the use of accompaniment in the music of the two composers as required, focusing on specific examples with detailed illustrations from the music.

Q.9 The songs of Maxwell Davies, Judith Weir and Benjamin Britten were among those discussed in this question. Most candidates were able to make some appropriate references, though discussions of Maxwell Davies were sometimes restricted to a list of unusual vocal techniques rather than wider song-writing techniques as required. Discussion of harmony and tonality was often rather limited.

Topic 2

Q.10 Most candidates had knowledge of some of the musical features found in the work, but only the best were able to apply this knowledge to discussion of extended passages as required by the specific question. Comments were often rather general or referred only to very brief moments in the music.

Q.11 Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of particular moments in the music of Vivaldi, with Biber and Couperin being among the other composers discussed. Some wrote very generally, citing all they knew, while better answers showed a close familiarity with the music and were able to link detailed examples of the use of melody and rhythm to the interpretation of subject matter. This knowledge was often much less evident in the chosen related repertoire.

Q.12 Berlioz featured in most answers to this question, often with Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky or Strauss. While there were some good responses, many answers were often inaccurate in detail and sometimes showed confusion between movements/sections/themes. A number of candidates restricted their answer wholly to comments on tonality, rather than illustration of the effectiveness of the wider descriptive writing also required by the specific question. In order to achieve high marks, candidates needed to demonstrate secure understanding of the music of both chosen composers.

Topic 3

Q.13 Most candidates were able to mention some features of the music, although some focused too much on discussion of the storyline rather than on how the music enhances the dialogue and action. Detailed references to the music from at least three scenes were necessary to gain high marks. The opening title sequence, while being a suitable choice on other occasions, was not appropriate for this specific question.

Q.14 Detailed examples of the relationship between music and dramatic action in two film scores were essential to gain high marks. Most candidates had some understanding of *The Hours*, but often lacked relevant specific knowledge of their other chosen score. References to more than two film scores, or to music written before 1990, could not be credited.

Q.15 Most candidates were able to demonstrate some appropriate knowledge of the music of their chosen composers, but answers were often better on the use of tonality than harmony. As in Question 14, references to more than two film scores, or to music from outside the period demanded by the question, could not be credited.

Topic 4

Q.16 Most candidates were able to show some relevant knowledge, though many answers were restricted to generalised comments that demonstrated little or no aural engagement with the

actual music. Specific detailed examples of the expressive use of timbre and texture were needed to gain high marks.

Q.17 The music of Tallis and/or Gibbons was often chosen for discussion with Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*. Candidates often made generalised comments about harmony and tonality without backing this up with specific detail from the music in order to demonstrate the harmonic and tonal processes involved.

Q.18 There were some successful answers here, mostly discussing works by Bach and Handel or Vivaldi. Some candidates made only superficial reference to effectiveness; others did not confine themselves to discussion of the writing for chorus, as required by the question, choosing to include comments on solo arias and recitatives. Better answers illustrated the effectiveness of the writing for chorus by discussing a range of specific appropriate examples from the two chosen works.

Topic 5

Q.19 Most candidates were able to demonstrate some appropriate knowledge of the music and there were a number of detailed responses. Other candidates recounted general facts without showing that they actually knew the music sufficiently well to be able to focus on how features of melody and rhythm are used in interpretation of drama. 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.

Q.20 Most candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge of *Dido and Aeneas*, but did not always focus their answer on the use of vocal timbres and textures for dramatic effect. Although there were some detailed comparisons with another appropriate work, usually by Blow or Handel, knowledge of the related repertoire was often very superficial.

Q.21 Most responses focused on the music of Wagner and Verdi and many demonstrated good knowledge of tonality. Discussion of harmony was less precise and often lacked reference to its expressive use. There was some confusion about 'nineteenth century' with some candidates selecting repertoire from outside the period required by the question. Such answers could not be credited.

Topic 6

Q.22 Candidates were able to give some detail of tracks from *A Night at the Opera*. Some candidates demonstrated good understanding of tonality, but many responses were limited to the naming of keys without link to their expressive use. In addition, a number of candidates restricted their answer wholly to comments on tonality, rather than explanation of the wider musical features also required by the specific question. It was necessary to discuss detailed relevant examples from at least three tracks to achieve a high mark.

Q.23 The music of Amy Winehouse was a popular choice for comparison with the songs of Norah Jones in this question. Good answers were able to link features to the interpretation of lyrics/mood in songs by both artists. Others lacked musical detail, focusing instead on the meaning of the lyrics. Some candidates discussed Norah Jones and then their other chosen singer-songwriter without any attempt to *compare* as required by the specific question.

Q.24 Most candidates chose *Sgt. Pepper* together with an album by The Rolling Stones or The Kinks. Some answers focused solely on the use of technology rather than a range of musical techniques, and discussion of the second chosen album was often limited to one song. Candidates needed to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the music of two albums to achieve high marks. Some answers discussed music which was not from the appropriate decade. Such references could not be credited.

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