

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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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

June 2012

Examiners continue to be impressed by the quality of work produced by candidates, especially at the higher ability levels, and the wealth of material seen this session confirms the rigorous nature of the specification and the demands it places on candidates to demonstrate skills and knowledge acquired in music across a very wide range of musical styles and influences.

This overview has a particular focus on A2 as a result of the responses of senior Examiners to the range and quality of work they have assessed during the current session.

A particular cause for concern is that many candidates who have demonstrated high levels of achievement at AS level are not always enabled to demonstrate the greater depth of subject knowledge, understanding and skill required to achieve high marks at A2.

Centres and tutors need to think very carefully about the tasks they select for candidates to undertake in the classroom and the extent to which the outcomes will enable candidates to reveal a suitable depth of subject understanding. The reports on individual units by Principal Assessors that follow this introduction will provide specific detail relevant to each unit, but as an overview the issues outlined below regularly provoke comment among senior examiners in relation to the depth of knowledge demonstrated by candidates at the upper level of assessment.

Examiners are concerned that able candidates are being disadvantaged on occasion as a result of decisions made at a relatively early stage in the A-level course that affect significantly the eventual outcome. Tutors responsible for delivering the courses that prepare candidates for A2 units should ensure that the range of tasks, the selection of repertoire and engagement with prescribed musical items are delivered at a level that makes it possible for candidates to demonstrate evidence of detailed learning and mature understanding, especially in relation to the two A2 Areas of Study: Tonality and Interpretation. It is vital that centres and teachers provide candidates with appropriate advice as they prepare for these units if candidates are not to be disadvantaged when they reach the point of final assessment.

In relation to performing (G354), A2 requires musicians to demonstrate a suitable level of depth in terms of their musical understanding. This depth is demonstrated not only in the level of technical demand present in the music performed, but also in terms of a candidate's understanding of aspects of interpretation within a relatively narrow musical focus. It is this element of focus that appears to be causing problems for some centres.

The A2 performance recital must not be seen as an opportunity for candidates to re-run (or pre-run) performance pieces designed to meet the graded examination or diploma requirements of the conservatoire examining bodies. The programme must centre on a clearly-defined musical repertoire that the candidate can explore in detail, in order to develop a depth of understanding of context and interpretative possibilities. This depth of understanding will be apparent in the aspect of individual interpretative detail present in the performance, and it will also be teased out in the depth of examiner questioning and subsequent candidate responses that characterises the viva voce. Wide-ranging focus titles such as 'Sonata form first movements' or 'Love arias' do not provide a sufficiently clear focus to enable candidates to demonstrate the depth of performance knowledge expected at A2.

In composing (G355), successful outcomes in the completion of exercises in stylistic imitation demand more than a cursory understanding of the musical ‘fingerprints’ of the style chosen. In terms of the harmonisation of chorale melodies, for example, a depth of understanding suitable at A2 level will not be evident in harmonisations that resemble more closely the four-part harmony found in conventional hymn books rather than demonstrating clear awareness of Bach’s distinctive use of chromatic alteration to harmony and the nature of his writing for individual voices.

The most useful way for candidates to acquire a sufficient depth of understanding is for them to engage with the music at first hand. A small group of students attempting to sing through some of Bach’s chorale harmonisations (even if meeting with limited success early on) will give candidates a far better feel for the elements of the style than playing through the harmonisations at a piano or allowing a computer to do this. Taking part in a performance of a Bach cantata or a large-scale work such as the St Matthew Passion with a choral society would allow candidates to develop a greater degree of contextual awareness as a result of experiencing the effect of these essentially vocal items within the framework of a much larger overall structure.

In terms of the study of harmony (important in order to develop a deep understanding of the Area of Study: Tonality) candidates must be encouraged to explore harmony through *all* activities and learning in the specification, including (for example) understanding the harmony of the pieces being performed in Unit G354.

First-hand engagement with the sound world provided by real instruments and voices will be far more effective preparation for students working on Section B compositions in G355 than continuous exposure to the limited sound world provided by computer sampled alternatives. At all stages, candidates who wish to demonstrate a sufficient level of depth in these activities need to remember to engage with live music and to be aware that the availability of digital alternatives do have drawbacks in relation to the accuracy of sound reproduction and the consequent level of pupil understanding of the sound world being explored.

In relation to the historical and analytical study of music at A2 (G356), the current A2 specification reintroduced specified items of repertoire for each historical topic in response to requests from teachers, while still enabling tutors and candidates to explore a wide range of related repertoire of their own choice in order to support contextual understanding.

In terms of candidates’ demonstration of a suitable degree of depth in their understanding, examiners rightly expect candidates to reveal more detailed awareness of the musical evidence in both the prescribed items of repertoire and the related repertoire than may be found in popular study guides published to support the specification. Candidates should be made aware that these guides are nothing more than supporting documentation: they must not be viewed as an easy substitute for, or a means of avoiding, rigorous exploration of the topic in the classroom.

The fact that many essays seen in Section B do not reveal evidence of the awareness of any musical examples beyond those cited in well-known published study guides is of great concern to examiners, and this approach disadvantages many candidates who demonstrate high levels of musical awareness in their answers to questions in Section A of this unit. The very clear advice from examiners is for candidates and tutors to make use of the investigations of prescribed repertoire and related repertoire in the study guides only as a possible starting point for further detailed, personal and musically rigorous exploration of the music.

Examiners are very positive about the achievements of candidates within this specification, and it is hoped that those responsible for delivering courses will read these reports with care and try to ensure that the range of class activities and individual tasks planned over the course, especially at A2, will enable candidates to demonstrate the degree of depth in relation to subject knowledge, skills and understanding that characterises the upper level of this examination and helps to maintain the standard and rigour of the study of this subject at Advanced level.

G351 Performing 1

Visits to centres were conducted from the end of February through to the first week of May, astride of Easter, and - as ever - the visiting examiners are grateful to centres, Heads of Music, departmental administrators, examinations officers and candidates (and their accompanists and ensembles) for facilitating visits and preparing the paperwork that examiners need prior to the visit and during the examinations. This help extends from the date of first contact (to discuss dates of visits), through the provision of programmes and music for the examiner in advance of the examination, and the smooth running and hospitality on the actual day of the visit itself. **The details of the items that will be presented for examination in the recitals should indicate both timings and grades.**

The range of music presented for this unit continues to be very diverse in terms of style and period. Timetables showed that allowing each candidate 30 minutes proved feasible, bearing in mind that Sections A and B must be presented together, and that Section C can be presented separately if so desired. Some centres encouraged audiences for their candidates' performing sections (the Section B Discussion however, is examined *in camera* between the candidate and the examiner) while others did not. Please note that no part of the examination may be videoed or recorded (other than by the examiner) in any format. As part of the moderation of examiners' work, two examiners are present in some cases at the examinations – in which case the centre will be informed in advance.

Section A and Section C

The choice of the music for presentation in these two performing sections can be crucial: some candidates opted for the pieces or entire programmes that were too demanding for them and which did not allow them to show their musical understanding and technical control. In some cases openings of pieces were known, but as the material unfolded (or modulated) security of pulse and notation became less reliable and the struggle for notes prevented the communication of detail and stylistic understanding.

This issue aside, examiners heard some very good performances in many styles, with strong attention to detail, a control of techniques and secure or insightful understanding of the styles. It was evident that these recitals had been carefully planned, rehearsed (with accurate timings) and in many cases presented to an audience in a trial run. The Section A recital should demonstrate *a range of techniques* and should last no longer than **eight** minutes. Some recitals this year overran this time significantly. Candidates should not wait for the examiner between pieces – they should feel free to go on in their own time, as if presenting a set at a concert or gig. If an audience is present they may wish to introduce the items briefly.

Pieces written with an accompaniment should be performed that way to ensure an understanding of the full texture/environment around the solo line and to ensure a cogent musical 'whole' is presented: playing piano or guitar accompaniments with no solo or vocal line will not achieve this.

Downloads from the internet or photocopies from guitar magazines should be marked up, as fully as possible, with stave notation alongside tablature. When pre-recorded backing tracks were used – while these are generally well-organised and familiar – there were some examples of poor balancing, jumping CDs, false starts and an apparent lack of familiarity with introductions. The ability to balance with and to play along in coordination with any backing tracks will be assessed.

In Section C the most common options were option 2: duet/ensemble and option 1: second instrument. In the case of ensemble and duet playing, examiners will be looking – in addition to accuracy and technical control – for the ability to blend and balance with any musical partners in terms of style and convention, showing a sense of status within a texture, as well as accuracy in

tuning. For many candidates it was apparent that the ensembles presented were established and/or well-prepared groups – many comprised only peers, while others involved their tutors in some capacity, which is quite acceptable. For many instruments, duetting in a lesson is a natural part of the learning and performing process, and the performance in this way can be a useful aspect of the Section C presentation.

Once again this year there were fewer candidates offering option 4: Improvisation and option 3: Own Composition but there were some very strong examples of both presented.

Section B: The Discussion

This must follow the Section A recital and will last about 5 minutes. The range of questions will cover aspects such as tempo, phrasing, dynamics and sonority, and specific techniques for the instrument, such as bowing, tonguing, sticking, effects and breathing. Some candidates seemed reluctant to go beyond a rather general response about tempo and dynamics and could not confidently articulate their reasoning in the choice of these factors. Stronger candidates were able to discuss choices made and the reasoning behind them with confidence, precision and self-appraisal – they were clearly experienced at ‘talking about music’. Candidates will be rewarded for substantiating answers with evidence or reasons: there will rarely be a question for which a single word answer is appropriate. Similarly, responses (for example) such as “my teacher told me to play it that way”, “that’s how it’s always played” and “ I heard it played like that on YouTube” do not give evidence of the candidate’s **own** thinking and understanding of interpretative issues and choices. Notes are **not** permitted for use during the Discussion, although both candidate and examiner may refer to the music performed if appropriate.

G352 Composing 1

Section A: The Language of Western Tonal Harmony

In this section, candidates are required to submit a folio of six exercises completed during the course and, in addition, the Timed Test. It is recommended that centres use a variety of genres when choosing the exercises, which enables the candidate to access the full range of marks available. It is good teaching practice, and this was apparent this year, to give the candidates preliminary exercises that introduce them to the requirements of the specification. These enabled them to recognise cadences and standard progressions, and made use of diatonic chords with a more extended vocabulary of dominant and secondary sevenths. Chords III and VII should only be attempted when candidates are completely confident in their usage and it was felt that many candidates disadvantaged themselves by using these this year. In technique, a clear full-texture incipit will allow candidates to continue and change textures where necessary and also shape bass lines. This was observed in the work of the better candidates this year. The recognition and correct treatment of modulations and an understanding of the principles of voice leading was also demonstrated. For the final submission, candidates who chose their six best exercises, fulfilling as much of the required criteria as possible, were awarded higher marks.

The following points need to be remembered when choosing exercises:

- Each exercise should incorporate as many of the requirements as detailed in the specification. This year, some candidates were disadvantaged by the choice of material with which they had to work.
- A range of exercises, with a varying degree of difficulty, should be made available to the candidates in order that they choose a level to suit their individual abilities.
- Exercises should be sourced from real music, clearly identifying the title of the piece, composer and date of completion by the candidate. This was not always included this year.
- The inclusion of **at least** two exercises in full-texture.
- The inclusion of one minor tonality exercise. This needs to demonstrate the ability of the candidate to understand and correctly treat minor tonality. Folk songs are often not appropriate for this exercise and it was observed that these were often included this year.
- Fair copies are not a requirement for this unit – copies that are clear and legible are a requirement. This is a coursework unit and if a fair copy is submitted, there should also ideally be two draft copies. The moderator should be able to see the extent of teacher guidance and input given throughout the course - this was not clearly apparent in many folios this year. Comments directed to the moderator by the teacher, which were included by some centres this year, are not required.

Harmonic Language:

- A clear understanding of the harmonic implications from a given melody should be demonstrated by the candidate. The use of both primary and secondary chords together with the correct application of sevenths should be evident - this was clearly applied in the work of the better candidates. There has been good evidence this year in the use of Cadential 6/4s; the use of Passing 6/4s has been less evident. It is clearly apparent when a candidate completes a bass line without thinking about the real harmonic implications - some less than coherent progressions were used this year.

- It is essential when using two-part textures that all chords are clearly identified: this includes the correct identification of inversions. Some candidates were able to identify all chords and progressions and candidates should be encouraged to include them in their exercises.
- By including a variety of genres, candidates were able to identify the correct harmonic rhythm. It is recommended that no more than 2 or 3 exercises are hymns or chorales: these restricted the recognition of correct harmonic rhythm where there is a change of chord on each beat.
- The candidates need to be able to demonstrate their understanding of different keys. The required tonality is major and minor – modal treatments are not a requirement of this unit and do not replace the requirement of one minor exercise, as evidenced this year, to be included in the submission.

Technique:

- Candidates should be able to demonstrate their ability to continue and change textures in a variety of styles - a full-texture Incipit is essential but was not always included this year. It is not necessary to include exercises in open score with a variety of instrumentation to fulfil the full-texture requirement. Several exercises had been completed in such textures. It was observed that candidates generally work better when using closed score exercises.
- Modulations should be identified and treated correctly by candidates – these should not be indicated through any incipit material. Centres need to take care not to give excessive help in this area. When using guitar symbols to identify chords, modulations need to be identified separately by the candidate. This was missing in several submissions and it was not clear whether the candidate had observed this technique.
- The ability to shape bass lines through the use of inversions and passing notes should be encouraged - many candidates used only root position chords.
- Voice leading can be demonstrated through the careful choice of full-texture exercises. As a result of good bass line shaping and appropriate use of textures with minimal use of block chords, voice leading was successful in many submissions.

Notation:

- Candidates need to be encouraged to check their final submissions carefully. Using music software does not guarantee full marks being awarded. Hand-written exercises, that were neat and legible, were awarded high marks, where appropriate and justified.
- The more successful candidates this year took the following into account; misalignment of notes, untidy rests, stems, incorrect notation, treatment of the anacrusis, missing pauses and mislabelling of chords.

The Timed Test:

Most centres fulfilled the requirements of the Timed Test correctly. The following points should clarify any uncertainties regarding this test.

- This test should be undertaken in one hour and clearly dated. It should not be returned to the candidate. Some tests had been returned to the candidate.
- It is recommended that it 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 observed in some submissions, during the course.
- The Timed Test should not be a familiar piece of music. Some material included Christmas carols this year and other well-known tunes.
- The materials should not include too much repetition, which was often the case this year, 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.
- 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.
- As regards re-submissions, a new Timed Test must be completed if any of the other exercises have been re-worked.

Section B: Instrumental Techniques

There were some very good submissions this year in this section. Candidates were able to explore their interests and individuality through a range of different genres. Some centres are still not encouraging this freedom and are stipulating the exact genre and instrumentation with which candidate should work. It is very encouraging to see an extension of the candidate's performing skills where they write for instruments with which they are very familiar.

Compositions were again more popular than arrangements this year. Some candidates are misinterpreting the requirements of arranging, where the actual input of creativity by the candidate is required to the same degree as a composition. There were examples of transcriptions that were too similar to the original lead-sheet. There were also some very creative and commendable arrangements.

Materials:

The commentary is an essential component of Materials where the candidate can really identify the influences that have shaped the composition or arrangement. Too often, bar-by-bar analyses of the piece were included. This is not required and nor are screenshots of the candidate's own submission. Moderators are looking for a real aural understanding of their chosen genre through listening or even playing experiences - a coherent style should be evident and understood. The best submissions were again those that cited relevant listening.

Use of Medium:

The specification states that the submissions should include between 4-10 instruments. Moderators are looking to recognise that candidates are able to write appropriately for the chosen instruments. In order to access the higher marking bands in this section, candidates demonstrated their knowledge of idiomatic writing. Instruments were used to their full potential as regards ranges and capabilities. The inclusion of instrument-specific techniques was also included in many submissions. Candidates also need to be aware of the combination of the chosen instruments, and the better candidates were successful here. The balance capability of instruments is often clarified through live performance. Although this is not always possible, some candidates were able to demonstrate a better understanding of their chosen instruments.

Many of the instrument combinations were fairly traditional – string/wind quartets and quintets. Care should be taken when using timpani and drum kit with acoustic instruments. There were several instances where these instruments were very over-powering. Small ensembles are often self-sufficient and really do not need the addition of a rhythm section. This was demonstrated in the use of string quartets, wind quintets and other small ensembles.

Some submissions included the use of voice and synthesizer. In this section, credit cannot be awarded when using these in Use of Medium. These can be included but centres should be aware the principal awarding of marks will be with the instrumental forces as detailed in the specification.

Technique:

It was apparent this year that although some candidates were successful in the use of Materials, they struggled with Technique. Initial ideas were inventive and demonstrated a good aural awareness of the chosen genre. The more successful candidates were able to develop and extend their ideas without relying solely on repetition. The less successful candidates often used traditional structures – Rondo and Ternary Form – without any development of ideas.

Modulations were often successful but sometimes could have been more effective with better preparation. In order to access top bands, the criteria as detailed in the specification, need to be fulfilled.

Communication:

Candidates have worked hard to produce some good and accurate scores. There were still some examples of the use of Tab which is not appropriate for this unit. Many candidates included all the relevant detail required but there were some scores that lacked any performance details. The following points were included in the more complete scores in final submissions:

- adding instrument names at the beginning of the score
- adding an opening tempo direction rather than just a metronome mark. This is especially useful for live performances
- adding correct phrasing and articulation. Jazz scores, in particular, needed specific articulation
- the use of dynamics was consistent.

There were many good live recordings this year. Many of the sequenced recordings were also good, as a result of the scores being detailed with performance directions. Some centres submitted both the live recording and the sequenced recording which is always useful for moderation purposes. CDs should be submitted in audio format with a separate CD for each candidate, and this was included by most centres. It has been appreciated again this year, how much work has been undertaken by the candidates and their teachers, to complete the requirements for this unit.

G353 Introduction to Historical Study in Music (Written Examination)

General Comments

Examiners were pleased to note the number of scripts that achieved marks of 80 and above, and several scripts achieved close to the maximum mark for the paper, confirming the accessibility of the paper for this examination cohort. The main stumbling block remains consistency of performance across the three sections of the unit, and particularly in the sections dealing with material that should be accessed and scrutinised well in advance of the paper as part of a well-organised and methodically planned programme of subject delivery at AS level.

Previous reports have alerted centres and candidates to the fact that performance in Section B is often the most significant factor in determining a candidate's overall grade for the unit. The section is also part of the paper where candidates are aware of the repertoire well in advance of the examination and have the complete taught course to study the music and become thoroughly familiar with its detail. In spite of this, examiners continue to encounter variable performance in Section B, often on a centre-by-centre basis, and it often becomes clear that candidates who demonstrate high-level musical skills in their answers to questions in Section A have been severely disadvantaged in Section B as a result of lack of detailed familiarity with the prescribed repertoire. It is incumbent upon those delivering the AS-level course to explore the six items of prescribed repertoire in a methodical and detailed manner so that candidates can acquire and consolidate appropriate knowledge in advance of the examination. Too often the awarding body receives enquiries from centres asking what the set works will be for the forthcoming examination towards the end of the spring term. This is far too late in the course for candidates to be encountering the music for the first time and it suggests a serious lack of careful planning in the delivery of AS-level teaching. Such an approach can only disadvantage candidates.

Last summer's report noted that a change in the prescribed jazz repertoire has disadvantaged some candidates as a result of centres preparing the wrong recordings. A similar set of circumstances arose this year in relation to a change in the prescribed orchestral repertoire, with some centres clearly not expecting the Vivaldi bassoon concerto to be a target for questions. Prescribed Repertoire is planned and communicated to centres and candidates well in advance of the examination, and OCR will not provide replacement questions based on previous repertoire if centres have covered incorrect repertoire with their candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Extract 1A BEETHOVEN, *Twelve Variations on "See the Conqu'ring Hero Comes" from Handel's Judas Maccabaeus, WoO45*, Theme & Variation 10. Alfred Brendel / Adrian Brendel (2004), Philips / Universal Classics 475379-2, disk 2, track 1 & track 11 [Total length of recorded extracts: 01'53"]

- 1) Most candidates appreciated the ternary structure of the extract, although the frequency with which alternate responses of *Binary* and *Rondo* structure appeared suggested a need for more rigorous learning of basic structural forms in some cases.

- 2) This was answered well by many candidates, although a common error was an incorrect opening interval (many candidates wrote a falling 3rd rather than a falling 2nd). A number of otherwise correct answers omitted a \flat symbol before the crotchet D in bar 10. Examiners were encouraged by this session's improvement in the accuracy of bass line notation.
- 3) There were many correct answers to this melodic dictation question, although several otherwise correct answers omitted to add a \flat symbol in front of the note C in bars 14 and 15. Another common mistake made by candidates was an incorrect judgement of the ascending interval between the final note of bar 13 and the first note of bar 14. This interval should have been a 6th, but Examiners saw many answers that produced an ascending 5th at this point.
- 4) Few candidates gained all four marks available for this question. Most answers were able to identify at least one of the cadences accurately, but answers were much less secure in terms of identifying the tonal centre, with the move to E (minor) at bars 11-12 clearly surprising many candidates. Many scripts gave G major as the tonal centre at this point, suggesting a lack of careful listening to the underlying harmony in the recording.
- 5) Correct placing of root-position and first-inversion chords caused problems for many candidates in this question. It is important that candidates listen carefully to the bass line in order to differentiate between the two positions of the same chord. The information contained in the printed melody at bars 18 and 19 should have provided candidates with clear evidence for the accurate placing of chords I and V, although many scripts appeared not to have appreciated this, with chord indications bearing little relationship to the given melody above.
- 6) Many candidates correctly identified the function of the printed A as a chromatic *passing* note, although popularity of the alternative response "chromatic *auxiliary* note" suggested some confusion in the minds of candidates and weaknesses in their understanding of non-harmonic function and musical context.
- 7) Most candidates gained credit for references to the louder dynamic level and recognition that the 'cello line began an octave lower than in bar 1. Many answers did not provided sufficiently precise detail of further changes needed to secure maximum credit for this question.
- 8) (a) Almost all candidates were able to identify accurately an ornamented note in the melody of the recorded performance.
(b) Not all candidates identified an ornament type that corresponded to the note identified in (a) above. "Trill" appeared to be the most popular 'guess' by weaker candidates, but this was only credited if the note at bar 39³ had been circled on the score. Many candidates correctly submitted the use of a turn at bar 25³ as their answer.
- 9) Many candidates failed to gain marks for this answer because their evidence did not relate to the piano writing. Detail of the music being played by the 'cello was not required here, nor were references to aspects of development of the main theme. Candidates who commented on elements such as the elaborate passagework in the right hand (frequently making use of scale passages), the more mobile bass line in the Variation, or the two-part nature of the piano writing received appropriate credit for relevant detail.

- 10) Many candidates wrote about imitation of the theme in answer to Question 9, but here is where such detail was required. In general this question was poorly answered, and examiners were surprised that so few candidates spotted the canonic imitation of fragments of the main theme in dialogue between the 'cello and the piano left hand at a distance of half a bar. Most candidates noted the increased use of ornaments in the Variation but relatively few answers ventured beyond superficial detail.
- Extract 1B VANGELIS, arr. JOHN WILLIAMS, *Chariots of Fire – Main theme* (EMI Music Publishing Ltd, 1981), Boston Pops Orchestra / Williams (1983), Philips / Decca Music Group Ltd., 475 6176 (2004), disk 1, track 7, 00'00" - 01'40" & 02'59" – 04'08" [Total length of recorded extracts: 02'49"]**
- 11 (a) Candidates who appreciated the meaning of the term *articulation* printed in the question were able to gain credit for their answer to this question. However, many answers suggested a lack of understanding of this significant item of subject-specific terminology.
- (b) Most candidates recognised use of a pedal as the musical device, but the total of two marks available for this question should have alerted candidates to the fact that examiners were looking for more detail for award of the second mark. A surprising number of scripts gave "dominant pedal" as an incorrect answer (and received only 1 mark). Examiners were surprised by this, since the score provided the pitch of the opening pedal in the insert.
- 12) (a) The majority of candidates identified the interval as a Perfect 5th, but examiners saw many scripts that selected Perfect 4th as a popular (but incorrect) alternative.
- (b) The question required candidates to identify *precisely* two places where the Perfect 5th motif appeared. Many candidates gave bar numbers only and this did not provide a sufficiently precise location reference for credit.
- 13) Most candidates answered both parts of this question accurately, although there were more incorrect answers in section (b) than in section (a).
- 14) A majority of candidates correctly identified french horns as the instruments playing the theme.
- 15) Candidates who were able to point out specific changes in the music gained credit here, but many answers consisted of vague generalisations and provided only limited detail. Popular observations included the louder dynamic level and the addition of strings to the melody.
- 16) Many candidates produced completely accurate answers to this question, but some candidates had clearly not appreciated the melodic contour at all and submitted workings that bore no relation to what should have been heard. A common error in many otherwise acceptable answers was a failure to return to C for the first note in bar 19.
- 17) (a) The percussion instrument used in the recording was a mark tree (or bell tree). This has a distinctive sound and is frequently used in modern film scores, so candidates need to be familiar with its aural effect. Examiners allowed credit for close alternatives (including *wind* chimes) but the generic term 'chimes' on its own was insufficiently perceptive to receive any marks.

- (b) Most candidates were able to describe the music of the woodwind ‘fill’ accurately, with answers referring to relevant detail such as the use of ascending and descending scale passages.

Many candidates answered part (c) accurately, although answers given in part (d) were often insufficiently precise to gain credit. In this part of the question Examiners expected candidates to provide both bar *and* beat references to locate the statement of the theme.

- 18) Most candidates appreciated the basic binary structure of the extract, although many answers failed to refer to the presence of an introductory section before the statement of the main theme. More perceptive candidates were able to mention more detailed evidence such as the variation of melodic ideas in both the A and B sections of the passage.
- 19) Many answers to this question were vague and only a few candidates mentioned that only the A motif was used in Passage 1ii. Many noticed the brass countermelody, but struggled to describe it accurately in musical terms. The best answers were clear about the musical content of both passages and provided relevant detail to support observations. Unfortunately too many answers lacked depth and clarity, consequently failing to describe successfully differences between the two passages.
- 20) Most candidates provided a suitable tempo indication for the passage from bar 38 to bar 39, but a number of scripts provided inappropriate indications such as *Andante* and *Adagio*.

Section B

Extract 2 VIVALDI, *Concerto in e for bassoon & orchestra, RV484, 1st movement, bars 47² to 64.*

Extract 2A: Barokkanerne (2008), 2L Records 2L56SACD, track 8, 02’50” – 03’55” [Length of extract: 01’05”]

Extract 2B: I Musici / Klaus Thunemann (1974), Pentatone Classics (2007) PTC 5186 154, track 1, 02’57” – 04’04” [Length of extract: 01’07”]

- 21) Most answers demonstrated secure knowledge of score symbols and technical terms and signs, but there were some imprecise answers to sections (a) and (b) that suggested a lack of contextual awareness. In the case of section (b), for example, candidates needed to make it clear that the *Tutti* indication referred to all instruments *playing that particular line* (including the basso continuo). Answers such as “all”, “everyone” or “full orchestra” were insufficiently precise here.
- 22) Examiners saw many good answers to this question, and most candidates were able to focus on specific aspects of Vivaldi’s idiomatic writing for the bassoon. Some responses degenerated into generalised descriptions of the sequence of events in the printed extract, but candidates who knew the prescribed movement in detail were able to organise a range of specific evidence to address the question in a logical and effective manner.
- 23) (a) Most candidates appreciated the nature of a musical sequence and were able to identify at least one example, although many answers failed to provide further supporting detail such as key centres.

- (b) This part of the question was answered less well, and many candidates appeared not to recognise the meaning of the term *antiphony*. Many candidates left this section blank, and a large number of responses failed to provide sufficiently precise detail to make it clear that an example of antiphony had been understood accurately.
- 24) Most candidates now approach this question in a manner that enables them to secure much positive credit. The best responses were able to concentrate on specific detail and many candidates chose to focus on the particularly noticeable differences between the two performances in respect of the improvised harpsichord continuo part. The best answers were able to refer to specific figuration and detailed aspects of instrumentation and performance technique within the performances, although Examiners were surprised that relatively few answers referred to the one-to-a-part instrumentation of Extract 2A. Candidates need to beware of leaping to unsubstantiated conclusions about the recording date of any particular performance: a ‘period’ recording may often be a more recent performance than a ‘modern’ recording (as was the case with the two recordings used for Extract 2 this session).
- 25) Many candidates were aware of the location of the printed extract within the movement as a whole, and most answers made use of appropriate terminology in relation to the overall structure. The best answers were able to refer to precise detail in the music of the final ritornello section, with many mentioning the presence of the octave motif and the final ‘echo’ at the end of the section.
- 26) Most candidates were aware of Vivaldi’s use of ritornello form, although examiners saw many inappropriate alternatives, the most common of which was “Rondo Form”. Given the nature of Vivaldi’s writing and his idiomatic use of structure within the context of baroque instrumental music, ritornello was the only structural form for which examiners award credit here.
- Extract 3** **GIL EVANS & MILES DAVIS, *It ain’t necessarily so* (1958), from *Porgy and Bess*, Columbia Legacy / Sony Music CK 65141, track 10, 02’28” – 03’24”. [Length of recorded extract: 00’56”]**
- 27) (a) There were many good answers to this part of the question, with the use of syncopation, a walking bass, swung rhythm and detached chords being the most popular details mentioned in candidates’ responses.
- (b) This part of the question was not answered as well by many candidates, with a number of answers failing to focus effectively on appropriate detail in the accompaniment. Most candidates gained some credit for recognition of the louder dynamic level and the increased number of instruments performing, but relatively few candidates provided the range of detail required for the award of full marks here.
- 28) (a) Almost all candidates identified the correct instrument in answer to this question. Examiners also credited mention of the flugelhorn.
- (b) This part of the question was answered less well, frequently as a result of the vagueness with which candidates identified the location of the first statement of Gershwin’s melody. Answers that provided only very general locations (such as “at the start”) did not receive credit, but many candidates knew the music well enough to be able to locate the statement *after* the introduction.

- 29)** There were very few good answers to this contextual question designed to test candidates' knowledge of the complete performance specified for study. Those who knew the recording well had no trouble in providing specific and accurate detail in their answers, but many candidates appeared to possess little more than a very hazy understanding of the music that followed the recorded extract. A common mistake made by many candidates was to provide a structural reference for the music (chorus 4), but the question asked for a description of the music, and examiners credited only responses that made appropriate reference to musical aspects such as motifs, instrumentation and texture.
- 30) (a)** Most candidates knew that the performance was recorded in 1958, although some suggestions dated back to the 19th century.
- (b)** This part of the question was answered less successfully. Examiners had expected candidates to be aware of Miles Davis' close association with Columbia Records, but popular alternative (and incorrect) answers included Okeh Records (principally associated with earlier jazz recordings) and Warner Records (formed only four months before Davis' recording took place).

Section C Question choice by candidates in this section covered all three questions, although **Question 32** (comparing approaches to the concerto) proved the most popular option. In general, **Question 31** (approaches to improvisation) was answered least successfully, with many candidates not selecting repertoire that allowed a sufficient range of relevant detail to be demonstrated.

Answers in the highest mark bands are expected to be consistently relevant, demonstrating thorough and detailed knowledge focussed on the question set by examiners, while at a lower level of achievement the writing must provide evidence of at least basic understanding of context together with some accurate supporting references to the prescribed repertoire studied throughout the course in order to achieve a standard appropriate to AS level.

- 31)** Candidates who answered this question well tended to choose items from the prescribed jazz recordings, although examiners did see a number of strong essays that compared jazz approach to improvisation with that heard in a specific recording of a prescribed orchestral score (usually the Beethoven concerto). The best essays were able to write in detail about the styles of improvisation found in each work chosen and often showed how the performance was typical of the era or style. Less good answers tended to recognise improvisatory elements within the examples chosen but discussion of the use of such elements was either very general or cursory in nature.
- 32)** Well-informed candidates clearly knew significant details about the historical context of the two works (although some answers spent rather too long dwelling on irrelevant and often speculative performance aspects of the Vivaldi concerto) and were also able to provide accurate detail on the solo writing, the orchestra accompaniment and the musical structure of each concerto. Middle-ability candidates were able to provide a general comparison of some aspects, although observations tended to be supported by less specific detail. Weaker answers often provided a very general summary of the instrumental forces used in each work together with a brief view (not always completely accurate) of the overall structure.

- 33)** The spectre of the “trace the development of recording technology” question continues to haunt **Section C**, and clearly confuses many candidates who provide a pre-prepared history of recording from the wax cylinder to the vinyl LP in answer to any question that appears to ask about general jazz context. Such an approach is fraught with danger and rarely results in positive credit for the candidate. This question was designed to discover what candidates knew about the working conditions for performers (not necessarily jazz musicians only) in the period from 1920 to 1960 and about their relationship with the recording companies and radio stations that exercised considerable influence during this period. The best answers demonstrated clear awareness of the financial importance of contracts to working musicians, and some well-informed candidates knew how much the legal arrangements behind such contracts benefited the recording companies rather than the performers and composers. Middle-ability candidates tended to focus more on the potential of contracts with record companies to spread fame, whereas lower-level responses drifted into histories of recording technology, frequently of variable accuracy.

G354 Performing Music 2 (Interpretation)

General Comments

Having now completed three sessions of Performing G354, there is much that is positive on which to report. Centres are to be congratulated and thanked for their continuing support in making the examining days run as smoothly as possible. Examiners are very aware and appreciative of the amount of organisation that occurs, both before and during the examining day in order to make this happen. They have again reported hearing some excellent recitals and discussions on a diverse range of instruments and topics.

A few general points to note:

- Timetables for the examining days need to be with examiners at least one week before. They need to include:
 1. details of repertoire including grades
 2. candidate names and numbers
 3. programmes allowing 30 minutes for each candidate plus any extra time needed for stage management
 4. time at the start of the day for the examiner to read the VVPFs
 5. appropriate breaks for examiners depending on the length of the examining day.
- Copies of the music also need to be sent with the timetable at least one week before the appointed day for the examining.
- Centres need to provide competent accompanists. Whilst in the majority of cases, this is achieved (and much thanks goes to accompanists for the excellent support they give), unfortunately there were some instances this year where candidates' performances were adversely affected due to poor accompanying.
- Centres need to ensure that noise levels are kept to a minimum. Again, in the majority of cases this is achieved.
- Centres are reminded that candidates cannot present the same repertoire for AS Performing G351 and A2 Performing G354 in the same session. This contravenes guidelines issued by The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and can adversely affect candidates' results.

This year OCR piloted the use of digital technology to record performing examinations. This has been most successful. Please note that all examiners will bring their own digital recording equipment, which they will operate themselves. Centres are respectfully asked to allow examiners to carry out this task themselves. There should be no recording of examinations by centres.

It has become apparent that not all centres fully understand what is meant by a 'focus' with respect to the repertoire chosen for the Section A recital. Unfortunately, absence of a secure focus to the music performed affects the marks awarded to candidates in both the Section A recital and the Section B *viva voce*. To this end, much of the ensuing content of this report will concentrate on what constitutes an acceptable focus area and what the consequences of its absence are.

Comments on Individual Sections

Section A: Recital

The specification states (on page 29):

“The repertoire performed should have a focus that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of a single idiomatic style or genre, either in the form of one or more movements from a multi-movement piece (eg a sonata), or of a small group of shorter, related pieces.”

It also goes on to state (on page 30) that the focus area should normally be:

“one that is recognised as representative of the instrument or voice-type and its standard repertoire (eg Weber’s music for clarinet, Satriani’s music for guitar, Cole Porter’s songs)... The focus area should be one that both promotes the development of the candidate’s technical and expressive control and lends itself to interpretative understanding.”

From the above, it is clear that the focus needs to be a musical one and the music chosen needs to be of a consistent style. Thus, focus areas such as:

*“the development of flute music from Baroque to Twentieth Century” or
“dance music from the Renaissance to the present day” or
“love through the ages as seen in songs”*

are not acceptable. None of these is made up of a consistent style of music; there is inevitably going to be a variety of styles in each, ranging, as it says, from Renaissance to present day. The music performed needs to be either by the same composer or composers very closely related in style if the necessary focus is to be achieved.

Examiners have reported an increase this year in the number of candidates presenting recitals that do not have a correct focus to them. Unfortunately, this affects the mark awarded in category four of the marking criteria which rewards marks for interpretative understanding of ‘*the style of the music*’. Clearly, if there is not a consistent style present, then it cannot be fully rewarded.

The lack of an acceptable focus area also has repercussions in section B, the *viva voce*, where the mark awarded is also affected as explained below.

The jump from AS G351 Performing to A2 G354 Performing is not to be underestimated. Once candidates have decided upon an acceptable focus area, it is important that they select repertoire that reflects a *depth* of study commensurate with A2 level. Examiners have commented that the range and depth of material offered has sometimes been quite narrow and at times quite superficial this year. It is hoped that at this level, candidates will take time to explore their chosen focus area not necessarily picking the most obvious ‘old chestnuts’.

Some general points to note regarding the Section A recital:

- Centres are reminded that fifteen minutes is the suggested length for a recital.
- To access the full range of marks, candidates need to perform music comparable in standard to grade 6 or above, but it is not in candidates’ interest to perform music that is too difficult for them.
- Candidates can offer recitals as a soloist, as part of an ensemble or as an accompanist but they cannot mix these disciplines.
- Improvisation is perfectly acceptable as long as the candidate provides details of the musical stimulus.

- Music performed should be complete – ie, not just the accompaniment parts of songs etc.
- Guitarists are reminded that they need to include details of rhythm, performance markings and structure on scores presented in tablature.

Section B: *Viva Voce*

Whilst examiners have reported hearing some excellent *vivae voce*, there have also been reports this year of *vivae voce* that have not been able to access the full range of marks. This has been due to:

- Unfocused nature of the music presented.
- Lack of depth of research and comparative study.

As explained above with reference to the Section A recital, the specification states that there should be evidence of *in-depth study* of the musical style chosen. This requires candidates to undertake research and comparative listening of a level commensurate with that expected at A2. Sadly, this has not always been reflected in either the notes provided by candidates on their VVPFs or under scrutiny in their *vivae voce*. It is clear that more time needs to be spent on this area of the unit.

As it states in the specification and to remind centres what is needed for successful attainment in the *viva voce*:

- Candidates need to have listened to at least two recordings of (preferably contrasting) interpretations of music *related to the focus area of their Section A recital*. NB: this does not have to be exactly the same repertoire that they have performed, though it can be, and in reality, often is. The aim is for candidates to develop an awareness of different interpretative possibilities of the music of their chosen focus area and for them to be able to discuss these with their examiner. They will be expected to show discernment, explaining what they have taken or rejected from their listening and why.
- In addition, in keeping with the depth of awareness appropriate for A2 level, candidates will have been expected to carry out background research of their musical style and to be able to discuss their findings in depth.
- Lastly, candidates will be asked to appraise their performance in the light of their listening, preparation and research.

To this end, the completion of the *Viva Voce Preparation Form (VVPF)* is very helpful for both the candidate and the examiner. It provides a useful document on which candidates can record their findings in terms of stylistic understanding and comparative listening and it also acts as a starting point for examiners when they discuss these findings with the candidate. It is thus advisable for candidates to spend considered time on its completion. In order to reflect the depth of research and study required at this level, it is recommended that candidates not only discuss the more obvious areas of tempo, dynamics and articulation in their comparative listening, but address such areas as sonority, pronunciation (for singers), performance practice and national identity too. A properly completed VVPF forms the basis of a successful *viva*. Many were rather cursory this year.

If a candidate presents an unfocused recital, as well as affecting the mark awarded in the recital itself as explained above, it also affects that awarded for the *viva voce*. If the music presented does not have a consistent style, candidates are not able to compare it successfully. The marking criteria for the *viva voce* awards marks for the “significance and appropriateness” of the listening and research that has been carried out. If the music presented and compared does not have a homogenous style, then it is not ‘appropriate’ and will not be able to access the full range of marks.

A few other points to note about the Section B *Viva Voce*:

- Candidates need to compare two or more performances on the **same instrument** that they played in their Section A recital.
- Candidates need to be judicious in their choice of performances taken from YouTube. Performers' names need to be included.
- Evidence of appropriate research should be included; judicious choices need to be made regarding web sites used.

It is hoped that centres will take on board the above points, particularly in relation to the focus area so that candidates may achieve to their full potential.

G355 Composing 2

General comments

Moderators have been encouraged by some very good composing work including occasionally outstanding submissions this year. A clear sense of progression from AS Composing was observed in the work of most candidates.

Administration

Moderators are grateful for the care taken by many centres preparing portfolios for moderation. Fewer clerical errors have been seen this year, yet there remains a need for a vigilant, meticulous approach to all aspects of administration.

Presentation of work was varied – at best, moderators note it was ‘thoughtful’, ‘immaculate’ and ‘creative’. In contrast, dishevelled presentation can make folios difficult for moderators to navigate and can communicate a message about the level of importance attached to the work by a candidate. Presenting candidates’ work in individual folders is helpful.

The Coursework Cover Sheet has two option ‘boxes’ on the front cover. Please use these to indicate the name of each option chosen. Inside the CCS a box to be ticked indicates the requirement for teacher annotations on each exercise. A tick or single word comment is insufficient. Teacher annotations give the moderator an overview of the teaching and assessment process / feedback throughout the course. Unmarked exercises should not be presented for moderation. Brief teacher comments on the CCS should always be given in justification of the marks awarded. This is helpful to moderators and encourages thoughtful and accurate centre assessment.

Clear identification of the exercise completed under controlled conditions was efficiently conveyed to moderators in the majority of cases. Centres are reminded that any candidates resubmitting this unit – with alternative exercises or re-worked exercises from a previous entry - must also complete a supervised exercise concurrent with the year of entry.

Recordings

Please ensure that CD recordings are playable on conventional equipment. DVDs must not be software dependent but playable on universal players accessible on any computer operating system. The moderator role was greatly facilitated by some centres in this regard but extensive delays resulted for other candidates when their work was inaccessible.

Section A: Stylistic Techniques

The most popular option continues to be Chorale harmonisations; numbers studying Serialism and 16th-century counterpoint remain small but there is an even distribution across the remaining stylistic options. An initial, careful consideration of the issues of teacher expertise and candidate capability/motivation can ensure candidates have the best opportunity of progress and achievement. Some candidates this series, for example, struggled with the reading of three clefs in string quartet writing when an alternative option may have proved more fruitful.

Candidates who worked with accurate incipits with dynamics / bowings / words when appropriate had an advantage compared to those candidates who had not been given an appropriate starting point. Carefully chosen exercises can make a great deal of difference to a candidate’s potential to make steady progress, gradually acquire sufficient knowledge and technical skill during the course and enhance the possibility for successful outcomes. Some moderators reported a large number of notational errors in incipits and given melody lines that were

unacceptable. The guidance for approximate length of exercises should be followed; candidates working with long enough extracts were able to demonstrate the range of required techniques.

Successful candidates demonstrated:

- a thorough aural familiarity with the stylistic technique chosen and had listened to a wide range of performances / recordings of the style
- steady progress across the course through regularly spaced dated exercises
- an ability to work with authentic composer extracts with composer details provided for each incipit
- consideration of the aural aspect of exercises, particularly those in popular song, minimalism and serial technique by providing a simple recording of exercises to help facilitate the teacher marking and subsequent moderation of submissions.

Further examples of good practice seen in the work of candidates this session were:

- demonstrations of candidates listening to what they had written particularly in an acoustic context. The singing of Bach chorales – even if one line at a time, the playing of 2 part counterpoint on instruments with a friend – these are all valuable ways to engage with the style when playing exemplar materials but also to hear what has been written when playing exercise solutions.
- the inclusion of one or two drafts of exercises that clearly showed response to teacher advice and the ability to independently seek solutions where errors have been identified.

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

Chorale harmonisations in the style of J. S. Bach

- Candidates are supplied with authentic exercises rather than adaptation or simplification exercises. Bach provides an excellent range of well-differentiated possibilities in his chorales.
- The use of chord symbols has been more prevalent this year and clearly helps candidates to demonstrate and track harmonic thinking.
- Successful centres engaged candidates aurally with this vocal style and its context helping candidates to understand that a chorale is much more than a puzzle on paper to solve.
- Common errors in choral writing include the poor understanding of inversions, uncertainties about idiomatic chord sequences between the openings and close of phrases, the inclusion of passing notes that do not ‘pass’, decorations on the pause chord and a failure to use chromatic harmony, particularly in the form of transient modulations.
- Moderators acknowledge that just as teachers need to practice to maintain their own performing skills, considerable application is needed to maintain harmonic literacy. We should not ask candidates to work exercises we could not attempt ourselves.
- Some centres continue to fail to provide a complete texture at the start of chorale exercises – this is a serious disadvantage for candidates who are then not able to meet the assessment criteria for *continuity* of texture.
- In assessment, the top two assessment bands were often cited for being ‘hymn-like’ (some candidates actually included Wesley hymns). These exercises were often much simpler in nature and seldom contain the more complex Bachian subtleties and characteristics.

Two-part Baroque counterpoint

- Candidates who used chord symbols to show harmonic understanding ensured a firmer harmonic foundation in this essentially linear style.
- Higher achieving candidates demonstrated facility in both treble and bass parts.

- Candidates provided with a helpful *Incipit* in complete texture at the start of each exercise were much more able to demonstrate continuity of texture.
- Although some candidates submitted initial examples of a simpler type, successful portfolios contained more demanding exercises that allowed for a demonstration of in-depth technical and harmonic understanding.
- Weaker submissions included pieces that frequently feature on the List A options of some practical examination lists. Over-familiarity with such pieces prevents many candidates from producing an independent solution of their own.
- Candidates achieved the higher-level demands of genuinely contrapuntal writing by including sections of a 2-part invention, for example, in several later exercises.

String quartets in the Classical style

- The most successful candidates explored a greater harmonic palette.
- Not all candidates were able to work confidently in three clefs.

Keyboard accompaniment in early Romantic style

- Candidates often continue opening incipits relentlessly with little initiative for piano invention being shown between vocal passages.
- Not all candidates demonstrated sufficient aural familiarity with exemplar models by significant composers to write stylishly and would have benefited from more listening.
- Successful candidates demonstrated an understanding of the more colourful harmonic possibilities in this style.

Popular Song

- Candidates best able to demonstrate in-depth stylistic understanding were those that had concentrated on a focussed range of exercises. Choosing multiple styles and/or composers prevented candidates from being able to demonstrate this.
- Candidates working with easy piano versions and arrangements, rather than the instrumentation of the original music, could not demonstrate an understanding of authentic textures and use of medium for the style. The same level of authenticity and technical demand must apply equally to a Beatles song or one by Schubert.

Minimalism

- Candidates worked with good quality exercises on the whole but centres need to be mindful of the specification requirement that the style should focus on that of the early work of the New York minimalists: Riley, Glass and Reich.
- Some candidates worked with exercises in this style that were not long enough to allow for harmonic transitions as well as motivic and rhythmic development.

Serial Technique

- Candidates who annotated their work with information about the rows and supplied recordings to demonstrate the aural outcomes of their exercises often did well.
- Some candidates could not gain credit for engaging in free composition rather than study and work with the specific styles of the works of the Second Viennese School – Schoenberg, Berg and Webern.

Section B

Some very exciting work was seen in this section of the unit where candidates valued working within a language of their own choosing. Centres who worked on projects or workshops with professional groups often saw fruitful outcomes. Some candidates, however, expressed frustration with a perceived lack of freedom in composing under such circumstances. A balance between opportunity and intention needs to be addressed.

Whilst candidates showed great confidence working with a wide variety of timbral forces and melodic and rhythmic ideas, a weaker element was revealed in harmonic understanding. The link between harmony and structure was not always understood. In non-tonal language, candidates must be secure and convincing and able to give a rationale for the choices they have made.

Candidates most able to fulfil the creative and technical demands at A2 level had received effective teacher guidance and support in choosing film clips, vocal texts or programmes with sufficient potential to formulate and develop musical materials.

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

The Commentary

- Candidates maximising marks in the assessment descriptors for 'Materials' referenced the listening context of the composing process before and during the composing process in their commentaries.
- Successful candidates made strong connections between the listening and creative procedures, focusing on the process rather than the outcome of the composing.

Vocal composition

- This was the most popular choice in Section B.
- Moderators noted some extremely impressive choral or a capella writing.
- There were many un-edited sequenced recordings that did not adequately represent the vocal part. This seems a very disappointing outcome and suggests that candidates need to plan ahead and secure the willing participation of a singer and/or choir.
- Some centres successfully recorded a live vocal part over a recorded backing. A capella performances that had a pianist quietly shadowing the vocal parts were effective.
- Moderators saw a direct correlation between successful vocal composing work and live vocal performance.
- Live recordings made in a Performing context give a sense of occasion and this was a successful option adopted by a number of centres.
- Some innovative and accomplished popular songs were presented and gained appropriate credit. It may be wise, however, to remind candidates that a celebrity can make a success (and money) of a weak song but the song may not display the compositional skills and elements required to gain full credit in an A level setting.
- The most successful vocal settings were those where candidates took time in the initial shaping of materials.

Programme music

- Candidates who outlined a detailed narrative found this helpful, although it is not the only approach – but not all teachers and candidates were mindful of the distinction between film and programme compositions.
- Many candidates favoured the use of harp writing but it was often treated pianistically rather than idiomatically.

- There were some rather naïve settings – simple ‘fairy tale’ settings more suited to a lower level of attainment.
- Where large-scale forces were used, candidates showed an improvement on previous series and doing rather better in addressing the skills of orchestration required.

Film / TV composition

- The range of films chosen by candidates was very wide.
- Some involved very generalised mood setting – there was some unhelpful overlap with programme music. Candidates that did not demonstrate an element of working to strict timings for film / TV submissions could not gain credit under Technique.
- Some poorly selected film clips consisted of long passages of ‘silent’ dialogue or inactivity. Successful candidates demonstrated a range of techniques and materials in film clips with sufficient action and changes of mood.
- Some candidates chose very well known clips – it was not always possible for them to generate independently creative responses.
- Some successful clips included Silent Film footage and an extract from the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.
- One centre successfully used a chart method with columns for timings and description of scene/music ideas/relevant listening - to explain how they had worked on their composition.
- The best work demonstrated a real understanding of the conventions of writing for film such as leitmotifs and points of synchronisation.

Production Commentaries

There were relatively few submissions where a production commentary and recording took the place of a score and recording but those that did provided a commendable level of technical information, often revealing copious knowledge, skills and enthusiasm on the part of the candidate.

Assessment

Moderators found that some centres were very generous in their assessment of candidates’ work. The reasons for centre inflation of marks are often unclear particularly when there are neither sufficient annotations on work nor any comments on the CCS. Too often comments do not match bands chosen and the evidence in the work does not justify the marks awarded. Some centres were entirely realistic about their candidates’ achievement and applied the criteria effectively and consistently.

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

- Centres misunderstand the requirements of a detailed score – high marks are often allocated when phrasing, articulation and opening tempi markings are missing.
- Scores need to be formatted and printed more carefully to avoid impossibly tiny scores or scores of 1 bar per page.
- Chorale harmonisations: inaccurate assessment seemed at times to be the result of misunderstanding on the part of some teachers who did not themselves know the idiom sufficiently well with uncorrected grammatical errors in exercises and 4-3 suspensions at cadences being thought to represent ‘a wide range’ of stylistic understanding, for example.
- Chorales awarded high marks need to demonstrate rigorous and thorough understanding of the idiom / technique – studying models is essential.
- Teachers seemed to overlook excessive technical errors in their assessment.

Concluding remarks

The report to a centre by moderators can be a valuable source of constructive and personalised feedback. Centres are urged to consider carefully the advice and recommendations made.

Congratulations are due to centres that continue to have belief in encouraging live performances of compositions and support their candidates in this. It is time consuming and often difficult to organise but the rewards in terms of quality of composing and sense of candidate achievement is immeasurable.

G356 Historical and Analytical Studies in Music

Unit 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. Some gave detailed responses. Others needed to develop the skills of selecting appropriate knowledge, applying correct technical vocabulary, and answering the specific question in order to gain high marks.

Most candidates completed the question paper, but others seemingly spent too long on Section A, thus leaving themselves insufficient time to write the essays in Section B. Some essays were very short and a number of candidates only attempted one essay question. Effective time management is essential in order to access the full range of marks.

Section A required candidates to discuss various aspects of Tippett's setting, and all candidates demonstrated some ability to engage with the music. There were some good responses to questions concerning texture, tonality and the interpretation of text. The application of appropriate vocabulary, especially regarding texture, proved challenging. In order to gain high marks at this level, candidates need to know, and be able to apply, the correct technical terminology across the full range of musical elements.

Critical listening is essential to gaining full understanding of the extract. It was evident that some candidates responded to what they could see printed on the score rather than to the music that they heard. Candidates need to demonstrate secure aural perception in order to gain high marks.

There were some lengthy responses in Section A that often resulted in unfocused answers. The ability to select key information is an essential skill at this level. It is entirely appropriate for candidates to write in note form rather than in extended prose.

Section B responses including all Topics.

Most candidates were able to write something about the appropriate aspect of the topic and attempted to answer the question. Those questions that required individual or comparative knowledge of the Prescribed Repertoire were dealt with more confidently than those demanding wider knowledge of the chosen Related Repertoire. Many candidates produced essays that represented no more than descriptions of basic events in the music with little detail beyond that provided in popular study guides. In order to gain high marks, candidates need to know the music in sufficient depth to be able to draw effectively upon musical detail to support perceptive observations relevant to the aspect of the chosen question.

In each session, questions will relate to aspects of the prescribed and related repertoire for each Topic as outlined in the Specification. Candidates need to have studied these aspects in appropriate depth to fully address the specific questions and need also to be aware that there will not necessarily be the opportunity to write about all three prescribed works.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- Q1(a)** Most candidates gave some appropriate response. In order to gain marks, candidates needed to demonstrate their understanding of the choral textures by giving specific examples from the music using appropriate terminology.
- Q1(b)** The best answers were those that considered detailed aspects of the use of the choral forces, explaining how the conflict in the text was interpreted in the music. Some wrote about the text in general terms without referring to the music.
- Q2** There were some detailed, accurate answers. A number of candidates misinterpreted or ignored the key signature and thus incorrectly identified the chords. To gain marks candidates needed to respond in specific detail to harmony and tonality.
- Q3** Many answers gave appropriate detail to reveal an understanding of the links between the music and the text. In order to gain high marks, candidates needed to use subject-specific terminology in describing the imitative textures and needed to refer appropriately to use of melody and tonality.
- Q4** Most candidates were able to mention some appropriate features of the music. To gain high marks, candidates needed to demonstrate acute aural perception with detailed explanation of how the contrasting dramatic moods were created and needed to refer to all the aspects required by the question.
- Q5** Most candidates gave some appropriate response, detailing the narrative rôle of the bass solo. Some referred only to the music of the uncle.
- Q6** In order to gain marks candidates needed to focus on stylistic features in a choral work and compare it with the extract. Answers that discussed other types of work, such as solo song, were not credited. Specific details are needed if full marks are to be achieved.

Section B

Topic 1: Song

- Q7** Most candidates were able to make some relevant points, though discussions of instrumental writing were outside the remit of the question. Detailed reference to the expressive interpretation of text was necessary to gain high marks.
- Q8** Most answers discussed aspects of Dowland's song-writing techniques, but were not always able to relate this to specific examples from the music. Detailed knowledge of the techniques found in Italian madrigals was necessary to access the higher mark bands.
- Q9** Some answers were rather unfocused, with candidates restricting their response to the songs of Schumann and Schubert. Candidates needed to make detailed reference to examples of character pieces for piano.

Topic 2: Programme Music

- Q10** Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of particular moments in the work. Better answers showed a close 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.
- Q11** Most candidates were able to select an appropriate work for comparison, for example, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Answers were often 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 timbre and texture.
- Q12** Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* featured in most answers to this question and most candidates were able to make some comparison, though answers often lacked specific musical references. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of both chosen works in order to achieve high marks.

Topic 3: Music for the Screen

- Q13** Candidates were able to write about scenes from the film and most showed some understanding of the music. It was necessary to give detailed examples of how the music integrated the storylines to gain high marks.
- Q14** There were some successful comparisons here. Most candidates were able to discuss the music of Korngold in some depth, but 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 Korngold were not credited.
- Q15** Candidates who chose to discuss two film scores from the second half of the twentieth century, as required in the question, generally demonstrated some knowledge of the music, but did not always explain how the dialogue and action were enhanced. References to the music of *The Hours*, or other later films, were not credited.

Topic 4: Music and Belief

- Q16** Most candidates were able to make some relevant comments. Specific, detailed examples of Bach's expressive use of instrumental timbres and textures were needed to achieve high marks.
- Q17** Most candidates had some understanding of the musical techniques found in *Stimmung*, but few discussed actual examples from the music. There were some successful comparisons, but candidates needed to give convincing illustrations gleaned from close aural perception of the music of both works to gain high marks.
- Q18** There were some successful answers here, mostly discussing works by Byrd and Tallis. Some responses made only superficial reference to harmonic and tonal processes. Answers needed to focus closely on the required features to gain high marks.

Topic 5: Music for the Stage

- Q19** There were some detailed answers to this question. 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 realisation. Answers needed to refer in detail to at least two extended passages to access the full mark range.

- Q20** Candidates showed some knowledge of the music, but essays were rarely able to go beyond basic descriptive accounts of individual items. In order to gain high marks, candidates needed to know the works in sufficient depth to be able to draw upon relevant detail to compare ways in which the music enables dramatic interpretation of the text.
- Q21** 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. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of the expressive use of harmony and tonality in both chosen works in order to achieve high marks.

Topic 6: Popular Music

- Q22** Most candidates were able to make some comment about the musical styles found in *A Night at the Opera*. In order to achieve a high mark there was a need to focus on how these styles were reflected in the music.
- Q23** Answers were often generalised and basically descriptive, without giving detailed examples that focused on the required aspects of melody and structure. It was necessary to make comparisons between the music of the two albums to achieve a high mark.
- Q24** Most candidates chose to discuss techniques used by The Beatles and The Kinks in this question. Good answers were able to link these to the enhancement of the music and lyrics. Others lacked musical detail, merely listing techniques used. Candidates needed to have detailed understanding of two chosen albums in order to achieve high marks. Some answers discussed music that was not from the 1960s. References to the music of *A Night at the Opera*, or other later albums, were not credited.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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