

OCR Report to Centres

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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.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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Music (J535)

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Unit B353 Creative Task

Approximately 670 candidates took this unit, an increase of 160 over the January 2011 series. In most cases centres entered whole cohorts of candidates and therefore examiners received work from across the whole ability range.

The Creative Task is a piece of work which integrates composing, performing and knowledge of an aspect of an area of study. It is not therefore purely a composing task, and the assessment criteria reflect this. Accordingly, a weaker composition which is performed musically could attain a mark comparable to that of a stronger composition performed in a more mechanical way. Candidates can therefore be credited according to their differing strengths in this task.

Most centres' work arrived at the end, or shortly after the end, of the examining window. Very few arrived before this end date, even though the tasks had been undertaken much earlier in the examining period. There were some centres that did not send their work until after the Christmas holidays, and this after a reminder by OCR in some cases. Centres **must** send the tasks to the examiners immediately after completion, as with conventional written examinations.

The Creative Task should be accompanied by a cover sheet, which sets out the stimulus used, and provides essential information to the examiner about the extent of the ICT used. It is pleasing to report that most centres completed this.

It is not necessary to send the stimulus sheets, even if candidates have written on them. Also, some centres provided recordings supported by written scores. Again this is not necessary: the assessment is based on the effectiveness of the communication **either** as a performance, **or** using ICT **or** by writing it down.

Recorded tasks should be submitted on a CD. This is the only method of submission allowed. For reasons of security and confidentiality, memory sticks and transfers by Email are not permitted. Whilst OCR accepted these on this occasion, they will not be accepted in the future. Centres should ensure that the track list accompanying the CD is entirely accurate. There were a small number of cases where this was not so and it was sometimes necessary for OCR to contact the centre to ascertain exactly which candidate had created which response.

The vast majority of Creative Task responses were recorded. Those that were not were generally traditional melodies, or two-part responses using the melodic phrase.

Responding

In order to gain more than nine marks in the responding category, the response needs to demonstrate some musical understanding in its treatment of the stimulus. Responses which demonstrated understanding of compositional techniques, but did not apply them musically, generally fell into the "satisfactory" band and were awarded between seven and nine marks. All of the stimuli are different and lend themselves to being used in different ways. In the case of the rhythm, note pattern and, to a lesser extent, the chords, there were some musical responses which did not make sufficient use of the stimulus to gain marks above 9, perhaps just playing it at the beginning, then moving on to something else, or in the case of the rhythm, repeating it throughout the piece without change.

The rhythm stimulus will be in one of four time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8. Candidates who plan to use this stimulus need to be prepared to work in all of these metres. There were a number of drummers who started off well, but quickly slipped into 4/4 time.

It was pleasing that many candidates who used the note pattern created a stylish and imaginative rhythmic shape around it and maintained the rhythmic interest throughout the piece. Less successful responses merely reproduced the pattern in crotchets, thus not creating a stylish composition.

The melodic phrase stimulus is designed to provide the opportunity for more academically inclined candidates to demonstrate their skills. In a minority of centres, all candidates undertook this task, with varying degrees of success. There were some candidates who did not take into account the instruction to add a second part (descant or bass line) and either wrote chords, or added more than one layer of sounds. These did not achieve high marks as the requirement of the task had not been met.

There were some good responses to the chord sequence, which repeated the four chords throughout, but varied the treatment of them on the repetitions in a musical way and gained high marks. Others equally well used a different set of chords for a middle section, often using the Eminor chord as a starting point, and also gained high marks.

Responses to the words stimulus were often repetitive and this may have been because each line of the poem started the same. Stronger candidates were able to seize the opportunity to develop an opening motive in different ways and create a musical response. There were a few outstanding unaccompanied vocal responses which were stylish and committed and it was heartening to hear singers who were able to demonstrate their musical understanding in such an impassioned way.

Responses to the sequence of events stimulus were varied in quality. Most candidates effectively conveyed the idea of rain, with a busy texture at the start of the piece, although there were some responses where the subsequent events were less convincingly portrayed. Candidates who did best at this stimulus used ICT to create their responses. This enabled the communication of the dense texture created by increasingly heavy rain, and opened up possibilities for a range of timbres representative of different aspects of the forest. There were some successful responses on the piano, but there were a number of candidates who responded using the drum kit, and these tended to use quite basic effects and did not gain high credit.

There were some stylish responses that did not use any of the stimuli at all. Examiners tried hard to find some reference to the stimulus in the responses, but where there was no evidence at all of its use, the mark of zero had to be awarded.

Area of Study Criteria

Five marks are awarded relating to an area of study. In order to assess a task against the criteria for Area of Study 1, it is essential that the instrument is named. Some written responses did not do this and, in cases where the instrument could not be deduced from the task, it was not possible to award the marks.

There were cases where the task was written for more than one instrument, the most common combination being voice and guitar or piano. In such cases the exploitation of the instruments in combination was taken into account in the award of the area of study mark. When using the chord sequence, examiners sometimes had the choice of assessing the outcome as Area of Study 1 or Area of Study 2 where a melody was played over a chordal accompaniment. In such cases, markers applied the Area of Study criteria which generated the higher mark.

Communication

There were some written responses which contained a wealth of musically conceived performance detail. However there were very few responses which were handwritten.

Candidates who use ICT to present a score need to be aware that to achieve more than 4 marks, the response needs to contain more than just accuracy of pitch and rhythm. Some candidates had scattered dynamics and marks of articulation randomly across the score and this did not gain credit.

A number of responses were recorded by the use of ICT. Candidates who were able to use the ICT in a basic way, but with little stylistic communication, achieved marks in the middle range, whereas where the ICT had been used to generate stylish responses, higher marks were awarded.

Most of the responses were live recordings and the full range of marks was seen here. A number of melodic responses showed good control of the instrument with clear articulation and a range of dynamic shading. Some of these did not maintain a sense of metre beyond the opening phrases, and this is perhaps an area that could be worked on with candidates prior to tackling the task.

Unit B354 Listening Examination

General Comments

There were many parts of this paper where candidates performed well. The majority of candidates understood the rubric and some very good answers to questions were seen. There was clear evidence of candidates developing their understanding of the areas of study and some astute listening skills were demonstrated. Candidates appeared to have a broad understanding of all the areas of study.

As in previous papers, there were times when musical terminology was not well understood. Words from the language for learning will always be used in the questions and it is important that candidates are familiar with them and their definitions if they are to access the highest marks.

- 1 (a) There were many good answers to this question and the particular dance style was clearly well known to many candidates.
- (i) Most candidates correctly identified the number of beats in a bar.
 - (ii) The majority of candidates recognised this as *club dance*. There were a significant number who inaccurately wrote 'disco'.
 - (iii) The most frequently seen answer was *loop*, which was correct. Other correct answers such as *ostinato* were given whilst some candidates opted for unsuitable answers like 'imitation'.
 - (v) Many candidates gained all three marks here, with nearly all candidates gaining at least one mark. Candidates appeared to have a good understanding of technology features within this style of music. Only candidates who did not use music technology terms did not gain significant credit.
 - (vi) This appeared to be the most challenging part of this question, although most candidates recognised the entry of the *voice*. Fewer candidates were able to give correct detail about the description of the voice and some failed to gain marks because they repeated the answers they had given in the previous question.
- (b) This question was answered quite well by candidates of all abilities.
- (i) Almost all candidates gained the mark here.
 - (ii) 'Sitar' was the most popular correct answer and the majority of candidates gained a mark.
 - (iii) This question required candidates to have learnt specific information about the style and those who had done so were able to gain full marks. More candidates knew the melodic pattern, *raga*, than the rhythmic pattern, *tala*.
 - (iv) The majority of candidates gained two marks here, showing understanding of the style and good aural awareness.

- (c) High ability candidates answered this question with focus and musical understanding whilst lower ability candidates wrote vague answers that gained less credit. The understanding of musical terminology was a problem for some candidates here.
- (i) Candidates who understood the term ‘ornament’ were able to correctly identify *trill* as the answer and link it with the buzzing of a wasp. Other candidates incorrectly wrote about instruments, although some were still able to gain credit for providing an appropriate description.
- (ii) Candidates who correctly understood the terms ‘dynamics’ and ‘pitch’ were able to gain credit by giving quite basic musical features and then linking them to the movement of wasps. Candidates who did not understand the terminology wrote vague, inaccurate answers that gained very little credit.
- 2 Some good answers were seen to this question, although some answers lacked enough detail to gain full marks.
- (a) Nearly all candidates correctly recognised this style of music as *jazz*.
- (b) Most candidates were correct here with *saxophone* as the correct answer. Some candidates did incorrectly write ‘trumpet’ or ‘clarinet’.
- (c) The most popular answers here were *improvisation*, *swung rhythms* and *syncopation*. Some candidates wrote vague descriptions that did not focus on the features played by the soloist.
- (d) A good percentage of the candidates understood the relationship between the *blues* scale and jazz and so gained credit.
- (e) Most candidates gained at least one mark here although few gained full marks. Candidates who were able to describe features and give additional information regarding them gained higher marks than those who just named one or two basic characteristics unrelated to the function of the accompaniment. *Walking bass* was the most popular correct answer. Few candidates went on to give additional features that would have enabled them to gain further marks.
- 3 This extended writing question was generally better answered than in previous examination series.

The majority of candidates gained marks in the middle or top marking bands. This was a rather sparse piece of music and this enabled candidates to focus on the musical detail. Many gave lengthy descriptions which were quite specific and accurate. A minority of candidates wrote too much about the programme itself and not enough about the music and this did restrict their mark. Candidates who wrote about a wide range of musical features and gave an element of chronology accessed the highest mark band. Centres are once again advised to encourage their candidates to use the preparation page in order to make notes which can help them to organise a concise and focussed answer.

- 4 A wide range of marks were gained by the responses to this question. As well as this being a notation question, there were some parts which focused on the Waltz style. Some candidates did not think about the features of this style when answering these part questions.
- (a) (i) Candidates who understood the term ‘grace note’ were successful in this question. Some candidates did not understand the terminology and put a circle around a variety of notes within the first 16 bars.

- (ii) Candidates who realised that the question referred only to ‘the first 16 bars’ were successful in answering this question. However, there were also those candidates who chose bars later in the piece, bars 38 and 39 being the most popular.
 - (b) A challenging question, which saw most candidates scoring some marks, but very few above 5 out of 8. Some candidates gained marks for shape, particularly in bars 32 and 33, where they recognised that there was a sequence with the following two bars.
 - (c)
 - (i) A good proportion of the candidates correctly chose *F major* as the answer, with ‘D minor’ being the most popular incorrect answer.
 - (ii) Again, the majority of candidates correctly chose *dominant* as the answer, whilst the most popular incorrect answer was ‘subdominant’.
 - (d) A good proportion of the candidates correctly gave the answer of *Romantic*. There were, however, candidates who did not think through their knowledge of the waltz style and wrote inappropriate answer such as Classical. It must also be remembered that, where a musical history period is required, dates will not be accepted.
 - (e) Some good answers were seen but they were in the minority. Candidates did not appear to focus on the fact that this was a waltz and did not address their answer to typical features of the style. Instead the answers were very vague and not worthy of credit.
 - (f) Many candidates gave the correct answer although there was a significant number that opted for just ball or concert hall, which was not accurate enough for a style of this type.
- 5 The first parts of this question were generally answered very well, but candidates fared less well in the final section where more precise detail and aural perception was required.
- (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to give two composers, one Baroque and one Classical.
 - (b) Most candidates were able to recognise that these extracts were in a *major* tonality.
 - (c) The majority of candidates gained a mark here. Some candidates appeared to interpret the ‘fast’ notes of the solo part in extract A as ornaments and so incorrectly ticked the box that indicated ‘that both extracts used ornaments’.
 - (d)
 - (i) Few correct answers were seen here. Some candidates did not understand the term ‘pulse’ so did not focus their answer correctly. Other candidates did not differentiate between the pulses and indicated that they were both fast which did not show enough accuracy in their aural skills.
 - (ii) The majority of candidates recognised the correct time signature for Extract A, but few were correct for Extract B. A small number of candidates correctly recognised that Extract A had a *simple* time signature and Extract B had a *compound* one.
 - (iii) This question differentiated well. Many candidates gained one or two marks for some basic musical understanding. Others wrote excellent answers that showed a high level of musical thinking, but the few candidates that gained full marks went on to actually compare their aural observations.

- (e) This was a challenging question with many candidates relating the answer to the wrong 'type of work'. The correct answer of *sonata* was seen but 'concerto' was a more popular choice, when a musical answer was given.
- 6 Many candidates answered this question well, offering perceptive answers that were relevant to the programme and gained good marks.
- (a) The correct interval of a *4th* was usually underlined.
- (b) Good answers were seen in this question with the majority of candidates appearing to understand the word 'texture'. The most common incorrect answer was 'thick' which, although not appropriate here, was an answer that related to texture.
- (c) Many candidates gained full marks, with *brass*, *low* and *loud* being the most common answers. Some candidates also wrote descriptions of the king which was not necessary here to gain marks and the few who only did this gained no credit.
- (d) Here the naming of a mood was required and many candidates gained a mark for this as well as suitable descriptions of the music. Some, however, only wrote vague comments relating to the story and so were not able to gain marks for musical observations.
- (e) Many candidates were correct here, with 'tremolo' being the most common incorrect answer.
- (f) The majority of candidates gained at least two of the four marks available here. Once again those candidates who focussed on the music rather than the story gained the most marks.
- 7 Generally this question was answered well. Most candidates had a good understanding of the style and so were able to apply the knowledge they had of the style to the extract itself.
- (a) Nearly all answers were correct, with most candidates recognising the style as *Tango*. There were just a few who thought, incorrectly, that the music was 'Salsa'.
- (b) The majority of candidates knew that the Tango originated in *Argentina*.
- (c) Once again the vast majority of candidates gained a mark for the correct time signature. A few candidates wrote only a single number rather than a time signature and so did not gain credit.
- (d) Nearly all answers were correct.
- (e) Nearly all candidates scored at least two in this question. Many candidates recognised the *staccato* nature of the accompaniment and the *use of accents*. A good number heard the *regular phrase lengths* while fewer recognised the *Bandoneon* as a typical instrument used in Tango. The most popular incorrect answers were 'rubato' and 'walking bass'.
- (f) In all but one or two cases, candidates answered this question correctly.
- (g) Many candidates were clearly aware of the dance steps and movements for the Tango and were able to gain full marks. There were some candidates who, incorrectly, described the steps for one of the other dances in the specification.

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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Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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