

## **Reports on the Units**

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**June 2010**

**HX42/R/10**

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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

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Advanced Subsidiary GCE Music H142

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# Chief Examiner's Report

## General Comments

GCE Advanced level is a qualification that is recognised and valued widely, and it is right that an examination at this level should be academically rigorous and demanding in relation to the specialist subject knowledge and skills being scrutinised. This fact has implications for candidates seeking a music qualification, for it presumes that any individual entering for a GCE award will be prepared to devote sufficient time and energy to the study of all aspects of the subject in order to acquire the range of skills necessary to secure a pass at Advanced level.

In all GCE music units, examiners attempting to assess the results of candidates' work will be asking themselves to what extent the material they are scrutinising reflects detailed first-hand familiarity with a relevant body of musical evidence. "Does this candidate know the music?" is a question that examiners will be asking themselves frequently, regardless of the unit being assessed. Familiarity with relevant repertoire will be apparent in verbal responses to examiners' questions in the AS performing discussion and the A2 *viva voce*, just as it will inform candidates' performances and their manipulation of musical language, textures and structures in their composing. In written papers, of course, the element of personal familiarity will be clearly apparent in terms of the detail upon which candidates are able to draw in order to support subject knowledge they have acquired throughout the course.

Examiners have noted that many candidates are able to draw upon knowledge of repertoire at only a relatively superficial level, and this inevitably restricts the range of mark bands at the upper levels into which their work can be placed. Without detailed and relevant knowledge drawn from first-hand familiarity with an appropriate range of music examples, candidates will be restricted to performance in the middle mark bands. This lack of detailed understanding of relevant aspects of the subject is holding back many candidates who would otherwise achieve higher marks. As a result, examiners recommend strongly that A-level music candidates set aside sufficient time in their schedules to devote to concentrated study of relevant repertoire, by repeated attentive listening, diligent study of scores or actual performance. Personal involvement in performing a piece of music, at whatever level of expertise, is often a very good way of gaining detailed knowledge of repertoire and how it works.

In recent years a number of study guides have been published in order to help candidates prepare for A-level music courses. Many of these have been written by experienced examiners, but they must not be seen as any kind of short cut to high grades in music at Advanced level. The guides can provide valuable contextual information and they can indicate areas for potential exploration of relevant repertoire, but they cannot be an effective substitute for personal contact with the music itself. Reading through a study guide and memorising large chunks of its content is not the route to success.

This has been the first session in which all six units of the new OCR music specification have been awarded and senior examiners have been pleased with the smoothness of transition between specifications in terms of unit performance. It is appreciated that there will be a period of settling while centres and candidates familiarise themselves with new composing options and a change of historical topics and introduction of specified works for analytical study at A2. This year's session has produced a wealth of valuable material that will be used to exemplify unit standards at OCR INSET sessions over the coming academic year.

The reports from Principal Examiners that follow this introduction are worth reading with great care, for they highlight the most significant features of candidate and centre performance in each unit and provide helpful advice on how best to prepare for the specific demands of assessment in each area of the subject.

There are some points which need to be made very clearly at this stage so that candidates are not disadvantaged in future sessions. The most serious issue concerns exercises submitted in Section A of Composing Units G352 and G355. The specification makes it clear (see pages 20, 24, 41, 45 and Appendix D – pages 111 & 112 – of the specification currently on the OCR website) that it is a mandatory requirement that each candidate's portfolio of exercises **MUST** include one exercise completed within the specified time limit, without assistance and under teacher supervision (verified by signature). This series, many centres failed to identify the supervised exercise or to verify the work by means of a teacher signature. **In future series any candidate whose portfolio for Section A in Unit G351 and/or Unit G356 does NOT contain a clearly identified and verified exercise completed under controlled conditions will be in danger of losing ALL marks for Section A of the relevant unit.**

In Unit G356 candidates need to think very carefully about the evidence they select to use in their answers: one question in Section A required candidates to compare the recorded song by Charles Ives with "another song from the period 1900 to 1945". Examiners were disappointed that so many candidates appeared to be unaware of any relevant repertoire beyond that used for Section A in previous legacy 2555 papers, and were astounded that, among repertoire chosen for comparison as "another song", GCE candidates had selected (among others) Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, and even Tavener's *The Lamb*. The ability to discern what is relevant from a body of acquired knowledge is a fundamental skill expected of all candidates at Advanced level.

Overall, however, examiners remain impressed by the general level of work seen, and at the top end of the mark range performances, compositions and essays have offered examiners real "treats", confirming that high standards of achievement are being maintained in all units of the specification. This is testimony to the hard work being undertaken on a day-to-day basis by candidates and their teachers at places of learning. Examiners wish to offer their warmest congratulations to all successful A-level candidates this series: it remains a real privilege and a pleasure to assess their work.

## G351: Performing

This was the second assessment of the current AS Specification unit, G351.

OCR's examiners would like to thank Heads/Directors of Music, Examinations Officers and departmental secretaries for the care taken in timetabling practical examinations and for sending in advance helpful and vital information to the examiner (to prepare paperwork and discs) and for being so welcoming on the day. In almost all centres it was apparent that much preparation and thought had been given to ensuring that recitals ran smoothly, to time, and were as enjoyable as possible for the performers, examiners and – if invited – candidates' audiences. The examining panel also heard some outstanding accompanists.

Unfortunately this year there was some disruption caused by the ash from the Icelandic volcano, with candidates delayed in returning to the UK from holidays or homes abroad: happily examiners and centres were flexible in dealing with this unforeseen problem. Some examination visits also clashed with the General Election.

Venues and audiences varied in size: from music classrooms to school halls and chapels, local churches and arts centres - sometimes with the audience comprising fellow candidates, friends or family, the entirety of years 7, 8 and 9, the school janitor or only the examiner. Some centres produced programmes to give to the audience, and some candidates introduced their items. In many centres there was a real sense of occasion and the examiner was able to be embedded in the audience or the department in a less intimidating manner.

Examiners are also grateful for the help given with directions to centres and (reserved) parking.

It may be beneficial to candidates if the centre can arrange for the examiner to meet with all the candidates at the start of the day (or afternoon) for a short greeting to break the ice, and to confirm how the day will run. Of course the logistics of the school day may prevent this, but we invite centres to consider timetabling such a greeting when possible

Those candidates who are re-sitting this unit at the same time as their entry for the A2 unit should guard against duplication in the repertoire offered for G351 and G354 **in the same series**. Though not specifically stated in the specification, this does contravene the general requirement laid down by the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) in that no material should be concurrently entered for more than one examination.

### Section A and Section C

The examining panel heard many outstanding performances in the recitals across a wide range of styles, in which it was evident that much care had been given to preparation of the material, in performances that showed fluency, technical assurance and real personality.

However, as a note of caution, examiners are encountering some candidates who are offering pieces beyond their ability, and often the struggle for fluency and maintaining a speed prevents much expressive or stylistic detail from emerging. Repertoire should be chosen that facilitates the demonstration of technical control, stylistic understanding and fluency.

Ensemble and duet performances will also be assessed in the areas of tuning, balance, an appropriate sense of status, vertical ensemble and cogency of interpretation. The criteria for assessing Own Composition are clearly laid out in the Specification, although there were very few submissions for this option in 2010.

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

Ideally, balancing of electric instruments and amplifiers should take place before the performance begins and candidates on these instruments need to consider how they link their recital pieces when an audience is present. Dynamic levels should be appropriate to the acoustic and size of the performance space. Page turners are welcome in the examination room and it is quite acceptable for a member of staff to contribute to the ensembles/duos offered as part of the performances.

By once again using minidisk wherever possible this session, examiners have attained a better quality of recording, making the process of moderation and appeal easier and more accurate. Centres (and audiences) are **not** permitted to record the performances, either aurally or on video. Examiners will bring their own supply of these disks (or occasionally an mp3 recorder), and most examiners will also bring their own recording equipment. However, thanks are due to centres which have provided recording equipment – although it is the examiners' responsibility actually to record performances and check levels. A separate disc/CD is required for each candidate as this forms an individual examination document.

Another pleasing aspect of this year's performances for G351 was the wide variety of styles and instruments offered for assessment.

Short over-runs of the maximum time, for the sake of artistic integrity, are not frowned upon; in addition, candidates should not wait for the examiner between pieces, but present them as if in a recital with appropriate gaps or as a set at a gig.

The Section A Recital should demonstrate a range of techniques and expressive understanding: playing two or three pieces that are over-similar may not achieve this.

Candidates **must** provide the examiner with copies of their music for **both** Section A and Section C (solo parts of accompanied pieces will suffice). This is vital in order for the examiner to assess accuracy and performance directions and, later, for the process of standardisation and scaling – and would be used again in the event of a result enquiry. All photocopies will be destroyed once the process is completed. It is sometimes not helpful if the presented edition is widely variant to that which the candidate has prepared.

Downloads from the internet or photocopies from guitar magazines should be marked up as fully as possible, with stave notation alongside tablature. Providing music after the performance is not acceptable, especially as the examiners' letters to centres in advance of visits confirm that copies will be required to facilitate assessment. (Equally unacceptable is the presentation to the examiner of a CD recording of an *intended* performance.)

Keyboard and guitar candidates should be dissuaded from performing accompaniments only (usually to songs) without incorporating the solo/voice line (as one might encounter in a song transcription) in the texture, or without the intended soloist. Similarly, playing only the solo breaks in a rock number (without backing from CD or band) with silent bars between will be reflected in limited reward in the fourth marking category, "Aural and Stylistic Understanding".

Examiners would like to acknowledge the help given by centres in timetabling Section C ensembles (string quartets, wind ensembles, backing bands, percussion groups and even whole choirs and gamelan ensembles) – often for multiple performances – and providing some excellent accompanists who were helpful and supportive to nervous candidates. Where pre-recorded backing tracks were used, these were generally well-organised and ready to go, with levels preset, but some performances were affected by poor balance, jumping CDs, false starts or lack of familiarity with introductions. The ability to balance with and to play in time with any backing track **will** be assessed.

The Section C Option (iv): Improvisation is intended to give spontaneous composers and improvisers an extra opportunity to perform. Although the uptake of this option is disappointing, responses to the stimuli ranged from the aphoristic (merely playing back the stimulus once) to the astounding. A huge range of styles was presented – and the stronger candidates devised pieces that showed clear form, strong techniques of extension and variation, imaginative use of the stimulus, technical range of their instrument or voice, and the ability to judge the need for tension and relaxation with appropriate length.

## **Section B: The Discussion**

This is an opportunity for the candidate to assess his/her performance (the Discussion will always follow the Section A performance) and how that may have developed in terms of the interpretative choices made in preparing the work. Questions focus on issues such as techniques employed, choice of various parameters such as sonority, speed, dynamic, articulation and ornamentation (for example). In general examiners have found that candidates have been well-prepared for this section, with intelligent, detailed and informed answers to these issues.

The examiner is not trying to catch the candidate out with trick questions, but merely exploring the thinking that has gone into the performance.

Opening questions might focus on reasoning behind the order of the pieces, the impact of the venue and acoustic on performing decisions, how the performance on the day varied from performances given before – or which of the programme is the favoured item. Questions will go on to explore technical and interpretative choices and the evidence of the score itself in influencing performance decisions. 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, “my teacher told me to play it that way” or “I heard it on YouTube” as answers do not give evidence of the candidate’s thinking and understanding of interpretative issues.

Candidates **may** refer to listening that has influenced them (while still underlining why choices have been made) but the examiner is looking for thinking and decision-making **beyond** mere imitation. Listening and comparison within a focussed style will be assessed in the A2 unit, G354.

## **G352: Composing 1**

For most centres, this was the second submission for the new specification Unit G352 and, like last year, administration has, in the main, run quite smoothly. It is very helpful to moderators to have the paperwork dealt with so efficiently and centres are to be thanked for their work in this regard. There were a few instances of requested samples of work arriving long after the deadline, but nearly all communication between moderators, OCR and centres has been very good.

Once again, centre marking was generally rather generous. It still seems that some centres are marking to the top of a band rather than using the full range of marks available. Teachers are encouraged to use the whole range of marks available for each subsection of the criteria. Within each statement there are two, three or four marks available, and centres should be able to graduate the marking within the band appropriately. For each subsection there is also a brief identification of the areas specifically being assessed and this should be reflected in the marks awarded. There is a natural tendency apparent for weaker candidates to be given the benefit of the doubt, but this is not really helpful to candidates in the long run and must be resisted.

It was pleasing that many centres provided comments to support their assessments – although these did not always match the actual marks awarded. There seemed to be some confusion regarding the requirement for teacher annotations on the Coursework Cover Sheet. As part of the normal teaching process it is, surely, standard practice to offer students written guidance about ways in which their work may be improved. It is that guidance – visible on the exercises, the composition and the Commentary/Brief – to which ‘teacher annotations’ refers and these are so helpful to moderators in assessing the work. It is apparent that many of the comments seen this year have been aimed at the moderator rather than the candidate!

There were fewer arithmetical errors this year, although a few large changes had to be made because the addition of marks within a section had gone awry or the transfer from section marks to the front cover and/or the MS1 had not been adequately checked.

The physical presentation of portfolios was excellent, with fewer centres sending bulky hard-backed files. Most work and the accompanying CDs were clearly labelled and the completion of the Coursework Cover Sheet was greatly improved over last year.

### **Section A: The Language of Western Tonal Harmony**

Once again, there is clearly much excellent work going on in centres to give candidates an understanding of Western Tonal Harmony. It is, perhaps, in this section that teacher annotations are most valuable (surely also to the candidates?). Such written guidance, skilfully leading the candidate to reconsider their work but without directing what they should do, allows students to develop and progress in their understanding of WTH.

There are, however, still too many instances where credit is being given for harmony that contains basic errors, which reappear in later exercises – poor understanding of the use of inversions (notably the 6-4), the appropriate treatment of the Leading Note (particularly in the minor key), approaches to and use of modulation etc. Candidates should always be encouraged to sing through or play the parts that they write – to detect poor voice leading and unnecessarily awkward bass lines, to spot incongruities and clashes of accidentals etc. – and to be aware of the relative pitch and spacing of parts. Some candidates, writing in open score, forgot the ‘real’ pitch of tenor parts – often creating unintended inversions with the tenor as the lowest note.

Notation, often with the use of computer software, was generally quite clear. However, the use of *Sibelius* or similar does not absolve the candidate of the need to check for appropriate note values and rests, to arrange stems correctly and even to align notes.

There were some specification infringements. It is required that at least two exercises are in full texture – requiring a full texture incipit. Also at least one exercise or equivalent must be in the minor key, and conventional staff notation is to be used. Please note that it is expected that accurate chord indications will be provided by the candidate – and these should also identify correctly the inversions intended, and should agree with bass line! Such chord indications are, of course, essential in two-part exercises in order to make clear the harmony intended. There were many examples where it was obvious that either the bass line or the intended chord had been changed, but the indications had not been adjusted as necessary. This does indicate a lack of understanding of the harmonic implications of a given melodic idea. Centres are reminded that two-part exercises are not two-part inventions and represent only the soprano and bass parts of what would otherwise be in full texture.

Most material provided was suitable for the candidates but centres are advised that a range of genres is expected and that the submission of a single genre (notably chorales) is likely to limit the opportunities of candidates to demonstrate fully their capabilities in this section. At AS level we are not making stylistic judgements but assessing a basic level of competence in handling the principles of Western Tonal Harmony. For this reason genres which are essentially contrapuntal are not appropriate at this level.

The provision of the Controlled Conditions Exercise was, in general, as intended. However, please note that this exercise is a mandatory specification requirement and that it is required that the exercise is clearly identified and the authentication statement on the Coursework Cover Sheet completed by the teacher. Without both the CC exercise and the signed declaration it will not be possible to accept marks for this section.

## **Section B: Instrumental Techniques**

Again, there were some very imaginative and exciting submissions this year, although the number of live realisations was fewer than in the recent past. It is extremely helpful to candidates to hear (and participate in) rehearsals and performances of their work. At the very least it can guide them as to the use of their chosen medium and ways in which they could capitalise on its potential. A number of compositions offered a mixed live/sequenced performance, which is a good compromise.

There were a number of arrangements this year – and, occasionally, some really stunning work in this genre was produced. Please note that marks can only be awarded here for the original material added by the candidate and that mere orchestrations of the Lead Sheet are unlikely to achieve good marks. The inclusion of a Lead Sheet is, of course, a specification requirement. Candidates must be very careful not to plagiarise the original. There were some arrangements which were very close clones of their original sound and structure!

In general, Briefs and Commentaries were often the weakest aspect of the submissions. In these documents, candidates need to provide a clear statement of their intentions and to identify the influential listening they have done – naming pieces and explaining the influence they had on the resulting composition. These influences can, of course, also reflect the playing experience of candidates in Youth Orchestras, Bands and other ensembles. There is no need for detailed analysis of the piece, although the process of composition should be outlined. It should, of course, be evident in the composition how the influences have shaped the music. Centres are reminded that the Brief and Commentary form part of assessment of Materials.

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

The visual presentation of scores was generally good, most using score writing software. However, candidates must remember that it is essential to include all performance directions necessary to enable a musical performance – appropriate instruments clearly identified, tempi (initial and elsewhere when needed), sensible and workable dynamics, phrasing, bowing, articulation, pedalling etc. – and these were often missing. Similarly notation must be rhythmically correct and clear, and crashes between notation and performance directions should be tidied.

Realisations were often rather bland and did not clearly represent the intentions of the composer. Sequenced performances were often badly balanced and ignored speed changes and dynamics. The very best sequenced realisations rivalled closely those which were performed live – and it was very encouraging to hear some exceptional live performances. Centres are reminded that wrong notes and entries etc. in a live performance do not lose marks.

As last year, centres are thanked for the technical production of the CDs. There were very few problems and most of those centres which provided one disc for the whole centre also provided a track listing. On only a couple of occasions were .wav files provided – and centres are reminded of the requirement to provide CDs capable of being played on standard equipment. Please note, however, that the CD forms part of the submission for that candidate and, as such, there should be a separate disc for each candidate.

Once again this has been a successful session, with some excellent submissions in both sections. It is clear that many centres have taken careful note of comments from last year's Report to Centres and those new to this specification will, hopefully, find this year's report gives good guidance for the future.

## G353: Introduction to Historical Study in Music

### General Comments

Most candidates this session achieved marks in the middle range, although there were some outstanding performances, demonstrating that the maximum mark was achievable by candidates in this Unit. Overall, however, examiners felt that candidate performance was not as strong as in the June session of 2009, and it was disappointing to note that many candidates who performed strongly in answering questions on the unprepared music of *Section A* demonstrated far less security in relation to the prescribed repertoire and its context in their answers to *Section B* and *Section C*.

In spite of several instructions (many in large bold print surrounded by a border designed to draw attention to its text) a worrying number of candidates still attempted both options (*Extract 1A* and *Extract 1B*) in *Section A* of the Unit. Examiners cannot stress too strongly the need for candidates to be aware of the dangers of such a strategy: excessive time spent answering too many questions in *Section A* has the effect of penalising overall unit performance as a result of time limitations when answering *Sections B* and *C*.

Candidates appear to be gaining confidence in the skills required to compare performances of *Extract 2*, and many scripts received high marks for answers to Question 23 this session. Most comparisons were able to focus on relevant detail and examiners saw many answers that revealed acute aural perception resulting from careful listening in the 15 minutes' preparation time prior to the examination.

More worrying to examiners, however, was the fact that a few centres complained about the quality of the CD recording supplied for *Extract 2B*: this was a historic recording from 1939 conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Fortunately no candidates appeared to be thrown by the nature of this recording: many candidates actually referred to the aurally evident surface noise of track 8 in the detail of their comparison for Question 23!

### General Tips for the Unit

- Use the 15 minutes of listening time at the start of the examination to listen attentively to the music recorded on the CD. In particular, this extended listening session can be an extremely valuable period in which to compare the two recordings of *Extract 2* and identify important relevant evidence to use in answers before the writing begins.
- Make sure that all SIX items (three scores and three recordings) of prescribed repertoire are studied in preparation for the Unit: a gambling technique in this area is not advisable and can have disastrous consequences for candidates. Examiners have no master plan of rotation for the repertoire and any item may appear in successive sessions and/or years.
- Ensure that basic musical terms are well understood: a clear grasp of musical aspects such as "harmony", "texture", "tonality" and "instrumentation" will help to encourage relevant detail in candidate answers and will lead to higher marks as a result.
- PLEASE remember that candidates should answer questions on EITHER *Extract 1A* OR *Extract 1B*, but not both! (There are plenty of instructions reminding candidates of this on the paper and the insert.)
- Consider sitting a proper "mock" examination of a full paper before the unit is set. This can be a useful means of identifying problems in terms of time management and specification infringement BEFORE the examination proper.
- At the end of the examination, please tag the material together in the following order: question paper + any additional writing/manuscript paper (*if used*) + Insert (*at the back*).

OCR issues paper packs with the Insert placed inside the question paper. If the Insert is tagged inside the question paper at the end of the examination, an examiner needs to unpick this and retag items in the correct order before he/she can begin to mark the paper!

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A

**Extract 1A**      **HAYDN, *Quartet in f# ("Prussian")*, op.50 no.4, Hob.III:47, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, bars 0<sup>2</sup>-20<sup>2</sup>, & 80<sup>2</sup>-100. Kodály Quartett (1996), Naxos/HNH International Ltd., 8.553984, track 2, 00'24"- 01'21, & 05'02"- 06'00" [Total length of recorded extracts: 01'55"]**

- 1      Most candidates were able to position at least two of the four chords accurately. Examiners were concerned that so many candidates failed to place chord **lc** accurately, given its position within a standard cliché imperfect cadence at the end of the phrase. Work undertaken in connection with G352 Section A (*The language of Western Tonal Harmony*) should have encouraged development of a degree of aural perception required to place this second-inversion chord accurately within the extract.
- 2      Elements of chromaticism in bars 5-6 and in bar 7 caused problems for some candidates, but examiners were pleased to note that many answers to this question received maximum or near-maximum marks. Almost all candidates were able to demonstrate an appreciation of the overall contour of the bass line.
- 3      Although some answers avoided referring to any aspect of harmony (frequently preferring to mention details of instrumentation) most candidates were able to identify the use of a perfect cadence at the end of the phrase. More detailed answers referred to the use of a **lc** approach chord and attempted to explain the aural dissonance caused by the suspension of the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord above the tonic in the bass line.
- 4      Most candidates answered this question accurately, identifying modulation to the dominant key.
- 5      Almost all candidates recognised the use of sequence in the passage from bar 12 to bar 14.
- 6      Examiners were pleased to see a significant number of completely accurate answers to this question, and there were many "near misses", with only minor inaccuracies in the placing of chromatic intervals towards the end of bar 15. The printed C# in the melody of bar 16 should have provided candidates with a valuable reference point against which to compare the final pitch of their written section of the melody line.
- 7      Most candidates identified the use of a dominant pedal accurately.

8 This question was not well answered by many candidates. Most answers were able to mention the decoration of the melody from *Passage 1i*, but few answers provided specific detail of changes, and there were some confused references to the addition of an obbligato line in the 1<sup>st</sup> violin part of *Passage 1ii*. Perceptive answers referred to the absence of a low bass line at the start of *Passage 1ii*.

9 Many answers to this question suffered from extreme generalisation in terms of the musical evidence provided. Many candidates noted that both passages ended with a perfect cadence, and some answers referred to the contrasting dynamic levels (quiet in *Passage 1i*; loud in *Passage 1ii*). Only a few perceptive listeners noted the faster rate of harmonic change evident towards the end of *Passage 1ii*.

**Extract 1B** **ANDY PRICE, *Robin Hood* – music from the BBC TV series (no score available), Danubia Symphony Orchestra/Miklos Malek & Peter Pejtsik (2006), Tiger Aspect Productions/EMI 3 81029 2, track 1 (Robin Hood Theme), 00'00" – 00'40", track 18 (Robin and Marian), 00'22" – 01'30" & track 34 (Robin Hood End Credits (00'00" – 00'35" [Total length of recorded extracts: 02'23"]**

10 Most candidates identified the basic structure of the extract as ternary form, although the 3-mark total for this question should have made it clear that examiners were looking for more detail (such as the use of repetition within 'A' and/or 'B' sections of the music, or the contrasts between compound rhythms in 'A' and simple rhythm patterns in 'B') for the award of full marks.

11 This question was answered accurately by most candidates. The most common errors were caused by carelessness, most commonly a failure to circle **two** notes in the printed melody.

12 Most candidates were able to identify specific examples of instrumentation to answer this question, but the best answers produced evidence across a range of musical aspects, including references to tonal, harmonic, dynamic and rhythmic contrasts between the sections. Examiners expected answers in the highest mark bands (3 and 4 marks) to cover a range of aspects, but many candidates focussed on only one feature of the music in their writing.

13 This question was well answered by many candidates. Examiners advise candidates to include the notation of rests in answers involving the notation of rhythm patterns: this can make clear any deficiencies in the alignment of a candidate's working with the rhythmic patterns of the printed stave.

14 Examiners were pleased that many candidates were able to place all four chords accurately. The most common error among nearly-correct answers was the misplacing of the two versions of the E $\flat$  chord. Careful listening to the bass line in the relevant passage should have made clear which box contained the first-inversion chord.

15 Most candidates were able to identify the use of a pedal accurately.

16 Examiners were delighted to note the significant improvement in accuracy of melodic dictation this session, with a large number of candidates producing entirely accurate versions of the melody. Almost all answers demonstrated a clear awareness of the melodic contour, with many workings containing only minor slips. It is hoped that this noticeable improvement will be maintained.

- 17** In contrast, Question 17 was not well answered by most candidates. Examiners were exasperated that so many candidates failed to mention any aspect of harmony at all in their answers, preferring to write about details of instrumentation, melody or structure. Some candidates were able to identify a tonal centre of f minor, but relatively few were able to appreciate the broader harmonic picture of a plagal cadence or to offer convincing explanation of the suspension and its resolution by means of a descending scale.
- 18** Many candidates penalised themselves by referring to detail that was not relevant to the appropriate aspect of the music (melodic material) clearly identified in the wording of the question. Those who did discuss the melodic writing in *Passage 1iii* were able to mention detail such as the use of 'A' material only from *Passage 1i* and/or the augmentation of rhythmic values. Examiners also credited references to the change from a compound to a simple pattern in the rhythm of the melodic material of *Passage 1iii*.

### **Section A Tips for Teachers and Candidates**

- Make sure that candidates prepare for both “classical” and “contemporary” extracts in Section A. An ability to engage with both styles of music will give candidates a wider choice of question in the actual paper.
- Provide candidates with opportunities to work through previous papers prior to sitting the examination. The experience will help them to develop valuable answering techniques. Discussion of candidate answers against published mark schemes will help both teachers and candidates to develop a clear awareness of the qualities that characterise answers that are likely to gain high marks.
- Remember to focus on RELEVANT aspects in answers: a question asking about rhythm does not require an answer that concentrates on instrumentation, for example.
- Listening papers from the OCR legacy Unit 2552 can serve as valuable practice documents for Section A. The layout and style of questioning mirrors exactly that of Unit G353. The only difference is that in 2552 papers Section A is marked out of a total of 35 marks against the 30 marks for Section A in G353.

**Section B**

**Extract 2** SCHUBERT, *Symphony no.8 in b (“Unfinished”), D.759*, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, bars 324 to 352.

**Extract 2A:** Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Sir Charles Mackerras (1990), Virgin Veritas/EMI Classics, 7243 5 61806 2 8 (2000) disk 1, track 5, 11’57” – 12’49” [Length of extract: 00’52”]

**Extract 2B:** NBC Symphony Orchestra/Arturo Toscanini (1939), Guild GHCD 2202 (2002), track 2, 11’35” – 12’24” [Length of extract: 00’49”]

**19** Most candidates were able to answer all parts of this question accurately; the terms and symbols were well known. Some candidates confused the accent articulation mark with a *diminuendo* symbol in part (b), while many were unaware of the significance of the “*primo*”/1<sup>st</sup> (1<sup>o</sup>) marking in part (c).

**20** Examiners were disappointed that a large number of candidates failed to receive marks for this question as a result of carelessness: many candidates *offered “tremolando”* as an answer explaining the notation of the timpani part, but this performing technique is not relevant to the timpani, and candidates really ought to have been familiar with the notion of a timpani roll at this level of examination.

**21** Many candidates produced entirely accurate answers to this mechanical transposition exercise. However, a large number of scripts produced pitches an octave above the sounding pitch, which restricted the amount of credit that could be awarded. A worryingly large number of candidates appeared to have little idea how to approach this type of exercise, which has appeared frequently in *Section B* questions over the past decade.

**22** The harmonic progression from bar 27 to bar 29 was a basic Ic – V7 – I sequence that should have been very familiar to all candidates, not just as a result of careful study of the prescribed orchestral score, but also from work undertaken in connection with *Western Tonal Harmony* exercises for *Section A* of Unit G352. While many candidates were able to identify the perfect cadence, examiners were concerned that so many candidates failed to provide sufficient further detail (such as the identification of a second-inversion chord or the addition of a 7<sup>th</sup> to the dominant chord) that would have led to the award of maximum marks for their answers to this question.

**23** Many candidates produced detailed answers to this question, reflecting careful and attentive listening to the two performances recorded on the CD.

Answers that received marks in the lower ranges tended to produce very superficial comparisons over a narrow range of musical aspects, frequently lacking any supporting evidence. The best answers demonstrated aural perception across a range of relevant aspects, producing clear comparisons that were supported by consistently accurate references to detail in the recorded extracts.

Examiners are very pleased that candidates have responded so positively to this type of comparison question, and are encouraged by the level of careful listening demonstrated in most answers seen this session.

Centres’ concerns that the poor recording quality of *Extract 2B* would disadvantage candidates proved completely unfounded: many perceptive candidates referred in detail to the presence of surface noise and frequency limitations in the 1939

Toscanini performance, making relevant contextual deductions from this feature in their written comparisons. The most perceptive candidates were able to contrast this with the cleaner and more balanced sound of *Extract 2A*: a performance from 1990 conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras, whose untimely death occurred shortly after the paper was sat by candidates.

- 24 (a) As in last year's paper, examiners were concerned that many candidates were unable to relate the printed extract to the overall structure of the movement. The sequence of music in the printed extract occurs only, at the start of the coda section of the movement (although it draws on thematic material that occurs in other places) and candidates should have been familiar with this fact as a result of detailed study of the prescribed score and repeated attentive listening to performances of the music.
- (b) Candidates who knew the music well were able to produce answers that provided plenty of relevant detail from the music, whereas those who did not know the music in detail tended to provide points that were far too general in nature or (in some cases) completely inaccurate.

**Extract 3** **MILES DAVIS, *So What* (1959), from *Kind of Blue*, Columbia Legacy/Sony Music CK 64935, track 1, 01'31" – 02'28". [Length of recorded extract: 00'57"].**

- 25 (a) Most candidates were able to identify Miles Davis as the soloist.
- (b) Many candidates recognised the use of half valving in the extract, but not all answers mentioned the use of *pizzicato* in the double bass.
- (c) Too many answers to this question failed to provide sufficient detail: examiners were expecting candidates to identify precise detail in the piano writing, such as the use of chord clusters or detached articulation at the start of the extract. Sadly, a significant number of answers failed to concentrate on features of the piano writing, digressing to include features relevant to other instruments performing in the extract.
- 26 Most candidates mentioned the presence of a walking bass and the use of a cymbal in the accompaniment. Examiners were expecting more detailed comment for the award of full marks for this question, and it was regrettable that more candidates did not refer to aspects such as the use of brushes on the snare, the use of swung rhythm or the cymbal splash heard at the start of the recorded extract.
- 27 Many candidates revealed a degree of misunderstanding in their answers to this question. Following the recorded extract, Miles Davis continues his trumpet solo, notably exploring the higher range of the trumpet, while the walking bass pattern stops and is replaced by a pedal note in the double bass. The most common answer was that a saxophone solo followed the recorded extract, and this betrayed incorrect knowledge of the sequence of musical events in *So What*.
- 28 Most candidates were aware that the performance was recorded in New York, although several candidates suggested answers such as Chicago and Kansas, suggesting some muddled learning in relation to revision of the jazz recordings.

### Section B Tips for Teachers and Candidates

- Make sure that you get to know the music of all six prescribed items of music thoroughly. The best way to do this is by careful and regular attentive listening, so that you become thoroughly familiar with the sequence of musical events in each work.
- Teachers should ensure that candidates can find their way around scores, especially in the early stages of the AS course. It is important that candidates gain confidence in handling the printed scores of prescribed orchestral repertoire. This will save valuable time finding your way around the printed score in the examination.
- Make sure that you set aside sufficient time to listen to the prescribed works as regularly as possible: candidates need to appreciate the music as sound, not just as notes on the page.
- Teachers and candidates must NOT leave preparation of the prescribed repertoire until the last minute in the course: this will not help candidates to become thoroughly familiar with the music they need to study.
- Remember that the PRESCRIBED REPERTOIRE CHANGES REGULARLY. Consult the OCR website for the prescribed repertoire relevant to any particular session of this Unit.
- In the study of jazz repertoire, centres and candidates must ensure that they use the recordings prescribed by OCR. If centres are in any doubt about a recording they are using, clarification should be sought from OCR. Occasionally CD recordings listed in the specification will be deleted at short notice and without warning by recording companies: in such cases OCR will be able to suggest alternative sources for the prescribed repertoire.
- Teachers and candidates are advised STRONGLY not to gamble on any particular rotation of prescribed repertoire: all SIX items (three “classical” and three jazz) of prescribed repertoire should be studied for any particular session if candidates are not to be disadvantaged. The examiners have no master plan for the rotation of items.

**Section C** Answers in this section of the unit covered all three questions, although Question 30 (background to Davis’ *So What*) proved least popular this session. In general, Question 29 (comparing orchestral forces in any two prescribed scores) was answered best of all, with candidates able to draw on precise detail to support their observations.

Answers in the highest mark bands are expected to be consistently relevant, demonstrating thorough and detailed knowledge, 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 in order to achieve a standard appropriate to AS level.

**29** This question was a popular choice and many candidates were able to draw relevant comparisons between the forces used in the two works chosen. The best answers were able to cover a range of instrument use and support observations with direct and specific reference to examples from the repertoire studied. Less perceptive answers were able to list the instruments used in each work, but were unable to progress far beyond basic generalisations in terms of comparisons drawn. Another feature noticeable in many of the weaker answers was an unbalanced division between the two works, with one work usually being covered in some detail, but the second work being treated in a more cursory manner.

- 30** Candidates who chose to answer this question generally demonstrated good contextual knowledge and were well aware of Davis' career and experience prior to the composition and recording of *So What*. Answers were able to mention appropriate features of earlier relevant styles such as bebop and to trace their influences in the music of the prescribed recording. Some weaker answers digressed into a history of the development of jazz music in America during the first half of the twentieth century, or a history of the development of jazz recording, but most candidates were able to demonstrate good contextual awareness when discussing the background to *So What*. A number of essays reflected both exhaustive knowledge of the topic and obvious passionate enthusiasm for the music. Examiners were impressed to read such erudite writing from candidates, revealing serious and scholarly study of jazz repertoire at a level appropriate to a GCE qualification.
- 31** Many candidates who chose this option misunderstood the point of the question: the focus should have been on the ways in which the limitations of early recording technology affected the style and performance of jazz in the early twentieth century. The two most common errors were (a) to produce a history of the development of recording technology and/or the recording industry and (b) to stretch beyond the early twentieth century and discuss issues relevant to Miles Davis' recording of *So What* (1959). The best answers were able to refer in detail to aspects of band layout such as the front line and rhythm section and relationship between soloist(s) and accompaniment, but weaker answers tended to focus on the manufacture of shellac disks and the nature of the recording technology used. Examiners advise candidates to study the wording of essay questions carefully to ensure that their writing is both focussed and accurate throughout.

### Section C Tips for Teachers and Candidates

- Try to arrange several opportunities to organise knowledge in 'practice essays' before the examination itself. This is helpful preparation for Section C of the unit and will point out issues that may need to be addressed before the real examination (eg allocation of time, overall essay structure and a focus on the relevance of information provided).
- Remember to focus essay writing in order to answer a specific question accurately rather than simply regurgitate knowledge that has been acquired during the course: many essays fail to gain high marks in Section C because the writing is not consistently applied to the demands of the question set by the examiners.
- ... and a final piece of advice from the examiners:  
LISTENING attentively is the key to success in GCE Music. It is important not to let the sound simply wash over a listener. In an A-level Music course examiners expect candidates to be able to delve beneath the obvious surface features of music they encounter. Intelligent and attentive background listening can be of enormous help to candidates in developing a sense of context for this section of the unit and in broadening and deepening their musical understanding: an important foundation that will provide effective preparation for A2 study in the subject.

## G354: Performing (Interpretation)

### General Comments

This year saw the launch of Unit G354, Performing Music 2 (interpretation) and examiners have reported most favourably on its first year. Feedback from centres has also been positive and often helpfully informative.

Much of the administration required remains the same as for its legacy predecessor, Unit 2553, and in the majority of cases centres fulfil these tasks successfully. It is, of course, in the candidates' interest to do so.

Items which need to be sent to the examiner at least one week in advance of the examination date are:

- candidate numbers, full names and details of music to be performed (with grade levels)
- copies of the music to be performed
- copy of the timetable (timings need to allow for set-ups).

The inclusion of e-mail contact details continues to prove very helpful.

A few examiners reported some external noise occurring during this series' examinations. Centres are reminded of the need for quiet recital conditions, although the constraints of a busy centre are understood.

Centres are again respectfully reminded of the need to provide competent accompanists.

Candidates should guard against duplication in the repertoire offered for G351 and G354 **in the same series**. Though not specifically stated in the specification, this does contravene the general requirement laid down by the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) in that no material should be concurrently entered for more than one examination.

If CD recordings are made for the examiner by the centre, it is imperative that these are checked by the examiner before leaving the centre. Of course, it is forbidden for centres to make separate recordings of their candidates' recitals for their own purposes.

Owing to the introduction of the *Viva Voce* into this unit, in place of the legacy Performance Investigation, the overall time necessary to run this examination is now recommended to be thirty to thirty-five minutes – an increase from Unit 2553. Centres are asked to bear this in mind when putting timetables together for future series.

Some centres still invite audiences to be present for the recital element of the examination and in some cases, it was clear that tremendous effort had been put in to making these performances very special for the candidates, treating the occasion as an informal concert with appropriate breaks for the *Viva Voce*.

Examiners are again most grateful for the hospitality extended to them by centres. Great care is taken by them to ensure that everything runs smoothly and this is very much appreciated by all examiners, who realise how much planning and effort goes into making this happen.

## Comments on Individual Sections

### Section A: Recital

The requirements for the recital element of Unit G354 remain the same as for the legacy Unit 2553, apart from the increase in weighting. In some cases, as in previous years, examiners were privileged to hear stunning performances of near-professional standard. This is an area in which candidates are often very confident and very few did not reach the required level. There was evidence of much prior preparation and rehearsing. More candidates performed from memory this year, though of course this is not a pre-requisite. Most of the repertoire presented accessed the full range of marks. Centres are once again reminded that it is not in the candidates' best interest to perform music that is too difficult for them.

As for Unit 2553, the music performed for Unit G354 still needs to have a focus. As 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...or of a small group of shorter, related pieces". The music presented should be linked by style and (usually) time and not by a shared form, texture, concept or even lyrics. Consequently, a recital incorporating preludes ranging from Bach to Berkeley is not focused. Neither is a song recital whose texts are all by Shakespeare if they range from Arne to Britten. There needs to be consistency and homogeneity to the music itself. As with Unit 2553, the validity of Section B still rests on there being a consistent focus to the music presented in Section A.

Increasingly this year, a number of guitarists presented recitals consisting of only the accompaniments of songs or, conversely, only solo sections were presented. In either event, incomplete performances of this kind attract a lower mark for "interpretative understanding and aural awareness", Category 4 of the marking criteria. On a positive note, examiners reported receiving more detailed scores for music in a popular vein this year, with rhythmic, structural and expressive indications often being added to Tab scores.

Unlike within Unit 2553, there is no minimum time length for the G354 recital, though a maximum length of fifteen minutes is stated. The candidates do need to present sufficient material from which the examiner can form a judgement, though.

Another difference from Unit 2553 is that now there is no limit on the amount of improvising that can be incorporated into a G354 recital, as long as the starting points (eg lead sheets, chord sequences etc.) are included for the examiner. This improvisational freedom follows on from its inception at AS level in Unit G351 and is already proving to be a welcome option in G354.

### Section B: *Viva Voce*

It is in Section B, the *Viva Voce*, that Unit G354 differs most from the legacy unit, 2553. Saying that, the *viva voce* is a natural successor to the Performance Investigation, retaining many of its fundamental features, and has proved to be very successful, with both centres and examiners commenting favourably. What is particularly pleasing to witness now is the way in which the *viva voce* follows on from the discussion at AS level in Unit G351. Whilst at AS level the emphasis is on self-reflection, additionally at A2, candidates are expected to show an in-depth understanding of their focus repertoire and also comment on different interpretations of this repertoire. In many cases this was achieved with a high degree of success. As is often the case with the introduction of a new examination element, it can take a little while for centres to feel fully confident. Consequently, the following section of this report will aim to clarify the requirements for this part of the unit, highlighting some misconceptions that materialised this year.

## Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

As the specification states (page 29), “candidates are required to have listened to, and compared, at least two interpretations of music relevant to the style or genre that is the focus of their recital”. The performances must be on the same instrument as that offered by candidates in Section A. **NB:** it is not necessary for candidates to have listened to and compared interpretations of the specific repertoire performed in their recital (though in reality this is often what does happen), as long as the music chosen for comparative listening is relevant to their focus area. Furthermore, it is not necessary for the same piece of music to be compared as long as comments on the different interpretations are comparative and not merely descriptive.

Unlike with the legacy Performance Investigation, candidates are now at liberty to listen to as many interpretations as they like as long as they are related to the Section A recital. Whilst YouTube can be a useful resource for this section of the unit, centres and candidates are advised to consider the worth of performances carefully before using them. There were instances of mediocre and often anonymous recordings being compared. This added little to candidates’ understanding of different interpretative possibilities.

The vast majority of candidates talked readily and often very perceptively about their comparative listening, sometimes highlighting the points they made with their instruments (or voice). However, whilst candidates answered securely on features such as tempo and dynamics, many were less forthcoming when asked about such details as sonority, pronunciation, accent, nationality, styles and dates of performances. More depth and detail of listening is advisable.

In addition to the comparative listening element, candidates need “to have supported their study by appropriate research” as stated on page 29 of the specification. Examiners need to be convinced that candidates have fully investigated their focus area through listening, reading and other research. Whilst in some cases there was evidence that this had been undertaken, in many cases it was the least convincing area of the section. Candidates need to be able to describe the typical features of their chosen style more securely.

Most candidates found the *Viva Voce* Preparation Form (VVPF) useful for recording the details of the comparative listening and research they had carried out. Many supplemented it with extra notes, which in itself is quite acceptable. In a few cases, candidates had almost over-prepared arriving with full-scale essays or “memorised answers” resulting in a lack of spontaneity or even an irrelevance in their responses.

As the specification states on page 31, “candidates may wish to photocopy the form so that they can use it as an *aide memoire* in the discussion”. Sadly, some centres were erroneously under the impression that they could not do this.

To clarify for the *viva voce*, as stated on page 30 of the specification, candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate an in-depth understanding of their focus style or genre and the different performing choices and conventions associated with it;
- show awareness of different interpretative possibilities
- explain their interpretative decisions; and
- appraise the effectiveness of their decisions in their performance.

In order for these four areas of this section to be adequately discussed, it has become apparent that the *viva voce* needs about **ten minutes** rather than the five minutes estimated in the specification. This is why centres are now asked to leave at least thirty minutes for this unit of the examination to be examined when devising future timetables.

Centres and candidates are warmly congratulated on a successful first year of Unit G354.

## **G355: Composing 2**

This year has been the first of the current specification in which centres have internally assessed the composing work of their candidates at both AS level and at A2 level. The issues raised by this exercise have been of great interest to both teachers and moderators: student progress, courses of study, the cross-over between the areas of study in different units and levels of technical understanding and musical application – these have all gained a heightened focus as both teachers and moderators have sought to evaluate the achievement of their music scholars. The picture of achievement overall is a mixed one and this report will evaluate and give advice with regard to assessment and specification matters.

### **Administration**

Moderators are grateful for those centres that present the work of their candidates with close attention to the requirements for submission. Centres are urged to be vigilant in avoiding both arithmetic and transfer of data errors, many of which were noted (and corrected) by moderators. Centres should note the following pertinent points, many of which were ignored or missing from this series' submissions:

- Candidates should be encouraged to be meticulous and organised, dating and ordering their work in a logical way from the outset.
- The source of Section A exercises (all options) must be identified by providing an appropriate, named composer.
- Each candidate must take responsibility for clearly and comprehensively indicating any given parts in Section A exercises including the incipit. Failure to do so constitutes malpractice at best and plagiarism at worst.
- The recording is an assessed 'document' and its production is therefore the responsibility of the candidate, not the teacher. One disc per candidate, suitably packaged and labelled is a specification requirement.

### **Centre Assessment of Coursework**

As a general observation, centres were inclined towards generosity on behalf of their candidates and almost all candidates were placed in the top three bands of achievement. An objective of moderation is to ensure the accurate application of the assessment criteria across all centres. Moderators found a much wider range of ability than most centre assessments indicated and for future years teachers are urged to use the full range of marks and descriptors when evaluating their candidates' coursework.

A mark out of ninety has a rather different feel to a percentage and assessors needed to be mindful of this. Those centres demonstrating care and thought in the allocation of marks, with insightful comments in response to the assessment criteria, produced accurate outcomes for their candidates.

## The work presented by candidates for moderation

Aspects new to this specification include three additional options in 'Stylistic Techniques' and greater freedom in Section B possibilities. Candidates are now free to research and choose their own texts for Vocal Composition and use a film clip or other stimulus of their own choice for Film/TV. The Programmatic instrumental option allowed the many candidates who warmed to the idea of 'representational' music the widest choice of possible 'programmes'. This flexibility has been enthusiastically embraced; candidates should nevertheless be encouraged to seek the wise counsel of their teachers when considering the implications of their choices. Moderators saw every possible permutation of option combinations within the unit, evidencing the breadth of interest and expertise in centres across the country.

### Section A: Stylistic Techniques

Within the choice of eight options, *Chorale harmonisations in the style of J S Bach* remain very popular and account for some 50% of all submissions. Moderators expressed concern at the lack of technical and grammatical understanding of the many stylistic features of chorale submissions. Chorale exercises were often assessed generously; idiomatic cadences alone cannot secure marks in the upper bands. The flow of the music within each phrase demands a sophisticated level of harmonic awareness and an ability to construct textures that show due regard to spacing, voicing, correct treatment of passing notes, chromatic issues and the preparation for and use of suspensions. Exercises in a range of keys must be offered and those centres who offer chorales as part of the AS submission should be mindful to avoid a restricted harmonic diet. Candidates demonstrating a secure, musical grasp of this style are relatively few and centres are encouraged to bring this option to life by giving the exercises a practical context and by listening to and gaining familiarity with chorales in their original performance context.

Exercises in *Minimalism* and *Serial Technique* were tackled by only a small number of centres. Nevertheless, credit is due to those teachers who produced first rate exercise incipits in these genres and the care taken to emulate the level of stylistic authenticity required in other options. The best work used role-models detailed in the specification: the works of Reich, Glass and others representing New York minimalists or those of the Second Viennese School: Schoenberg, Webern and Berg. Candidates were not able to access the full range of marks if their submissions consisted of 'mini-compositions', based only loosely on a serial or minimalist principle. Incipits must always be identified as having been sourced from the work of a relevant composer.

*Baroque two-part keyboard counterpoint*, *String quartets in the Classical style*, *Keyboard accompaniments in early Romantic style* and *Popular Song* were all represented more or less equally in terms of candidate choice.

Whilst the specification gives a wide choice of possible approaches to the study of *Popular song*, the assessment criteria makes clear the importance of demonstrating stylistic understanding. This is best achieved by a focus rather than a broad spread of popular composing styles. The most successful work was seen where candidates presented a range of exercises of Beatles and other sixties' songs or Gershwin and additional Tin Pan Alley composers, for example. Incipits and given parts must always be as faithful to the original as possible, whether the exercise is a song by Led Zeppelin or Schubert. A simplified piano version of a Beatles song such as *Eleanor Rigby* would not be an acceptable alternative to the original string quartet instrumentation.

Teachers had painstakingly crafted some authentic exemplar exercises of Tamla Motown songs, for example, in order that their candidates could learn the technical details of the style. Some teachers made clear links with the Historical Topics of Unit G356 in the teaching of various stylistic options. It is envisaged that more centres will feel encouraged to consider *Two-part vocal counterpoint of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century* as they uncover the treasures of early vocal music in this context.

### **Continuity between the Composing units**

It was encouraging to see the continuation of best practice from AS level, namely the use of chord symbols to demonstrate an understanding of the harmonic implications of candidate workings. This is crucial in any 2-part work and beneficial in 4-part work, enabling a candidate to think clearly about chord inversions, modulations and the ways chords connect together.

### **Teacher annotation of exercises**

Evidence of the teaching and learning process is essential for informed moderation to take place. As a coursework rather than an examined unit, exercises should be marked with annotations that accurately reflect a candidate's achievement.

### **Centre-supervised exercise**

In the current educational climate, a greater level of scrutiny is required to demonstrate what candidates are able to do independently in the context of their coursework exercises. Many centres have found it useful for candidates to work on an exercise under timed conditions on more than one occasion. The *final* centre-supervised test is a 'snapshot' of the candidate at work, unaided and unable to subsequently revisit the exercise. Whilst centres exercise control of the conduct of this procedure, a degree of formality is advisable, underlining the mandatory nature of this specification requirement. Without the inclusion and signed verification of the centre-supervised exercise, a candidate risks losing all marks awarded in Section A by the centre.

### **Section A recordings**

Some candidates took advantage of the option to include sequenced recordings of their exercises, which greatly assisted teachers and moderators alike in the process of evaluating *Serial*, *Popular song* and *Minimalism* submissions, for example.

### **Section B: Composition**

Moderators saw an exciting range of research underpinning the focus candidates gave to their creative ideas in the 'Self-determined brief'.

Film/TV composition accounted for some 15% of candidate entries with Programme music and Vocal Music represented more or less equally. Whilst the ratio of live performances to sequenced recordings overall was approximately 45%/55%, it was clear that candidate success, particularly in the case of vocal composition, was directly related to their live realisations. The compositional process was demonstrably enhanced by the knowledge that the only sure route to success was to test out, however imperfectly, that the piece was indeed 'sing-able'.

### **Aural familiarity, assessment and commentaries**

Several centres mistakenly assessed the commentary with the score and recording, as has previously been the case in the legacy unit, 2554.

In G355, candidates are required to account for relevant background listening and aural familiarity with a range of music, relevant to their composing ideas under the assessment criteria heading, 'Materials'. The descriptors make this clear in their reference to the range and relevance of listening models. The criteria do allow, however, for that familiarity to be demonstrated in the music itself. A candidate submitting a programmatic composition based on 'The Sea', for example, may be able to communicate aspects of the work of Britten and Debussy without necessarily stating it explicitly in the commentary, but it certainly makes sense to do so when the opportunity exists. Candidates are expected to broaden the range of relevant analytical listening beyond their prescribed historical topics repertoire.

Moderators are concerned that many commentaries are unduly lengthy. A document referencing pertinent listening in an insightful way together with a concisely crafted account of the process of composition and its success in relation to the brief will meet the requirement. It is counter-productive to write a commentary that simply describes or analyses the finished product at great length: far better to give that time to further refining of the composition or rehearsing it for performance.

### **Vocal composition**

- Text choices were wide and varied and almost always suitable for compositional interpretation
- Sequenced recordings of songs with no vocalisation of the text setting are always disappointing and cannot adequately meet the assessment descriptor, 'effective recording'.
- A copy of the original text used as source material for compositional interpretation should be provided, separate from the composition itself.
- Aspects of text setting that are to be credited under the assessment descriptor 'Technique' include a demonstrable understanding of the characteristic rhythmic sounds and intonation of language, metre, stress and rhyme, use of word painting, melisma, syllabic emphasis etc.
- The idiomatic ways in which candidates indicate their understanding of the tenor or soprano voices, for example, or write effective textures for accompanying instruments is credited under 'Use of Medium'
- Piano accompaniment was a popular option and effective figurations were achieved by those candidates who had clearly realised the need to study a range of role models from various styles and genres.

### **Programme Music**

- A comprehensive range of extra-musical ideas was presented by candidates, ranging from texts to photographs, stories to landscapes, pre-existing to self-generated programmes.
- Orchestration skills were clearly enhanced by the study of scores in G356.
- A range of styles was employed to facilitate the interpretation of a programme: a photograph of Anthony Gormley's 'Field' installation gave rise to a minimalist composition; an El Greco: 'The Burial of the Count of Orgaz' (painting) was cast in a dark late Romantic sound-world.
- Specific aspects of the musical interpretation of a stimulus are assessed under 'Technique'

### **Film/TV Composition**

- Candidates crafted some highly effective and detailed storyboards in preparation for the writing of an appropriate film score.
- Some candidates successfully synchronised their own compositions with a pre-existing sound clip

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

- Those who simply gave a generalised account of music for a film and wrote a descriptive piece with no visual or clearly scripted story board were in reality submitting a piece of programme music.
- Appropriate character themes, synchronised timings or mood shifts in interpretation of the film stimulus are assessed under 'Technique'
- It is not appropriate to submit a complete commercial DVD with instructions 'music to fit section found at 1hr 35 mins' and a separate music recording. A written storyboard constructed from the DVD clip, with precise timings is much more effective accompanying document.
- Some candidates worked very successfully with 'silent' black and white film clips.

### **Assessment of production**

- A small number of candidates chose to submit a production recording for evaluation, in preference to a score, with great success.
- Centres are reminded that this option is available for all three composing options; some popular song submissions were most effective.
- Some candidates submitted two commentaries to cover the requirements: one detailed relevant listening models and the composing process, the other focused entirely on the recording, mixing and final production of the master recording giving full and comprehensive details of technological procedures.
- Another successful route was to write a single commentary that included all these important aspects

### **Concluding remarks**

Teachers and candidates alike are thriving within a highly flexible specification. Moderators are encouraged when they see variety and diversity in the courses centres deliver but they also voice some concern that expertise may be spread too thinly. Many centres offer two options in Section A, typically a traditional one and a more contemporary one, but there are teaching issues to be considered to ensure candidates systematically build up a bank of knowledge and understanding, with an in-depth appreciation of stylistic elements. A useful maxim is to balance teacher expertise with candidate interest and enthusiasm; we should not set any exercise we would not be able to do ourselves, neither should we press all our candidates into following a single route of our own choosing.

Moderators frequently expressed delight in the inventiveness of candidates as composers and appreciate that, on every level, music learning, teaching and assessment is a mutually beneficial exercise.

## G356: Historical and Analytical Studies in Music

### General Comments

The first June session of Unit G356 produced a wide range of marks with most candidates being able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding in their answers, but there were fewer outstanding scripts than might have been expected. There was clear enthusiasm for the new topics and prescribed repertoire, though some candidates did not appear to be able to make comparisons with appropriate related works.

Whilst most candidates completed the Paper, some were unable to manage their time effectively, often spending far too much time on Section A, thus leaving little time to plan properly for the essays in Section B. In some instances, only one essay was produced and in others, the second essay was very brief.

Many candidates were unable to use correct musical terminology effectively. A particular issue was the term 'atonal', which was often taken to mean anything that was not completely diatonic. At this level, candidates should be conversant with the appropriate technical vocabulary, both for the topic they have studied and for use in the Section A vocal extract.

The standard of English varied. Some candidates showed a high level of competency, but many scripts displayed errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax. It was disappointing that names of composers and repertoire were not always correctly known. Accuracy of written language is assessed in Section B, and it is important that candidates are able effectively to communicate their thoughts. This was also impeded by the fact that some candidates had difficulty writing legibly at speed.

**Section A** produced some good answers to questions on word setting. Most candidates were able to recognise some features relating to the Areas of Study of *Interpretation* and *Tonality*, although some were confused by the lack of a key signature and thus assumed the music was in C major or even atonal. The format of the questions enabled all candidates to make some pertinent observations and the majority seemed to have made good use of the fifteen minutes' preparation time.

Many candidates wrote far too much in Section A, often using continuation sheets without indicating that they had done so. For most questions in this section, a mark is awarded for each relevant comment. Sometimes just one or two words will suffice, eg b.36<sup>4</sup> F major. Candidates need to focus very carefully on what the specific question requires and then aim to give a considered, concise response. They will not be rewarded for general comments on everything that is happening in a passage. Use of bullet points is fine – there is no need to write in continuous prose.

### Teacher Tips for Section A

- DO offer candidates plenty of opportunities to respond to a range of unfamiliar examples of accompanied vocal music written between 1900 and 1945. This should be taken from a variety of genres for solo voice and larger ensembles.
- DO encourage candidates to develop their ability to comment – using correct technical vocabulary – on both Areas of Study: *Interpretation* and *Tonality*.
- DO encourage candidates to use the fifteen minutes' listening time at the start of the examination constructively. This extended listening period (with access to the score insert and questions) should be seen as a valuable time to focus on the aural nature of the extract, its lyrics and its structure before candidates begin to answer the questions.
- DO encourage candidates to organise their thoughts in bullet point form in Section A. Marks are awarded for key facts in response to the question, not for gratuitous comments.

**Section B** was approached in a positive manner by most candidates. The most popular Topics were *Programme Music* and *Music for the Stage*, with *Music for the Screen* and *Popular Music* close behind. Relatively few centres prepared candidates for *Song* or *Music and Belief*.

Candidates had studied the Prescribed Repertoire in some depth, but few were able to show specific knowledge of the music and confined their answers to a discussion of a single musical feature eg the tritone in Q.21. They should develop the ability to explain and illustrate in detail the ways in which composers have responded to a stimulus (*Interpretation*) and how *Tonality* has been used for expressive purposes. Additionally, candidates should be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the music in relation to these two Areas of Study.

Most answers involving reference to related repertoire were superficial. Candidates were less well prepared for their chosen related repertoire and were not able to perceive the prescribed music within a meaningful wider perspective. Centres should ensure their candidates have detailed aural familiarity with the related repertoire and not be over reliant merely on information found in published guides.

Candidates showed a disappointing lack of ability to focus knowledge on answering the question. Essays often fell in the lower middle bands, not because candidates had failed to acquire knowledge of the topic, but rather because they were unable to focus on what they had learnt that was relevant to the appropriate aspect of the topic identified in the specific question. The ability to select relevant knowledge and to arrange detail in sequence to answer the question effectively is a key skill, which is required to be demonstrated to achieve marks in the top two bands. Many answers did not focus immediately on the relevant aspect of the topic. Within the time allowance, candidates cannot afford long, rambling essay introductions that simply provide a sense of context for the topic in general. Candidates' writing must focus consistently on the appropriate aspect of the topic if they are to gain high marks. Some had clearly learnt pre-prepared essays and proceeded to write these even though they did not relate to the questions.

### Teacher Tips for Section B

- DO study extended sections of the Prescribed Repertoire. Answers which dip in and out of scenes and movements are rarely successful. At this level candidates should have carried out rigorous and thorough appraisal of the music.
- DO encourage candidates to listen attentively to the Prescribed Repertoire on a regular basis. Close familiarity with the music is the key to success.
- DO ensure that related repertoire is covered in enough detail for candidates to be able to make worthwhile comparisons. Again, detailed listening is essential.
- DO encourage candidates to learn and use appropriate musical terms.
- DO encourage candidates to include relevant manuscript quotes if it enables them to express their point more effectively.
- DO ensure candidates practise hand writing their essays. The ability to write legibly at speed with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar is essential if candidates are to communicate their thoughts clearly.
- DO encourage candidates to read and digest the question and to plan a relevant answer. Essays cannot access the top two bands of marks if the whole question is not answered directly.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

- 1 In general, this question was answered quite well, though some candidates missed some obvious features. Most could say something about the shape of the vocal line, but were less sure about the tonality. Comments were sometimes rather general instead of homing-in on features of the vocal melody itself – candidates did not always seem to be considering stylistic features of rhythm, pitch etc. Most made some effort to connect comments with the nature of the text.
- 2 This was quite well done. Most candidates were able to make some comment about the repetition and cross-rhythms, relating answers to the text. The pedal was usually spotted well, often leading to good conclusions about the tonality.
- 3 This was consistently well answered though sometimes precise words were not highlighted in the answer and explanations were not always convincing. Occasionally it was evident that word-painting as a concept was not fully understood with irrelevant words like 'and' or 'the' being described. A few candidates gave more examples than the three required. When a specific number is mentioned in the question, only this number of responses is marked.
- 4 This was another question where relevance had to be considered carefully. Many answers did not grasp the point of the question here, just describing what was already marked in the score rather than listening to the interpretative choices made by the performers.

- 5 (a) Most candidates could refer to some relevant rhythmic facts – mostly crotchet movement, dotted rhythms and unified voice and accompaniment. Not many commented on the diminution, the bass minims, or the ending.
- 5 (b) In general, the harmonic/tonal understanding shown here was less convincing in comparison to the rhythmic understanding of the previous question, though many identified the 5ths and the key change to F major. Surprisingly few commented on the imperfect cadence. A number of answers failed to identify the key – candidates seemed to be confused by the accidentals. Stronger answers commented on the hymn-like texture.
- 6 This question engendered some thoughtful responses, though full marks were rare. Most candidates observed the repetition of the previous vocal phrase and some were able to make pertinent observations about the tonality. Almost all candidates recognised the reflective nature of the postlude.
- 7 Most candidates gave some response to this question, but were unable to select a suitable song for comparison. Many referred to whole operas, or large choral works rather than a single song. There were, however, some perceptive comparisons with songs by composers such as Finzi, Schönberg, Strauss, Warlock, Britten and Elgar.

## Section B

### Topic 1:

- 8 Of the centres that prepared this topic, most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of *Dichterliebe* and some familiarity with the music. However, there was often little focus on the expressive use of harmony and tonality and answers were more generally descriptive.
- 9 There were a few good answers to this question, but other candidates seemed to find this question challenging and did not attempt any comparison with other English madrigals.
- 10 Few candidates chose this question. Those who did were able to make some valid comparisons.

### Topic 2

- 11 A popular question. Many candidates found it difficult to focus on the actual transformation of the themes, but gave general descriptions of the orchestration and storyline. Better answers went into detail about the metamorphosis of the *idée fixe*, the *Dies Irae* and the cor anglais/oboe theme from the opening and end of the third movement.
- 12 Another popular choice. Whilst there were some pleasing answers here, again there were some general descriptions – often narrative descriptions of the sonnets without specific musical links being made. In general, candidates chose Couperin as the second composer to discuss, but did not always include much detail. Some candidates referred to composers out of the time period.
- 13 Most candidates chose to focus on the MacMillan and were able to write in some detail, though many concentrated on timbre and texture rather than on harmonic and tonal processes. Comparison was often made with Takemitsu, Penderecki or Reich, but this music was much less well-known and answers were often superficial.

### Topic 3

- 14 Of the centres that chose this topic, this seemed to be a popular choice of question and resulted in some pleasing, relevant detail. Most focused their information on showing how the drama/dialogue was enhanced, though some were more general.
- 15 Fewer candidates chose this question. The significant aspect of the topic was often overlooked: timbre and texture were often very poorly discussed and some choices for comparison did not facilitate a convincing response. The term 'contemporary' was not always understood.
- 16 Whilst there were some successful responses to this question, there were some issues too. A number of candidates provided general descriptions of the story of their chosen films with only vague references to the music and others duplicated material from Q. 14. Candidates are warned in the rubric to Section B not to duplicate material in their two essays as they cannot be credited twice for repeating exactly the same information. It is obviously acceptable to refer to the same film, or even the same scene, but different points need to be made. Apart from Korngold, other featured composers included Shore, Elfman, Williams and Zimmer.

### Topic 4

- 17 The few candidates who answered this question did so with varying degrees of success. Some were able to give thorough responses with detailed musical examples, but others were only able to pinpoint very brief moments in the work rather than discussing two extended sections as required.
- 18 Most responses showed some knowledge of the Byrd and were able to discuss the vocal textures and tonal processes. Not all were able to draw comparisons with a suitable related work and some displayed little aural familiarity with the music.
- 19 Those who had studied *Stimmung* in depth were able to give informed responses here. Most were less secure when dealing with the related repertoire. Unfortunately, it appeared that some candidates had relied on learning a few facts from a book rather than engaging with the prescribed and related music through concentrated listening.

### Topic 5

- 20 Many answered this question and there were some detailed responses showing that the candidates had found this work approachable and manageable in terms of being able to get their heads around its stylistic features. Most, but not all, managed to discuss the vocal forces and how they transmitted the action rather than just describing the music. Weaker candidates did not really discuss extended sections of the work and had difficulty with the term 'vocal forces', just giving brief examples of word painting rather than discussing the dramatic effect found in Purcell's setting of recitative, arioso, aria, and chorus.
- 21 Many candidates wrote at length for this question. Almost all could refer to the tritone, but spent much more time irrelevantly discussing various aspects of rhythm and instrumentation rather than focusing on harmony and tonality. The pinpointing of these features in the second stage work was often quite weak, although there were some good responses on Britten's *Billy Budd* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

- 22** Unsurprisingly, *Die Walküre* was chosen as one of the works for consideration by almost all candidates who attempted this question. The other work was usually by Verdi. Although there were a few impressive responses, even the stronger candidates found it difficult to identify features of word setting convincingly, and just discussed motifs and Wagner's orchestra without reference to the text. Understanding of the second chosen work was, for the most part, superficial. Unfortunately, in this question and in Question 21, a number of candidates discussed works outside the time period.

### Topic 6

- 23** Most answers focused on instrumentation and technology. Stronger responses went beyond description to discuss harmonic and musical techniques with close reference to sections of specific tracks. Weaker candidates could name technological advances such as ADT, but were unable to give detailed explanations with examples from the music.
- 24** Candidates had generally engaged with the music of the two albums, but many were unable to relate aspects of instrumentation to interpretation of the lyrics – especially in the Norah Jones.
- 25** There were some good responses to this question, mostly discussing The Beatles and The Kinks. However, many candidates dealt with instrumentation alone, rather than going beneath the surface of the music to aspects of texture, harmony and rhythm.

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