

GCSE

Music

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J535**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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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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B351 Integrated Task/B352 Practical Portfolio

This report covers the two moderated Units of GCSE Music. The first section of the report deals with issues common to both Units, while the latter part of the report focuses on Unit specific issues.

Administration

Many centres submitted the work of candidates in a well-organised format giving the moderator easy access to all the component parts. This makes the process of moderation easier and more effective. Unfortunately, a small but significant number of Centres continue to have difficulties in submitting their sample of work in an organised way. OCR sends two separate sample requests by email: one for unit B351 and one for unit B352. These invariably require the sending of work for different candidates. It is very important that the correct candidate work is sent for the appropriate unit, as this can seriously delay the moderation process.

The Candidate Assessment Forms must be completed in full – this includes full details written in the text box and all appropriate ticks provided on the second page. A significant number of Centres leave these boxes blank, and moderators often have to contact the centre for additional information. The box requesting information about the use of technology in a composition frequently lacks detail with some centres simply naming a software programme. This is sufficient for a score writing package, such as Sibelius, but more detailed information is required for recording software including the number of tracks recorded, any samples used, and any sound processing applied during the mix down.

Moderators discovered many clerical errors made by centres who completed hand written assessment forms. It is strongly recommended that the interactive Candidate Assessment Forms are used. These can be found on the OCR website and they will automatically calculate the total mark.

Centres should ensure that the correct MS1 marksheet is completed for each Unit. There were a number of cases where B351 marks had been submitted for B352, and vice versa. Centres should also always complete the CCS160 Centre Authorisation Form, and include this with the sample of work that is sent to the moderator.

Most centres submit their work to the moderator by post. There is also the option to submit work via the Repository. This is a very convenient way for centres to provide their work, and centres who use this option rarely need to submit any samples by post. When using the Repository, it is important that all of the files are correctly labelled, and that the correct work is attached to the correct unit folder. The Administration folder should only be used for the CCS160.

Each candidate folder must contain:

- the Candidate Assessment Form
- the Performance sound file
- the Composition sound file
- the Composition score or candidate annotations
- the Commentary (B351) or the Log and Evaluation (B352)
- the Ensemble score (if necessary for B352)

Postal entries arrive with Moderators in a variety of ways. There follows precise details of what is required when submitting a sample of work:

- present the assessment forms **with the work**, in candidate order.
 - only submit the candidate assessment forms for the candidates requested in the sample
 - Printed work consists of the Commentary (B351) or the Log and Evaluation (B352); additional evidence will include a composition score or candidate annotation, and an ensemble score for B352, if necessary
- all recordings on one CD with a track list, in candidate order. A separate CD for each candidate may be submitted if preferred. *Centres are requested not to supply a CD of performances and a separate CD of compositions*
 - check that all CDs play, and that the tracks are correctly labelled before submitting. Delays are usually caused by issues or faults with the CDs provided
 - no announcements are required before each track on the CD as long as an accurate track list is provided for the moderator.

Heavy, bulky files or ring binders should not be sent to the moderator; the work can be placed in a plastic or cardboard folder

Moderators frequently need to contact centres for additional information to support the verification of the marks awarded. Most centres respond to these requests quickly, and moderators are able to undertake a professional dialogue with the Music Teacher. However, in a number of cases, centres and teachers were slow to respond to both emails and telephone calls. Whilst appreciating the significant demands on the teacher's time, requests for information about the work of candidates should be provided in a timely manner and afforded an appropriately high priority.

Assessment of Performing

It was pleasing to note that many centres assessed performing accurately. However, there were a significant number of centres who over-marked performance. In particular it is important to only award the mark of 12 for 'Fluency and Technical Control', and for "Communication and Interpretation" (B351) or 'Interpretation and ensemble awareness' (B352) for work that is significantly above and beyond the normal standards expected of GCSE Music. A suitable indicator is to only award this mark to performances that would score well in an A Level examination. Please refer to page 35 of the specification for the precise details.

Similarly, a difficulty mark of 6 should be reserved for pieces that are above and beyond the normal expectations of a GCSE Music course. This is a piece that exceeds the instrument specific criteria for 5 marks in several significant respects.

At the lower end of the achievement range, a short simple piece - for example a right hand keyboard performance of a 16 bar melody – does not give the candidate sufficient scope to demonstrate a high standard of communication and interpretation. Though the performance may justify a mark in the 9 – 11 bracket for fluency and technical control, it is unlikely to get beyond the 3 – 5 bracket for communication and interpretation, or interpretation and ensemble awareness. Simple pieces should be awarded the mark of zero for 'difficulty.'

Moderators were pleased to see examples of rapping, beatboxing and DJ-ing. The use of these styles and genres is a well-established part of the OCR specification and candidates are able to receive credit for performances and productions that incorporate the control and manipulation of the wide range of software and technology that is now available and used in Centres.

Assessment of Composition

Moderators found the assessment of compositions to be lenient with marks often being placed in a band higher than the evidence suggested. Many successful compositions showed an understanding of compositional techniques but lacked the musicality and style to access the 12 – 14 band of marks in the Core Criteria.

As with performing, the highest core criteria mark (of 15) should only be awarded to exceptional work.

It is important that centres understand the requirements of the regulations surrounding the Controlled Assessment, which must be followed explicitly. In particular, the use of other performers in composition work continues to be a matter of great concern. Many candidates write pieces that have accompaniments or other parts performed by others. Centres must assess precisely what the candidate has written and not the final outcome or recording which may well have been enhanced by another performer who is not the candidate. If a candidate composes a melody and adds chord symbols it is not possible to give credit for an elaborate realisation of these elements by an accomplished performer. Primary evidence of how the part was communicated to the other performer(s) must be provided to the moderator so that the reliability of the assessment of the candidate's work can be verified, and the validity and integrity of the examination maintained.

The following are acceptable forms of evidence to support candidate intentions when additional performers are involved in the realisation of the compositions.

- A score of the part(s) played produced by the candidate (hand written or on an ICT package)
- A video or audio recording of the rehearsal process
- A detailed written (or recorded) explanation by the candidate of their intention
- Any form of graphic notation to diagrammatically how a part should be played

Centres must therefore follow the instructions in Section 4 of the specification (pages 27 – 33). In particular, paragraph 4.2.4 makes the following specific points:

“Where others are involved in the performance of the work, they must not enhance what the candidate has provided. Where the candidate's intention is only implied and the performer(s) interpret the composition (such as by improvising in a section or by adding accompanying figurations to a set of chords) credit cannot be given.

In all cases where others are involved in a performance, evidence of what the performers are using as the basis for their realisation must be provided in the score or annotations.”

A small number of centres submitted joint compositions for both B351 and B352. This is not permitted in B351, and only possible for B352 if the input of the individual candidate can be clearly defined and assessed.

Unit B351 – Integrated Tasks

This unit is based solely on Area of Study 1: My Music. Candidates should gain an understanding of how music is written for their instrument which emerges through three strands: a performance, a commentary that considers the instrumental techniques required by the performance piece, and a composition that draws upon and develops these techniques. In this session, the guitar, drum kit and voice were popular choices. There was a marked decline in the use of orchestral instruments.

Solo Performing

A solo should not necessarily mean that the candidate performs on their own. Centres are reminded that when a performance requires an accompaniment it should be provided whenever possible, by using a live performer (or performers) or a backing track. For example there were a

number of drummers who performed the drum part to a rock song – unfortunately, without a backing track or accompaniment, the drum part loses a lot of its meaning.

In addition, it is essential that the piece of music chosen for performance should be commercially available and must not be the composition of a friend or teacher. The only exception to this rule is where the nature of the piece is improvisatory, for example beatboxing, rapping or djembe. In these cases the music should be clearly based on the style of a specific, named performer. Full details of the candidate's inspiration should be explained and discussed in the Commentary.

Composing

As always, moderators heard many fine compositions in this session. Candidates clearly benefit from the challenge of writing a piece for their own instrument and being given the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity using skills and techniques with which they are familiar.

In most compositions, the Area of Study mark was accurately applied. Unfortunately, a small minority of candidates produced a composition that did not include their own performance instrument. In these cases the Area of Study mark cannot be awarded.

Commentary

The Commentary requires the candidate to consider specific instrumental techniques used by the composer of their chosen performance piece. The application of these techniques is then discussed in the performance evaluation. Finally, the candidate writes a composition brief that sets out the instrumental techniques that are to be used and developed to produce the final piece.

This year moderators reported fewer examples of work worthy of marks in the top band. There seemed to be a focus on a description of the musical elements found in the performance piece as opposed to a discussion of instrumental techniques. In many cases the use of elements does relate to instrumental techniques, but this link must be clearly explained. For example, most pieces feature changes of dynamics -an element. These can be achieved in different ways on different instruments. Candidates should therefore focus on *how* the dynamic changes are achieved using their instrument as opposed to simply describing the dynamic markings in the score.

Some well written commentaries were often let down by a very simple composition brief that did not focus on the use of the candidate's instrument.

For the production of the Commentary, many centres use the OCR template that is provided in Appendix B of the specification. This led to candidates trying to fit their handwritten responses into the limited space provided by the text boxes. It is not necessary to use this form. Commentaries are better presented as a MS Word document with the four sub-sections clearly subtitled. Candidates may then address the content of each section fully and without restriction. The Quality of Written Communication is considered in the assessment of the commentary and moderators have the authority to adjust by up to two marks if the work is not well written.

B352 Practical portfolio

This unit involves three separate elements: an ensemble performance, a composition that is based on either Area of Study 2, 3 or 4, and a Log and Evaluation. Candidates have the option to choose an area of composition that relates to their skills and personal interests.

Ensemble Performing

Moderators enjoyed some fine ensemble recordings. This unit provides the chance for candidates to work on pieces they enjoy playing, with a group of performers who are often from their GCSE class. The ensemble skills of the candidate are of particular significance in the 'Interpretation and Ensemble awareness' criteria. The best practice is observed when candidates interact musically with the other performer(s), demonstrating changes of balance and role (such as when to lead and when to follow), and showing awareness of phrasing and rubato. This type of performance accessed marks of 9 and above.

Some pieces do not enable a candidate to show ensemble awareness. For example a keyboard played with the backing beat function precludes the use of rubato within the ensemble. This type of performance is unlikely to access more than 5 marks even if the part is played fluently and accurately. A limited number of candidates perform with a backing track. This can restrict the extent that ensemble skills can be assessed.

Centres should advise their students against performing in an ensemble that involves considerable unison passages, as this can also significantly restrict the mark awarded - this was most often the case with vocalists in this examination session.

Many centres provided clear information about the parts performed, and provided scores in cases where a part was difficult to distinguish aurally. This was very helpful to the moderation process. Centres are therefore reminded that it is essential to provide a score where an ensemble involves similar sounding instruments or voices so that the moderator can be absolutely clear about what has actually been assessed. A small number of centres submitted ensemble performances on video to enable candidates' parts to be easily distinguished. Moderators found this very helpful. Video evidence is also essential for the accurate assessment of DJ ensemble performances or any other type of performance that involves the manipulation of technology as part of the performing process. In these cases, the video must enable the moderator to see how the candidate is using the technology to generate and enhance the performance.

Care should be taken in the recording of ensembles. The recording should be a balanced recording of the whole ensemble with the candidate's part clearly audible at all times. Centres are recommended to make a trial recording of a section of the piece to test the balance and audibility of the performance before recording the complete piece.

Composing

The composition element of this unit provides students with a wide variety of possibilities. Candidates can choose an option that is best suited to their interests and skills. Many centres allow their students a completely free choice and moderators enjoyed listening to a wide range of music from many different genres. This resulted in the production of very good creative work that justified the awarding of high marks. In contrast, some centres prefer all their candidates to work on the same option making the teaching process more straightforward. However, moderators observed that in many cases this approach restricted the creativity of candidates and high marks were not so easily achieved.

Area of Study 2 tended to be the most popular choice, with many candidates choosing to write songs in a popular style. Often these candidates perform their compositions with the help of

fellow students. This is excellent classroom practice provided that the conditions of controlled assessment referred to earlier in this report are followed.

In Area of Study 3, the Waltz remains a popular option. Many of these were very predictable with basic chord sequences focussing on the 'um cha cha' accompaniment pattern over which a triadic chord note melody is added. These were often found to be marked generously by Centres.

Other candidates were able to use their music technology skills to full advantage by using software such as Garageband and Cubase to compose dance-style pieces. The repetition of simple patterns based on a limited number of chords is a key feature of this type of music and as a result some Centres tended to assess relatively simple pieces very generously. At the other end of the scale some highly creative and technical dance compositions were evident which showed complete mastery of both the technology and the genre. In these cases high marks were fully justified. Centres are reminded to provide full details of any loops and samples included in the composition of a candidate. There were a number of examples of compositions in this session that consisted entirely of loops and samples. This type of composition can't be awarded high marks.

Area of Study 4 was also a popular choice with candidates. The Area of Study mark is based on how effectively the candidate has conveyed their chosen story or mood. A clear and detailed brief is an essential component of the composition process. In order for the assessor to award these marks correctly, the intention should not be hidden within the detail of the Log or Evaluation. Candidates may use inspiration from a picture, text or other media source, and this should be submitted along with the written brief.

Some centres prefer to submit arrangements. In these cases, the original source material must be submitted. High marks are available to candidates who rework the given material significantly and moderators saw some very good work. However, some arrangements were little more than transcriptions or re-orchestrations; these can only achieve low marks because so much of the material is provided for the candidate in the first place.

Many candidates provided a score to support the recording of their composition. This was helpful to moderators. Moderators also found the inclusion of screen shots from programmes such as Garageband and Cubase extremely useful especially when accompanied by a candidate annotation explaining key points in the composition.

Log and Evaluation

Centres tend to mark the Log and Evaluation leniently. There should be three distinct sections each with its own clear purpose. It should begin with a *Brief* that gives details the Area of Study chosen and provides information about how the stylistic features of the chosen focus within that Area of Study will be created. Area of Study 2 will include full details of the chosen instrumentation and genre. Area of Study 3 should include specific features of the chosen Dance style. For Area of Study 4 the brief should be about the specific story or mood that will be conveyed by the music.

The *Log* should consist of a session by session description of the compositional process. The best logs include musical reasoning for the choices made during the composition process. Candidates then write about the effects of these choices on the outcome of the composition in the *Evaluation*. In particular, candidates should focus on how key features of their chosen genre have been incorporated in the composition. This can be explained in the log as the composition evolves followed by some reflection in the evaluation. A common issue noted by moderators is that the Evaluation is often a repeated version of the Log.

There is no obligation to use the OCR template found in Appendix B of the specification. This can lead to candidates trying to squeeze their handwritten responses into the limited space

provided by the boxes. The Log and Evaluation is better presented as a MS Word document with each section and session clearly subtitled. Candidates can then address the content of each entry properly without feeling restricted by the size of the box they are trying to fill.

Advice and support

OCR has a dedicated subject specialist who is available to answer queries and provide advice on the delivery of the specification. Marie Jones can be contacted through this email address: marie.jones@ocr.org.uk

CPD training courses, delivered by a leader of the assessment team are also available in the autumn term. Further information is available on the OCR website.

B353 Creative task

General Comments:

This is the second year of marking to the current criteria. Unfortunately a number of centres submitted the old style cover sheets with their entry and centres are reminded that the correct version of the form is on the web-site and should be used next year.

Some excellent work was seen in this series with clear evidence of thorough preparation by many centres. It was encouraging to see a wide variety of stimuli used with the Melodic Phrase and the Sequence of Events having more entries than in previous years. Some centres obviously gave their candidates helpful guidance and choice within the stimuli allowing them the opportunity to create work that was most suited to their strengths. It is always good to see centres where support has been given so that every candidate can achieve their potential. However, there continues to be evidence that some centres do not appear to prepare their candidates sufficiently well, especially where all of their candidates produce work using only one stimulus which is not always to the candidates' best advantage.

Administration of the Examination

Once again there were issues with the dispatch of candidates' work to the examiner. Each year the examination can be taken at any point between March 5th and May 5th. It is important to send the work to the examiner as soon as possible after all the candidates have completed the paper. If the correct labels are not in schools at the start of the examination period then work should be stored securely and sent to the examiner immediately the labels arrive. A number of centres did not send work until after 15th May (the deadline for moderated work). This is ten days after the final date for the Creative Task to be taken and several weeks after the labels were in centres. This meant that the work was very late reaching examiners and made it difficult for them to keep to their own deadlines.

With the work from each centre it is important to include:

- A hard copy cover sheet for each candidate
- A completed, signed and dated attendance register
- A CD containing the work of those candidates whose responses are performed
 - The CD should be checked thoroughly
 - The CD should be carefully packaged
 - A separate track list for any CD. It is not enough to assume that the examiner will realise that they are in the order on the attendance register
- Copies of all written responses

Centres are reminded they should not provide a CCS160 form as they would do for the moderated units. It is also important for centres to keep 'back-up' copies of all the work in case work is lost or damaged in transit. Care should be taken when recording candidates work to ensure that all the work is audible and that extraneous noise is not too distracting for either the candidate when recording or the examiner when marking.

Centres are also reminded that the Cover Sheet is an important part of the submission. These should contain all the information necessary for the examiner as follows:

- The correct candidate name and number
- One stimulus box should be ticked
- One response box should be ticked
 - Where centres submit both a printed copy and a recorded copy of a candidate response it is important for the examiner to know whether to assess the audio (performed or ICT) or the written response

- Information about any ICT used should be clear and unambiguous (it is important that examiners know if any samples or loops have been used)
 - Some centres continue to tick ICT when the candidate has clearly produced a written response but used a programme such as Sibelius to create their piece. If a candidate has used a programme to produce their piece and then simply printed out the response, the 'written' box should be ticked. ICT should only be ticked if a candidate has multi-tracked their response or used ICT to enhance the final mix

It is useful for examiners to have the name of the candidate at the start of each track but this is not essential. However, lengthy introductions of the centre number etc. at the start of each track is not required. It is also not helpful for examiners to have each candidate's work on a separate CD. One single CD containing all the work is far better.

There were one or two centres that sent marks and detailed comments regarding their candidates' work. Centres are reminded that the work is externally marked and any marks from the centre will not be looked at.

Response (mark out of 25)

A wide range of marks were given with full marks going to a number of candidates who were able to create work that was exceptional, showing flair and a high level of musicality. Many candidates achieved marks in the upper bands with work that was stylish, with effective development and well written for their instrument. It should be noted at this point that it is not necessary to use every instrumental technique within a response to gain high marks. Often when this was done the piece became unmusical. There were many pieces that achieved marks in the middle bands. These responses were often from candidates who were not able to develop the stimulus sufficiently or who produced pieces that were highly formulaic. Whilst structure is very important to a successful composition, pieces that have formulae such as A in the tonic and B in the dominant or relative with no real modulation and then excessive sequential passages will not necessarily be able to reach marks in the higher bands. It is the written tasks that more often fall into this type of response. Successful responses are often relatively short and focussed, well organised and then well-rehearsed. Conversely there were also some extremely lengthy responses which began to lose focus after a while and so were not able to access the higher mark bands.

Unfortunately, a few candidates failed to use the stimulus correctly. A small number did not use it at all and so could only access the bottom band. Some who used it in part had their marks capped at 8, others who used it but made a single error within it were capped at 12.

It should also be noted at this point that no-one else is allowed to take part in the creation or performance of any stimuli with the exception of the Melodic Phrase and the Chord Sequence under certain circumstances. With the Melodic Phrase it is permitted for someone else to play the stimulus itself and any extension that the candidate creates provided that there is clear evidence that it is only the work of the candidate. This is also true of the chords; someone else can play the chords where the chords are used as the basis for a melodic response which the candidate performs.

Communication (mark out of 15)

There was the usual mixture of performed and written responses, with perhaps more written ones than in previous years. As with the response, candidates who gained full marks were able to perform or write pieces that were exceptional, showing a high level of maturity and style. Those who accessed the higher bands were able to perform or write with confidence producing a convincing and musical outcome. At the bottom end of the mark range performances were inaccurate and hesitant with a lack of attention to detail. Written pieces were inaccurate and also lacked attention to detail.

Programmes like Garageband were used by a number of candidates in order to multi-track their responses. Some of these were excellent, but others lost marks due to either bad synchronisation or poor balance. There were also those candidates who submitted written pieces that included too many instrumental techniques and/or added excessive or extreme written expressive markings, which did not allow the top bands to be accessed as it detracted from their musicality.

Comments on Individual Stimuli:

Rhythmic Phrase

This was used by a great many candidates to write and perform a rhythmic or melodic response. Many responses adopted a lovely musical approach to the stimulus, using it in a variety of ways and developing parts of it for different sections within their pieces.

The rhythmic performances were mostly for drum kit, although a few multi-tracked percussive pieces were seen. The 3/4 time signature proved difficult for some drummers and there were those candidates who were unable to play in this time signature at all. Others were able to start using the stimulus but after a few bars went into a more familiar time signature of 4/4. However, some excellent pieces were heard with very good use of the drum kit and a good sense of development and structure throughout the piece in a stylish 3/4 rhythm.

The melodic responses were often very good and some lovely full textured waltz style piano pieces were heard. More able instrumentalists created very good and stylish melodies that were both performed and written. Some of the written ones were excellent, especially those where harmony was added. There were also a number of responses for the bass guitar which were effective and highly appropriate for the instrument. Some lower ability candidates created pieces that were rather repetitive rhythmically but those who could break free from the rhythm at times were often more effective. There were a number of centres where candidates all produced a formulaic 24 bar ABA melodic response. Many of these were successful in terms of rhythm but limited in musicality, often using rising and falling scale like melodies along with many unmusical sequential ideas.

Note Pattern

This stimulus was less popular than in previous years but as usual candidates were able to access it at a variety of levels. Many were simple repetitive melodies but others showed a high level of compositional techniques. There were a number of pianists who created very thoughtful, musical pieces with harmonic accompaniment. On the other hand there were those who just repeated the melody in crotchets with little or no rhythmic interest, or who played continuously using various patterns but only with the notes from the stimulus. Although there were some very good responses, in many instances the note pattern could only be seen at the start of the piece and any additional sections seemed to bear no relationship to the stimulus whatsoever. There were also weaker responses that just had a tendency to wander and meander around the given notes.

Melodic Phrase

This seemed to be far more popular than in previous series in both written and performed formats. There were a few candidates who just extended the melody and did not add a second part; these responses were not able to access many marks. There were also those who added several parts or chords, rather than just the second part required, and this adversely affected their mark. Some of these candidates created lovely pieces using ICT for several instruments but they could not achieve the musical credit they might have gained had they focussed on adding just a single line. Other candidates created highly successful two part pieces with excellent textural and harmonic interaction. Few candidates recognised the potential for a modulation but those who did were able to demonstrate a high level of harmonic understanding. Many middle ability candidates created pieces that showed basic harmonic awareness and simple textural interest.

Chords Sequence

As in previous years this was a very popular choice. Candidates were able to use it in a variety of ways. Guitarists were able to create chordal pieces which varied in quality depending on how much interest, variety and development had been included. Some only played the chords within the stimulus and had no variety or development at all apart from perhaps with the style within which they were played. Candidates who varied the chords at times within their composition were often able to access higher marks. A number of these pieces had a Ternary structure with the use of contrasting chords in the middle section. Some candidates chose to create multi-tracked pieces, some of which were of an excellent standard and showed good musical skills as well as skill in using the technology. There were also a good number of successful pieces for piano as well as some songs. There were however, a number of candidates who created melodies which did not always fit well with the chords and therefore showed limited creative skill. Some keyboard players fell into this category and because a large part of the piece was created by the auto accompanying features of the keyboard itself they were only able to access the lower mark bands.

The majority of the entries for this stimulus were able to use it successfully, however there were a small number who missed out a chord, who played a D minor chord at the end instead of D major or who played A major rather than A minor as the third chord and these caused a cap to be imposed.

Set of Words

Once again this proved to be a popular choice of stimulus and many highly musical and imaginative songs were heard. There appeared to be less unaccompanied songs this year. Sometimes the accompaniment was very helpful for the candidate. It clearly helped them to create a well-rounded and fully textured piece which was effective and musical. There were, however, some candidates for whom the accompaniment seemed to be a hindrance because it spoilt the final performance. They were obviously more focussed on the accompaniment, which caused hesitations and a lack of fluency, rather than being fully focussed on the voice. In other cases the accompaniment wasn't as accomplished as the singing and so this affected the communication mark awarded.

The best responses had a good sense of structure with clear development of the melodic and harmonic ideas with appropriate extension of the words. A few responses moved away from the given words and created other lyrics which did not appear to fit the style of the original words and this had the potential to adversely affect the mark. Other candidates repeated the given words rather too much which was somewhat limiting.

There were some wonderful, musical and stylish performances which were able to gain very high marks. There were also performances that had very poor intonation which was obviously a disadvantage for the candidate when they were trying to convey their musical ideas.

Sequence of Events

There appeared to be a significant increase in the number of candidates who used this stimulus compared to last year, but the responses were very mixed. There were a limited number that were unmusical and ineffective and that bore little relation to the stimulus. However, a high proportion of candidates were able to gain marks in the middle of the response band for creating a piece that conveyed the peaceful opening and showed good ideas to represent the train. A few candidates only used sound effects for the train which limited the mark awarded.

The best responses were created by pianists and those who multi-tracked using ICT. There were some highly inventive and effective pieces that gained high marks. Guitarists and drummers also appeared to be able to create the impression of a train thundering past at speed and then develop their ideas, although they often seemed to find the peaceful scene more challenging.

B354 Listening

General Comments:

The paper appeared to be accessible to candidates of all abilities and many very good answers were seen in all of the questions. There was good differentiation in this paper with a highest mark of 99 and a greater number of candidates achieving above 90 than in previous years. While a number of questions challenged the most able candidates there was also a good range of questions that were accessible to the weaker candidates.

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the varied styles within the paper and responses to the different extracts showed good awareness of the specific musical nature of these styles. There seemed to be less difficulty with musical terminology this year which was very encouraging. 'Chromatic' was the only term that appeared to be consistently unknown or unclear.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- Q1** This proved to be a series of part questions in which candidates of all abilities were able to gain good marks. Question 1(a) saw many full mark answers and both 1(b) and 1(c) had many answers which gained at least half marks. The musical extracts proved to be accessible and appealing.
- Q.1(a)(i) Nearly all the answers to this question were correct.
- Q.1(a)(ii) The vast majority of candidates underlined the correct answer. A few of each of the other possible answers were seen.
- Q.1(a)(iii) A good proportion of candidates were able to gain full marks here with answers such as 'echo', 'synthesiser', 'looping' and 'drum machine'. However, weaker candidates sometimes wrote vague answers such as 'repeating', which was not specific enough to gain credit.
- Q.1(a)(iv) Again the majority of candidates underlined the correct answer although all answers were seen from time to time.
- Q.1(b)(i) A good proportion of candidates recognised this as Indian Classical music. However, there were a significant number who wrote Gamelan, which was incorrect. Others wrote Bhangra, which is a dance style and not part of Area of Study 2, which was stated at the beginning of the question. There were also a few candidates who only wrote Indian or Classical and neither answer was sufficient on its own.
- Q.1(b)(ii) Once again a good proportion of candidates underlined the correct answer of 'drone'.
- Q.1(b)(iii) The responses to this question were mixed with high ability candidates able to answer with more clarity and accuracy. These candidates understood the role of the Sitar and were therefore able to give appropriate answers such as 'playing the melody', 'based on a raga' and 'improvisation'. Less able candidates often recognised the 'pitch bends' and 'ornamentation' in the music which also gained credit.

- Q.1(b)(iv) The correct answer of 'tabla' was seen regularly but a variety of incorrect responses were seen, including very vague answers like drum which would not access marks for a question that requires the actual name of a percussion instrument.
- Q.1(b)(v) The correct answer of 'tala' was also seen regularly, although less often than tabla in part (iv). A number of candidates confused 'tala' with raga, which is the melodic and not the rhythmic pattern in this style, or with the clave or chaal, which are the other named rhythmic patterns within the specification.
- Q.1(b)(vi) This question was answered particularly well by candidates of all abilities.
- Q.1(c)(i) Most candidates were able to gain some marks here and the most popular answers were 'loud', 'fast', 'cymbal crash' and 'thick texture'. Many other excellent observations were seen which also gained credit. However, some candidates clearly focussed too much of their time on describing the movements in the fight that the music was depicting rather than on the musical features and this severely limited the marks that they were able to access.
- Q.1(c)(ii) A good proportion of candidates recognised that the music moved into a 'major' tonality, that the music had a 'triumphant' quality and that the 'melody was played by the brass'.
- Q2** Some excellent answers were seen to this question, particularly by high and middle ability candidates. Contextual knowledge that had been well learnt was able to gain candidates credit here.
- Q.2(a) The majority of candidates gave the correct answer of 'Bhangra' but there were a significant number who wrote Bollywood. Bollywood is a film genre which often contains Bhangra songs so it was not acceptable as an answer here.
- Q.2(b) Many candidates were able to access the full three marks for this question, the most popular answers being 'vibrato', 'slides', 'trill' and 'long notes'. Once again there were vague answers that referred to notes wavering, which received no credit.
- Q.2(c) Many candidates recognised the correct shape of the bass line. The most popular incorrect answer was the third melody line, where candidates heard the rise of the first two notes but not of the second to third.
- Q.2(d) An excellent proportion of candidates gave the correct time signature. There were a few candidates who just wrote one single number, which does not constitute a time signature, and so did not gain credit and some who left the question blank.
- Q.2(e)(i) A pleasing number of candidates wrote the correct answer of 'chaal' although a variety of other answers such as clave, tala or raga were seen.
- Q.2(e)(ii) The majority of candidates wrote 'dhol' but a significant number of incorrect answers such as tabla and bongos were seen as well.
- Q.2(f) 'Shouts' and 'hoi' were the most often seen correct answers. The most popular incorrect answers were chant and, call and response, neither of which was accurate.
- Q.2(g) Candidates who had learnt the background to the genres, as the specification requires, were successful in answering 'Punjab'. However there were a significant

number of candidates who had not learnt specific details and only wrote India or Pakistan which was not precise enough.

- Q.2(h) A good proportion of candidates were aware of the dance steps that are normally associated with this style. 'Harvest or farming movements', 'energetic steps', 'arms in the air' and 'acrobatic stunts' were the most common answers. There were some candidates who wrote answers that were vague and general and could apply to most of the dance styles within the specification like fast movements and lots of people dancing together which were not specific enough to gain credit.
- Q3** Candidates appeared to find this extract accessible although the majority of the answers were more of a broad overview rather than a detailed description.
- Q.3(a) Most candidates scored a mark of three or four out of nine which was disappointing and a little lower than in previous years. Candidates were able to give basic information about the music: that the music was 'slow, soft and legato at the beginning, played by strings, and then it became louder, faster and included percussion'. More able candidates were able to identify specific detail of 'the violin melody followed by the clarinet melody and then a timpani roll that had a crescendo'. Few candidates were able to give accurate observations regarding the latter part of the extract. Some more able candidates also mentioned the 'long tremolo notes' at the beginning and were able to give some detail on the final rhythmic section and the nature of the 'repeated rising melody by the violins'.
- Q.3(b) The most popular answer here was 'John Williams' which, despite not being the actual composer (who was 'Howard Shore') was an acceptable film music composer. 'Hans Zimmer' and 'Danny Elfman' were also popular choices. There were a number of candidates who opted for a programme music composer such as Grieg or Tchaikovsky which was not appropriate here. Various other composers were seen such as Handel and Mozart which were totally inappropriate.
- Q4** Some good answers were seen to parts of this question although the trill, chromatic notes and accompaniment were less successful. The question therefore proved to be a good discriminator.
- Q.4(a) The notation was quite successful this year and the majority of candidates who attempted it scored some marks. There were of course a small minority of candidates who simply left it blank although fewer than in previous years. Lower ability candidates were often able to score three or four marks, but a significant number of middle and higher ability candidates scored seven or more, however full marks was rare. The great majority recognised that the last three notes were a repeat of the beginning of the extract and so gained three marks quite easily. Most recognised the descending nature of the semiquavers, although many seemed unwilling to allow the notes to go below the staff. There are still a significant number of candidates who do not appear to understand ledger lines despite this being a requirement of the specification. Many wrote notes that just descended below the staff with no ledger lines and so the notes were meaningless.
- Q.4(b)(i) Higher ability candidates were able to correctly place the trill in bar 7 or bar 29, but many other candidates circled the previous note, before the rest. Lower ability candidates either left it blank or circled a note seemingly at random.

- Q.4(b)(ii) This question was one of the least well answered questions on the paper. High ability candidates were correct most often but many still placed the circle in the wrong position. The three circled notes were often placed within bar 16 and not going across the bar line into bar 17. In bar 28 some candidates included the A# but did not make it the middle note but rather made it the first note and included the high E. This was a shame but did provide an opportunity for differentiation.
- Q.4(c) A good proportion of candidates gained one mark for 'staccato' or 'pizzicato' but the second mark was not awarded very often. Candidates did not appear to hear that there were chords or how these were placed within each bar.
- Q.4(d) This question was another that was not answered well with many candidates repeating answers from bars 1 to 8 rather than giving the differences that occurred with bars 9 to 12. However there were candidates, particularly high ability ones, who were able to hear the use of 'arco' and 'legato' and so gain 2 marks.
- Q.4(e) Many candidates correctly gained a mark for 'Classical'. Fewer candidates wrote dates than in previous years and the most often seen incorrect answer was 'Romantic'.
- Q.4(f) The correct answer of 'string quartet' was seen often. Some weaker candidates only put string or quartet and so did not gain credit, whereas others went for quintet or concerto.
- Q5** Some very good answers were seen to this question and the comparison questions in the boxes appeared to be far more accessible than in previous years.
- Q5(a) The majority of candidates gained a mark for both 'trumpet' and 'saxophone' although there were a significant number who gave the answers the other way around. A small minority did not hear the correct timbre at all and gave inaccurate answers such as piano or trombone. 'Improvisation' was underlined most often with ostinato as the most popular incorrect answer.
- Q.5(b) Some very good answers were seen to this question. Candidates who opted for the most straightforward responses gained good mark for answers such as 'strummed chords' which if written for both extracts gained the full four marks. Some candidates were far too vague with answers that focussed on tempo or dynamics or repetition which were not appropriate. A good proportion of candidates recognised the way that the 'electric guitar' changed in Extract A from a chordal approach to a melodic one later in the extract while in Extract B it played the accompaniment all the time.
- Q.5(c)(i) Candidates most often gained marks here for recognising that both extracts were 'steady'. However the majority of candidates thought that Extract B was faster than Extract A which was not correct as the walking bassline of Extract A played the traditional crotchets and not quavers.
- Q.5(c)(ii) Many candidates gained four marks here for recognising that both extracts had a 'walking bass' and then either that they were both played by a 'double bass' or that they went 'up and down in scales'. There was the usual smattering of vague answers that often revolved around one being louder than the other, which was not the case, or that they played ostinatos which again was an inaccurate answer.

- Q.5(c)(iii) The vast majority of candidates gained one mark here for recognising that Extract A had fewer instruments than Extract B. However, few candidates were able to be accurate about the number of players in each so full marks were quite rare.
- Q6** Mixed responses were seen to this question with many answers being rather vague and more often focussed on the cheeky man rather than the music.
- Q.6(a)(i) The most popular answers were violin and trumpet which were both incorrect. Discerning listening regarding instrumental timbres was not seen as often as might have been expected from candidates who have studied this subject for two years. The most popular correct answers were 'horn' and 'clarinet' and these were mostly from higher ability candidates.
- Q.6(a)(ii) The majority of candidates recognised that the melody 'got faster'.
- Q.6(a)(iii) A good proportion of the answers were correct here but less than in part (ii).
- Q.6(b) Candidates gained full marks here for answers such as 'tremolo', 'long notes' and 'crescendo' but these were most often seen from high and middle ability candidates. Lower ability candidates were often rather vague but once again did recognise features such as 'staccato' or 'short' notes and 'high'.
- Q.6(c) The correct answer of 'octave' was underlined most often but all answers were seen.
- Q.6(d) Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark but once again differentiation was seen with the more able candidates accessing higher marks. 'Quiet', 'ascending', 'scale' and high were the most popular correct answers. Once again some candidates spent far too much time writing detailed descriptions about what the man was doing rather than what the music was doing.
- Q7** Generally good answers were seen to this question, particularly with the true or false choices.
- Q.7(a) The vast majority of candidates recognised this music as a Tango and were then able to give a correct place of origin. There were a few candidates who wrote Salsa which was perhaps more understandable although clearly incorrect, but quite a number of Waltzes were seen which was surprising.
- Q.7(b) Some very good responses were seen with 'high', 'vibrato', 'accents' and 'glissando' being the most popular correct answers. Some candidates incorrectly thought they heard the violin play tremolando while others wrote vague answers like plays the melody.
- Q.7(c) The majority of candidates correctly ticked the first box. The most often ticked incorrect answer was the bottom box where candidates mistakenly heard an extra quaver on the second beat.
- Q.7(d) A good proportion of candidates gained all 5 marks here with many others able to access 3 or 4 marks. Parts (iii) and (v) were correct most often.

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