

GCSE

Music

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J535**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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

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

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

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B351 Integrated Task/B352 Practical Portfolio

The current specification is well established and the vast majority of Centres submit well organised packages of work that are accurately assessed. It is quite clear that Centres have a good understanding of the requirements of the specification and that candidates are being prepared well for the presentation of their two controlled assessment portfolios. It was pleasing to see a wide variety of challenging repertoire being performed well and some interesting and original compositions emerging from the imaginations of talented and aspiring musicians. There was less evidence of what one might call 'classical' music with a clear emphasis on contemporary popular styles. Even orchestral instrumentalists often favoured jazz and pop adaptations and arrangements over more traditional pieces and, in composing, the popular song was by far the favoured choice, usually accompanied by piano or guitar.

Administration

The vast majority of Centres submitted their work on time, either by post or onto the Repository. Most Centres were also very well organised, and presented their work clearly with quality recordings and neatly produced candidate's written work.

Unfortunately, some Centres continue to:

- make clerical errors – to avoid this, the use of the interactive Candidate Assessment Form on the OCR website is recommended, as marks are correctly totalled up as each component is entered onto the form
- omit recordings from the submission
- not provide a track list
- send unformatted CDs
- send the same sample for both components, despite separate ones being requested for B351 and B352.

Most of these errors can be avoided by checking the CD and the accompanying candidate documentation prior to submission to the moderator. Most Centres provided one CD per unit, which contained all the candidate recordings. This was the easiest format to work with. Some provided a CD of all performances and a second CD of all compositions, which made moderation awkward, as moderators work by complete candidate submissions, rather than looking at the performance, composition and commentary as separate elements. Separate CDs for each candidate are also acceptable, although these are presumably time consuming (and more expensive) for Centres to produce.

Most recordings were of good quality, but the same issues occur year-on-year, for example, excessive background noise from neighbouring practice rooms or poor balance in ensemble recordings. Some Centres also submitted work as Sibelius or Garageband files. Moderators are not expected to have the full range of music software available for immediate use in these situations, and Centres were requested to send audio files instead. Page 68 of the current specification gives a comprehensive list of the acceptable formats in which work can be presented.

This year, there were again a significant number of Candidate Assessment Forms not completed with the required detail. This most commonly related to the compositional detail and tick boxes required on the back of the forms for both B351 and B352. Although many Centres have got a little better at including specific details about how candidate compositions have been produced and performed, moderators nevertheless had to contact a number of Centres to request further information. This was most commonly because performers other than the candidate, were involved in realising the composition.

Page 32 of the specification is explicit about the rules for the presentation and authentication of composing. For clarity, the rules as printed in the specification, are as follows:

- 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 the performance of a composition, evidence of what the performers are using as the basis for their realisation must be provided in the score or annotations.

Therefore, assessors should note that it is not enough for them to write that the candidate explained, demonstrated or chose how the part should be played. In order to credit the part, candidates should provide supporting evidence of the way in which they communicated the part to the other performers. This could take the form of a score or sketch of the notes, or a short audio recording of a relevant part of the teaching process.

Moderator's contacted a lot of Centres during the moderation process to seek clarification on aspects of the candidate work submitted. The vast majority of Centres responded quickly and were very helpful with most examinations officers and/or Heads of Music resolving any issues by return. However, a handful were rather relaxed about getting back to the moderator and this can cause significant delays to the moderation process.

Where the moderator has made an adjustment to the marks awarded, Centres should receive a report outlining the reasons for this. However it must be noted that moderators are only allowed to comment on the accuracy and quality of the overall assessment and administration of the centre and that references to individual candidates can't be made. Reports will therefore always have an element of generality about them.

Centres are reminded that OCR has a dedicated Music subject specialist (Marie Jones) who is available to support Centres in the delivery of the specification.

B351 Performing

The integration of tasks appears to be becoming ever more successful as candidates take more care in linking their first performance and composition in a consistent and coherent way. It is now common to see links emerge and be maintained thereby giving the portfolio a sense of connection and cohesion. However some candidates take this to the extreme, and replicate their performance piece far too closely. This inevitably restricts the marks that can be awarded due to the lack of originality in the composition.

Overall the work for this unit was well prepared, with a wide range of abilities heard from beginner level to way beyond GCSE standard. However, the awarding of 12+12+6 was used far too liberally; the majority of Centres who applied this mark to the work of their candidates did not understand that 12+12 was to be awarded only to very exceptional work beyond the standards of the GCSE exam. This "over and above" mark was an Ofqual requirement of the current specification that should only be used in the cases of exceptional musicianship.

A good majority of Centres assessed performing accurately, but there were several who were very lenient in the awarding of marks. At the lower end of the range, Centres are reminded that the difficulty mark of zero should be awarded to very easy pieces; for example some candidates were awarded a difficulty mark of +1 for a very simple keyboard piece often with just one hand when the mark of '0' would have been more appropriate.

Where marks needed to be adjusted the majority had been too generous and thus had to be adjusted downwards. There were only a handful of Centres assessed harshly where the marks had to be increased.

B351 Composing

Many highly musical and successful compositions were submitted with many candidates seemingly welcoming the opportunity to compose for their instrument. Whilst some compositions were inspired and totally engaging many opportunities to reach the high mark bands were missed. This was mainly due to the fact that strong initial material was not sufficiently developed or extended. A surprising number of compositions did not explore the technical range of the chosen instrument. For example, simply adding block or broken chords to a piano melody is not the extent of the instrument's potential but for some assessors this was worthy of full marks. Extending a composition through modulation is always a useful technique, as well as the injection of a further dimension or colour by adding a countermelody or descant, or by introducing another timbre. This was successfully achieved by a good number of candidates, but in other cases, where this was attempted it was so brief as to make no lasting impact.

Another frequent observation from moderators was that for many candidates, ICT was seen as a means to an end rather than as a musical instrument in itself with the potential to enhance work significantly. Consequently, work that used software and sound modules to create the finished product often sounded mechanical, wooden and essentially unmusical. In electing to use music technology, there must be the understanding that this is a complex medium that needs care and consideration in its use.

Overall, the assessment of composition was slightly lenient with Centres frequently awarding the 12-14 bracket too liberally. A number of Centres were also lenient on the Area of Study 1 instrument criteria marking. These Centres awarded 5/5 or 4/5 even though the range and/or techniques of the instrument had not been fully explored. Many marks were therefore decreased to 4/5 or 3/5.

Commentary

The standard of commentaries varied hugely between Centres. Some Centres had unnecessarily gone over and above the expectation of this element of the course and submitted hugely extended essay like responses. These Centres appear to use supporting packs (where the candidates were given questions to answer), which contained much more information than was needed and was often irrelevant.

Many candidates were let down by a lack of detail in the instrumental techniques section. A significant number of commentaries assessed in the 6-8 bracket failed to address the effect that instrumental techniques had on the piece, or how the technique was realised on the instrument. Candidates frequently wrote about the musical elements within the piece (especially dynamics) rather than including instrument specific detail. It was also obvious that candidates from certain Centres had written the brief after they had finished their composition. They had used the future tense but the brief was in reality a detailed description of their completed piece. It was also the case that a significant number of otherwise good commentaries lost marks due to a very basic composition brief that was not sufficiently focussed on the use of their instrument. The best commentaries demonstrated a high level of musical understanding by the candidates that went beyond working to a formulaic template. Done well, this document can show real musical intellect and engagement with the chosen style and genre as well as reveal the musical maturity of the candidate. At worst it provides a perfunctory description of the piece and its composer with little consideration of the learning that had taken place and the inspiration for the original composition that emerged.

Most Centres sensibly use their own adaptation of the OCR template to set out their candidates' work but a number continue to use the pages photocopied directly from the specification. This forces candidates to squeeze their writing into the four boxes, often resulting in handwritten entries that are barely legible. The quality of written communication is taken into account in the assessment of the commentary, so candidates should take the time and care to write (or type) legibly and correctly.

A slight majority of Centres assessed the work accurately. A significant number were marked leniently, while a small number were marked harshly.

A high quality exemplar Commentary is available on the OCR Music website page, along with a marking justification document to support assessment in the next session.

B352 Group Performance

Many interesting ensemble pieces were submitted showing a wide range of musical ability. Many Centres have realised that the quality of the other musicians in the group is very important and therefore appear to have gone to great lengths to ensure that a candidate's talent is showcased in the best possible way. It is extremely important to balance these performances well; this may involve several 'takes' of a recording but the resulting benefits of a good recording are immense. Pieces were generally of an appropriate level of difficulty for the candidates, and allowed for good interaction between performers.

An increased trend this year was for ensembles involving more than one vocalist to include excessively lengthy unison passages, which limits the opportunity to assess any of the singers particularly well. For the purposes of the specification, moderators need to hear each singer individually or in harmony, along with the accompaniment provided. Whilst some songs from musicals, for example, may require a degree of unison singing in their original form, Centres should adapt these for the purposes of the examination.

Centres are reminded that it is necessary to provide a score for the moderator when the candidate is performing within an ensemble of similar sounding voices or instruments. A number of Centres did indeed provide scores without prompting, and these were very helpful in enabling the candidate's part to be clearly defined and assessed. Some scores had to be requested from other Centres, which caused delays in the moderation process. Some Centres provided videos of group performances to enable candidate parts to be easily distinguished; this was very helpful. There were several candidates who performed with just a backing track; this can slightly limit their mark for ensemble interaction.

The vast majority of Centres assessed the ensemble performance broadly accurately. As with B351, the awarding of 12+12+6 was used incorrectly in almost all the cases in which it was applied. These Centres didn't interpret 12+12 as exceptional work beyond the normal standards of the exam.

B352 Composing

A good selection of work across all three areas of study was seen in the compositions submitted, with the most popular being Area of Study 2. This was sometimes weakly handled with insufficient attention being paid to how the instrumental parts fit together. A frequently observed method for popular musicians was to provide a fairly basic chord sequence to a rhythm section over which the candidate might improvise some sort of melodic idea. This type of improvisation frequently lacked a sufficient degree of planning or organisation to be successful.

As would be expected for an Area of Study 2 composition, large numbers of Centres utilised additional performers in the recording of their candidates' compositions. Many Centres provided adequate evidence for the parts played by other performers in these compositions, often as a detailed score. Unfortunately there were also a significant number of Centres that didn't provide sufficient evidence, and some who failed to produce any evidence at all. In these cases the moderator contacted the Centres in order to gather relevant materials to ensure the moderation of the work was accurate and fair. A reminder comment was also written into the moderator's report to the Centre.

Within Area of Study 3, waltz compositions, often with highly formulaic chord structures and simple chord note melodies remain a very popular type of composition. However, moderators were pleased to report that some very creative and musical waltz compositions were also submitted. A number of other dance forms also occurred quite frequently, most notably the Tango and the Salsa. Club Dance and Disco were also very popular choices for candidates comfortable with the use of ICT as a composing medium. Garageband is a frequently used tool for this style of composition with assessors now being very helpful in advising the moderator about the use of any pre-composed samples or loops within the candidate work.

A range of descriptive pieces were submitted for Area of Study 4, based on a variety of stimuli that included a single picture, a storyline, a mood or a film. However, not all candidates had clearly stated the intention of their piece and this did impact on some marks. Centres are reminded that an Area of Study 4 composition should be accompanied by a clear outline of the intentions of the piece, as this is essential for the awarding of an accurate Area of Study 4 criteria mark. It should not be left to the moderator to work out what is happening in the piece.

There were instances where all candidates in a Centre undertook the same style of composition. Unfortunately, by limiting their candidates experience to a certain genre, these Centres may not be giving their candidates the best opportunities to develop their musical creativity and understanding.

As with B351, the majority of the compositions were assessed slightly leniently, with Centres tending to award the 12-14 bracket to pieces that were lacking in style and musical shaping. Overall, the Area of Study marks were usually correctly applied although in some instances it was clear that another area of study would have given the candidate a better mark for these criteria.

Log & Evaluation

The Log & Evaluation was presented in a variety of ways. This meant that many candidates had elements missing, usually either the intention or the evaluation. The level of detail in work submitted was hugely varied with some candidate's logging their process in four or five simple sentences and others writing extensive paragraphs for each composition session.

Centres are once again reminded that it is not necessary to use the OCR template photocopied directly from the specification; this can be freely adapted to suit the needs of the candidate by the Centre.

The assessment of the Log and Evaluation was the least accurately assessed element of B352 and B351. Many candidates were assessed in the top two brackets despite having produced extremely simple logs of the composition process. Relatively few candidates were able to produce a log that contained musical reasoning for the choices made during the composition process, as well as an evaluation that reflected on the overall musical outcome of the composition. While many evaluations were detailed, and picked out specific positive and negative features of the composition, a significant number were just a repeat account of the composition process, or simply a discussion of the performance aspects of the composition.

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When this piece of work was done well the moderator was able to vividly visualise the entire process of the candidate's composition from inception to realisation.

A high quality exemplar Log and Evaluation is available on the OCR website Music page, along with a marking justification document to support assessment in the next session.

B353 Creative task

General Comments:

This is the penultimate year of the current specification and therefore of this exam. Some excellent work was seen again in this series with many centres showing evidence of thorough preparation. It was encouraging to see a wide variety of stimuli used with the Melodic Phrase and the Sequence of Events having even more entries than in previous years. Many 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 important for centres to allow students to experiment with various stimuli at an early stage in the course before deciding on the best approach, thereby allowing students to develop their ability over a substantial amount of time and so be able to reach their potential. It was good to see a significant number of centres whose candidates used a variety of five or even all six of the stimuli. However, there are still centres who give the same stimulus to every student and it is clear that this is not always in every candidate's best interest. For example there were obviously gifted pianists who chose the set of words when it appeared from the response that the Chord Sequence or Rhythmic Phrase might have been a better option.

Administration of the Examination

Whilst a good percentage of the work had arrived within a few days of the final deadline date there were a significant number of centres whose work did not arrive until after the final date for the moderate units, B351 and B352, which is 10 days later. The window during which the creative task exam should be taken remains the same each year and it is between March 5th and May 5th. Once the exam has been taken the work should be sent immediately to the examiner. Unfortunately the examiner address labels were not in school at the start of the window which did cause some difficulties, but there were a considerable number of centres that did not send the work off as soon as the labels did arrive as evidenced by the date given by the centre for when the exam was taken. There were also a few centres that sent their creative tasks to the B351 and 2 moderator along with the moderated work. These units have been separated for the entire life of this specification and centres who have made this error should take particular note of the correct procedures.

Whilst OCR did send out the incorrect forms initially, it should be noted that the correct forms are on the web and OCR did rectify their mistake by sending out the correct forms later. The required form has a space for a contact number which is very helpful for the examiners should there be an administrative problem that needs to be sorted out quickly.

There continues to be some issues with what centres need to include with their submission. Here is a reminder of what should be included:

- A hard copy cover sheet for each candidate
- A completed and signed 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 any work is lost or damaged in transit.

There were a number of centres who submitted recorded responses where there was a lot of extraneous noise on some tracks. Whilst it is recognised that soundproofing within music departments is often not very good, it is also important for centres to realise that the other sounds heard by a candidate whilst recording their final version for the exam can be very off-putting and in some extreme cases it can also be difficult for the examiner to hear the response clearly. It is also important for the quality of recording to be as good as possible; there were some recordings where the CD had a large amount of 'hiss' on it.

As mentioned in previous years, centres are also reminded that the Cover Sheet is an important part of the submission. They should be filled in accurately and 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
 - 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
- Information about any ICT used should be clear and unambiguous (it is important that examiners know if any samples or loops have been used)

It is not necessary for a teacher to speak on the CDs indicating the name and number of the centre etc. Sometimes the announcements are very lengthy and make it very time consuming for the examiner. However, it is quite useful for examiners to have just the name of the candidate at the start of each track; this is not essential and we recognise that it is difficult if an audio export has been taken from a software programme.

There were still a few centres that sent the work on an individual CD for each of their candidates. This is not the way that the work should be submitted and it is once again very time consuming for the examiner. One single CD containing the entire centre's work is the correct procedure, or more than one CD for a large centre.

Response (mark out of 25)

Some excellent responses were seen and a number of candidates were able to access full marks with work that was clearly over and above the level normally expected at the GCSE level. There were a significant number of candidates who created pieces that were of a very high GCSE standard and these candidates were also able to access the A and A* grades. These pieces were usually very well structured, with musical melodic ideas that were developed and extended. They usually showed very good harmonic awareness whether or not they had an actual accompaniment. At the other end of the spectrum there were responses that were completely unfocussed and lacked any clear musical understanding. There were also responses that were based almost entirely on repetition of the stimulus. Neither of these cases were able to access marks beyond the level 2 mark band. Some responses, as in previous years, were very formulaic. Structure is important to a successful piece but it needs to be used in a musical way rather than a formulaic one. Some centres clearly teach their students a strict formula from which to create their response. Often these responses are unmusical and lack a sense of flow which restricts the mark. Pieces that fall into this category are not usually able to access marks

that are higher than level 4 and they may not be able to access level 4 if they do not show some musicality.

As in the past there were a few candidates that did not use the stimulus. A box was ticked by the centre but that stimulus failed to appear in the piece at all. Sometimes centres ticked the wrong box and it was clear that the candidate had used a different stimulus. This was changed by the examiner and marked accordingly so that no candidate was disadvantaged. However, if a candidate does not use a stimulus then the marks are restricted to level 1. Candidates should be made aware of this by centres and given support so that they know what is expected of them. There were also a number of candidates who did not use the stimulus correctly. Some used only part of the stimulus or made significant errors and if that was the case then their marks were 'capped' at 8. There were others who used it but made a single error within it and these were 'capped' at 12. There were also a number of candidates where the stimulus was used once or twice at the beginning and then abandoned and the music that followed was often only loosely, or not at all related to the stimulus. Candidates should be taught to use the stimulus as a basis for their composition and if they do not do this the mark will be restricted.

Another issue that continues to be problematic is that of teacher involvement. Teachers (or anyone else) are generally not allowed to take part in the creation or performance of a Creative Task. The only exception to this is the Melodic Phrase and the Chord Sequence, the latter only where the candidate has created a melody to be played with the chords. The teacher is allowed to play the given Melodic Phrase and any extension written by the candidate. The candidate is then able to play the second part that they have created. The teacher is permitted to play the chords whilst the candidate plays the melody line that they have created. In both cases this should be stated on the cover sheet and evidence of any other music created by the candidate that the teacher is required to play should be submitted so that clear evidence is given to show that the work is all that of the candidate.

Whilst not wanting to stifle the creating process it is not necessary for candidates to write overly long pieces. Some responses were six minutes and more this year with many others being between four and five minutes. Whilst some candidates can cope with this, especially those who create songs, there are a high proportion of these longer responses that become unfocused and tend to 'ramble' or just repeat ideas that they have used before. This is often detrimental to the candidate.

Communication (mark out of 15)

As usual there was a mixture of performed, written and ICT responses. As with the response, candidates who gained full marks were able to perform or write down pieces that were exceptional, showing a high level of maturity and style. Many candidates performed with a confidence and a surety that allowed them to access marks in the highest mark bands. These pieces were musical and polished and were played or written convincingly. ICT responses that had more than just a mechanical feel were able to access the higher bands and these pieces showed a high level of technical control for the medium with good balance, well-chosen timbres and very good synchronisation.

Candidates who performed in a hesitant manner or who had a number of errors with very limited attention to detail were not able to access marks beyond the bottom 3 levels. ICT performances that were very poorly balanced or poorly quantised also failed to gain marks above that range, as were written pieces that showed inaccuracy and limited attention to detail.

Many candidates used programmes such as Garageband, Logic and Sibelius. Some candidates used the programme to multi-track their response and a good number of these were excellent. They showed very good technical control of the medium with clear attention to the detail of

timbre, balance, dynamic variety, synchronisation and quantise. However there were also pieces that were poorly synchronised, poorly balanced and lacked any definition.

Some centres ticked the ICT box when the written box would have been more appropriate. ICT should be used for those candidates who multi-track their pieces or for those who create a piece using a number of layers. When a single line melody or chordal piano piece has been created then this should be submitted as a written piece. It would be helpful, however, where a candidate has chosen to submit a written response that has multiple parts, for centres to provide an audio version that will not be marked but will be used as an aid by the examiner. Where there are three or four parts, some of which are at a similar pitch, it can be quite difficult for examiners to be able to play these on a piano to the candidate's best advantage.

Comments on Individual Stimuli:

Rhythmic Phrase

This was used by a significant number of candidates but it was not as popular as in previous series. It was used to create both rhythmic and melodic responses. Many responses were able to show a musical approach to the stimulus, and it was used in a varied ways and developed either as a whole or in smaller motifs for different sections within their pieces.

The rhythmic performances were mostly for drum kit, although a few multi-tracked percussive pieces and even some beat boxing were seen. The 4/4 time signature was helpful for the drummers but there were a number of candidates who used the stimulus initially and then moved away to a 'safe' pop or rock style pattern. Some candidates did return to the stimulus at the end while others did not. Either way the stimulus was not really used or developed so the mark gained was limited. Some candidates used a considerable amount of repetition which again led to very limited outcomes. There were however some very successful rhythmic pieces heard with clear development and structure, sections of contrast and imaginative use of the kit. These responses accessed high marks.

A good number of lovely melodic responses were heard. Many classical instrumentalists used this stimulus creatively and stylishly with a clear structure. The performance of these responses was also often musical and stylish with significant attention to detail. There were also some excellent written responses, a number of them being harmonised to a high standard. 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 few centres that produced a set of formulaic 24 bar ABA melodic responses. These used the stimulus successfully in terms of rhythm but many were full of sequential passages and a modulation to the relative minor and then the dominant.

Note Pattern

This stimulus was once again not overly popular but as usual candidates were able to access it at a variety of levels. There were quite a lot of candidates who created simple repetitive melodies which were quite limited but others were able to show a high level of development and use of compositional techniques. There were some different approaches to this stimulus this year, with a variety of styles being used; Indian Classical, folk and jazz being among them. Often these pieces were able to access very high marks because of their original and musical approach.

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. Some formulaic pieces focused entirely on repetition, sequence and inversion. This strategy showed very limited musical shape or understanding.

Melodic Phrase

This stimulus was once again quite popular this year. Whilst some lovely work was heard there continues to be a significant number of responses that are done incorrectly. The instructions state that the candidate should 'create a second part (descant or bass)', ie. a single line. However, in some of the responses there were three or even four separate parts added or chords were added. Neither approach is correct. The examiner will only be able to take one of the parts into account when marking, or only the bottom notes of the chords. Centres are urged to take note of this. A good proportion of those seen are by clearly able candidates and centres often ask for the script to be re-marked. The centre does not seem to appreciate that it is the approach that is wrong and that the candidates are being disadvantaged by the teaching of this stimulus in some cases.

There were also a few candidates who just extended the melody and did not add a descant or bass part; this is also an incorrect approach and therefore the responses were not able to access many marks.

Other candidates created highly successful two part pieces with excellent textural and harmonic interaction. Again this year there were very few candidates who were able to recognise the potential for a modulation but those who did usually had a high level of harmonic understanding. Many middle ability candidates created pieces that showed basic harmonic awareness and simple textural interest. Responses where the parts are harmonically sound but that move homophonically will not be able to access marks in the higher levels because of the lack of textural awareness that has been shown. Conversely if there is significant textural interest but a distinct lack of harmonic understanding the mark will be limited.

Chord 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 from the stimulus and had no variety or development from those chords at all. The only interest came from the strumming or picking styles used. Sometimes the changes of playing style were very effective but in weaker candidates the changes were often awkward and lacking in rhythmic clarity.

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. A number of candidates created a middle section that was in E minor and this was often quite effective. Some candidates chose to multi-track their pieces and some of these 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. Some of the songs were very successful indeed. 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 texture of the piece was created by the keyboard itself they were only able to access the lower mark bands.

As has been the case in the past there were those candidates who did not use the four chords correctly. It is important that they spend time developing their strategies and making sure that the chord stimulus is always used accurately at the beginning of the piece. In other cases the candidate played the chord sequence once or twice at the beginning and then moved completely away from it. Whilst the piece created might have been of quite a high standard, the lack of focus on the stimulus will restrict the mark, often quite considerably. Once again students need to be taught how to use the stimulus in order to be able to access their full potential.

Set of Words

Candidates seemed to like the words this year with some lovely thoughtful extensions to the given stanzas. As always it was a popular choice and a wide range of marks were awarded. There was the usual mix of songs that were unaccompanied and accompanied and some highly successful songs were seen in both styles. There were also some responses where the candidate had created a backing track and many of these were very effective. Some lovely multi-tracked vocal lines were added in some cases which were often very successful and musical. There were, however, some candidates for whom the accompaniment seemed to be a hindrance because it spoilt the final performance. These were often piano accompaniments. Candidates had to wait until they had found the correct chord on the piano before singing the next word which resulted in significant hesitations and a lack of fluency. In other cases the accompaniment was rather basic and unmusically played which sometimes had an adverse effect on the mark. The best responses had a good sense of structure with clear development of the melodic and harmonic ideas with appropriate extension of the words.

There were some really musical and stylish performances which were able to gain very high marks for communication but 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.

A number of the songs submitted were very repetitive. These pieces were often based on a very limited amount of music. Sometimes there was just one, or maybe two phrases, that occurred for each line or pair of lines. This is similar to someone using the note pattern or rhythmic stimulus over and over again. There is no development and therefore the mark will be in level 2 or 3.

As usual there were a few rapping responses this year. Some of these were quite creative with added backing tracks but those whose responses lacked rhythmic focus were only able to achieve very limited marks.

Sequence of Events

Once again there was an increase in the use of this stimulus this year, with some centres having a high proportion of their candidates using it. However, once again the standard was very mixed. Many candidates were able to convey a good feeling of the beautiful day, although not many were able to portray the sea. Many of the pieces were atmospheric rather than musical especially with regard to the mist, although some very effective interpretations were heard. 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 the first two parts of the stimulus reasonably successfully. There were a few candidates that were very reliant on sound effects like waves and birds which limited the mark awarded but many told the story well and were able to characterise each section clearly. However in most cases the terrifying end was disappointing.

There were responses from pianists but far more from those who multi-tracked using ICT. There were some highly inventive and effective pieces that gained high marks. There were less of these responses from drummers and guitarists this year.

B354 Listening

General Comments:

The paper once again appeared to be accessible to candidates of all abilities and many very good answers were seen in most of the questions. The overall standard was slightly better than in previous years, however, good differentiation was achieved.

It is clear that there has been some excellent teaching for this paper with far more accuracy of terminology seen than in previous years. The musical term that caused the most problems was 'tonality' in question 4 where many answers showed a lack of understanding of the term. Conversely it was very encouraging to see a significant increase in the accurate use of musical terminology when answering questions that required the identification of features or descriptions. 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.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q1 Some excellent answers were seen to all three of the extracts for this question but part 'b' was answered particularly well. The Gamelan question was answered far better than similar questions in previous years. The understanding of the genre and its vocabulary was clearly seen.

Q.1(a)(i) Nearly 100% accuracy for this question.

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) The majority of candidates were able to recognise that the 'hi-hat played on every off-beat'.

Q.1(a)(iv) The majority of candidates correctly underlined the word 'hook'.

Q.1(a)(v) This part-question was the least well answered of 1a with some candidates writing very vague answers. A specific tempo is not always a reason for the suitability for dancing and was not included as an acceptable answer this year. Far better reasons focus on the 'rhythmic' nature of the music and the 'strong beat' and 'steady pulse' found in the '4 to the floor' bass drum beat.

Q.1(b)(i) The vast majority of candidates were able to access 3 or 4 marks. Many candidates were able to recognise features such as 'violin solo', 'legato', 'long notes', 'minor', 'high' and 'quiet'. Lower ability candidates were able to access this question to a high level.

Q.1(b)(ii) The majority of candidates also gained good marks in this part-question with clear comparisons drawn between this and the previous section within the music. 'Faster', 'lower', 'major', 'louder' and 'more instruments' were among the most popular answers.

Q.1(c)(i) A good percentage of candidates knew where Gamelan originated. However there were candidates who wrote India, Africa or Asia which were incorrect.

Q.1(c)(ii) A good percentage of candidates were able to correctly identify the type of instruments used in the Gamelan genre and many candidates gained marks for 'gong' and

'metallophone'. Some specific instruments were known, far more than in previous years. There were, however, some very vague answers such as drum which did not gain credit.

Q.1(c)(iii) Higher ability candidates and those who had clearly been well taught were able to give good detail on the features heard in this music. A good proportion of candidates recognised the use of 'gong cycles' and the 'heterophonic' texture. Some heard the 'steady pulse' and 'moderate tempo' which was quite specific to this extract. However, a significant number of candidates were unable to actually identify the specific features of gamelan music. Many candidates referred to dynamics, polyphonic texture or repeated rhythms which showed that they did not really understand how this music is constructed and tried to describe it using Western Classical features and terminology.

Q2 Some good answers were seen to this question although some candidates continue to confuse the style of music with the dance itself. It was often easy to recognise those candidates who had a well-grounded understanding of this dance style. The question differentiated well.

Q.2(a) There were very mixed answers to this question. 'Country and Western' was the correct answer and many candidates wrote this. Some wrote 'Country / Western' which was also given credit. However those who transposed the two words or only used one of them did not gain credit. Others wrote American Line dance but this is not what the question asked for.

Q.2(b) A good proportion of candidates heard that the tambourine played on the '4th' beat of the bar. A few wrote 2nd and 4th which was not correct.

Q.2(c) All boxes were ticked to this question but the correct box was the most popular.

Q.2(d) Clear differentiation was seen here and able candidates heard the 'melody' that was 'picked' and 'high'. Others heard the 'vibrato' and 'slides' used by the 'solo' instrument. Some answers were far too vague such as repetitive or fast.

Q.2(e) This was not a particularly well answered question with few candidates gaining the full three marks. A significant number of candidates felt that the music was in unison which was not correct, others just stated that it was sung by a group which was not accurate enough. Those marks that were given were for answers such as 'harmony', 'homophonic' and 'sung by both men and women'.

Q.2(f)(i) The majority of candidates wrote 'line dance' or 'American Line dance' which was correct.

Q.2(f)(ii) The majority of candidates who had an understanding of this style gained full marks here. Many of these candidates knew the names of specific steps like 'grapevine' and 'bootscoot'. Those who did not have any knowledge of the style wrote incorrect answers like with partners, group dance or go right and left.

Q3 Candidates appear to understand how to answer this question now and many found this extract quite accessible although, as in previous years, the majority of the answers were more of a broad overview rather than a detailed description. The question did show quite good differentiation.

Q.3 Most candidates scored a mark of three to five out of nine. Those candidates who achieved higher marks were able to write with a degree of chronology and correctly identify instruments and their techniques, together with informed commentary on what they could hear and intelligent links to the programme. However, a lot of responses, whilst getting the general idea of what was going on, were rather vague in terms of the music itself and the

instrumentation, which led to marks in the middle or lower band. Candidates were able to access this question at their level and answered with varying degree of accuracy and specific detail. Comments pertaining to the 'call and response' or 'dialogue' nature of the music were often seen but these then varied in detail and further accurate information. Many answers lacked detail regarding instrumentation with lots of orchestral families being listed or named rather than specific instruments.

Q4 The answers to this question were mixed. Those who understood that this music came from the Baroque and Chamber music style of Shared Music often fared better than those who had clearly not taken this into account.

Q.4(a) This was not answered at all well with many candidates revealing a lack of understanding of tonality. Answers like high and soft were frequently seen. Those who did understand the term were often correct with 'major', although minor was also seen quite frequently.

Q.4(b) The notation was very successful this year and the majority of candidates who attempted it scored significant marks. Lower ability candidates were often able to score up to five marks because of the scalic shape of both bars. Full marks were awarded more frequently than in previous years but a mark of 9 was seen more regularly because that last 'E' in bar 4 was often incorrect.

Q.4(c)(i) Higher ability candidates often underlined the correct term of 'imitation' but lower ability candidates often selected wrongly.

Q.4(c)(ii) Out of the three part (c) questions this was most often answered correctly with 'perfect' underlined, however all answers were seen.

Q.4(c)(iii) As with part (i) higher ability candidates were able to correctly recognise the 'sequential' melodic device.

Q.4(d) This question was answered better than similar questions in previous years with the keyboard part being quite clear and easily distinguishable. However, there were still relatively few candidates who gained full marks. Most candidates who scored marks did so for the answer of 'chords', but there were those who recognised the 'block' and 'broken' nature of the chords for the second mark. Some more able candidates understood this accompaniment as the 'continuo' part. Some wrote harpsichord here which, despite being the instrument that was playing, was not a correct answer to the question.

Q.4(e) A better proportion of candidates than in previous years were able to recognise this music as being from the 'Baroque' period. The most popular incorrect answer was Romantic.

Q.4(f) The vast majority of candidates who wrote Baroque in the previous question correctly wrote 'harpsichord' as their reason for that answer. It was good to see the understanding and obvious link between the two answers.

Q5 Some very good answers were seen to this question with some excellent understanding being shown from able candidates. Lower ability candidates were also able to access a significant number of marks.

Q.5(a) The majority of candidates gained a mark for the composer with the most popular answer being the actual composer of this music 'John Williams'. A few other film music composers were also seen and credited. Some weaker candidates named Classical composers such as Mozart and Beethoven.

Q.5(b) The most popular answer was 'orchestra' which was correct. The next most popular was brass band presumably because of the large part played by the brass section of the orchestra. The other two answers were rarely seen.

Q.5(c) A good proportion of candidates gained the full 4 marks for recognising which extract each feature occurred in. Part (i) was incorrect most often, no doubt the repeating pattern from the timpani being mistaken for a roll. Those candidates who did not understand the term ostinato were not always able to gain a mark in part (ii). Parts (iii) and (iv) were often answered correctly across all ability ranges. There were a few candidates that misinterpreted this question and only put one tick in one of the boxes and so were not able to gain any marks.

Q.5(d)(i) The majority of candidates gained 2 marks here for recognising that 'Extract A was faster than Extract B'.

Q.5(d)(ii) This part question had more marks available than usual for this type of comparison. This allowed for greater differentiation and a wide spread of marks was seen. Weaker answers did not focus on the music after the introduction, as the question specified, and so inaccurate observations were given. Other answers did not focus on the melody, again as the question specified, so the marks were once again limited. However those who did focus on the melody from the correct part of the extracts gained marks for answers such as 'the melody is the same in both' and 'brass in both'; these were the most popular answers. Quite a lot of candidates gained the rest of their marks from correct statements rather than comparisons. Answers such as 'A was loud throughout' and B had 'sustained notes' were among those that were seen most often.

Q.5(d)(iii) A good range of answers were also seen here although again some referred to the beginning of the extracts which was not acceptable. However many candidates recognised the 'ostinato' rhythms and correct instrumentation in Extract A and the 'high' 'tremolo' 'strings' at the end of Extract B.

Q6 Although it was clear from some of the answers that a number of centres had taught this style effectively, this was perhaps the least well answered question on the paper. It required a greater knowledge base than the previous questions and there were candidates from all abilities who had clearly learnt this information well. However, other candidates who had not learnt this information lost several marks.

Q.6(a) Many candidates gained a mark for the correct time signature of '4/4' or '2/4'. However there were some candidates who only wrote 2 or 4 which is not a time signature and so did not receive credit. Other inaccurate time signatures were also seen.

Q.6(b) There were some very weak answers to this question with many vague or inaccurate comments such as fast, all together, unison and sequences being given. The most popular correct answers were 'loud', 'harmony', 'homophonic' and 'accents'.

Q.6(c)(i) The correct answer of 'Cuba' was seen regularly. Spain was the most popular incorrect answer.

Q.6(c)(ii) A good proportion of candidates wrote 'New York' which was correct. However, a huge variety of cities was seen, mostly from America.

Q.6(d)(i) Those candidates who understood this style correctly wrote 'Clave'.

Q.6(d)(ii) Many candidates wrote 'claves' but unfortunately there were candidates who wrote the word clave without an 's' and so did not receive credit. A wide variety of incorrect instruments were also seen including maracas, bongos and guitar.

Q.6(d)(iii) Despite the percussion being a very important feature of the Salsa style relatively few candidates gained the 2 marks available. Very vague answers were given pertaining to tempo, playing with the melody and generally playing the rhythm. Acceptable answers that were seen included 'syncopated', 'cross rhythms', 'layered' and 'accents'.

Q.6(e) Again numerous vague answers were seen. The most popular correct answers were 'in Spanish' and 'tenor'.

Q7 This proved to be a very appealing extract with which to end the examination. The true / false part questions were very successfully answered by the majority of candidates. The interval part question was least successful.

Q.7(a)(i) All answers were underlined with the correct answer of '5th' being seen least often.

Q.7(a)(ii) Some of these terms were clearly not understood by some candidates with a variety of incorrect answers being underlined. 'Glissando' was seen but not as often as might have been expected.

Q.7(b)(i) A good proportion correctly heard that the strings entered on the '5th' line.

Q.7(b)(ii) A similar proportion of candidates were able to identify the entry of the voices.

Q.7(c) This question saw some very good answers across the ability range. From the study of this genre it was clear that candidates recognised the style of singing and many identified the 'rise' in pitch, the use of 'melisma', the 'crescendo' and the use of 'vibrato'.

Q.7(d) Many appropriate artists were seen. The actual artist, 'Beyonce', was seen most often with other powerful female artists also being credited. There were candidates who wrote artists such as Elton John which was not an appropriate answer.

Q.7(e) A good proportion of candidates gained four or five marks here. Very few gained less than three out of five, with part (ii) being answered incorrectly most often.

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