

GCE



**Chief Examiner's and  
Principal Moderator's Report  
Music**

Summer Series 2023





## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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## GCE MUSIC

### Chief Examiner's Report

#### Subject Overview

Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching, teachers and candidates were provided with Advanced Information which was published three months prior to the examination. This provided candidates with the knowledge of which set works would be assessed in the first three questions on the Tests of Aural Perception and Questions 1, 3 and 4 on the Written Examinations. Despite this, candidates still seemed to find the papers challenging in parts and there was a wide range of marks in all units at both AS and A2 Levels. There was also a slight increase in the number of candidates scoring at the lower end in all units. The overall standard in the A2 composition options was noticeably lower than at AS, and this may possibly be attributed to the fact that this was an optional component last year.

#### Assessment Unit AS 1

#### Performing

##### Overview

Examiners were delighted to be visiting schools to assess AS Performances for the second consecutive year since the pandemic. Arrival at schools proved a varied experience for examiners and some were kept waiting in reception for too long, which had a knock-on effect on the timings for the whole day. This was especially problematic when examiners were visiting a second centre later in the day.

Schools had taken on board the advice from last year's Principal Examiner's Report and the majority of performances and vivas showed how teachers and candidates had been mindful of the time limits.

CAFs were ready in advance, although several centres stated that it was difficult accessing and downloading the correct updates. In some centres, candidates had completed the CAF themselves and had ticked the highest level of demand, when they were playing at a lower grade. In future, teachers are asked to check this information carefully.

All centres were aware of the regulations when using technology and all backing tracks were played on equipment which met the required regulations. Examiners reported that sound checks had obviously taken place in advance of their arrival and there were no problems with sound levels or quality.

In most centres, accompanists were competent and enhanced the overall performance. However, there were a few instances of accompanists struggling with the difficulty of the music and consequently, hindering the candidate. In future, schools are encouraged to consider bringing in a competent accompanist to ensure that candidates are supported fully during their performances. On occasion, piano accompaniments were overly loud, especially when the examinations were taking place in a small room.

##### Repertoire

Repertoire crossed a wide range of musical styles, from Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century, Rock, Funk, Musical Theatre, etc. With mostly singers and pianists this year, Musical Theatre and Classical were the two most frequently performed styles. The majority of pieces presented were set pieces from examination board syllabi including ABRSM, Trinity, Rockschool and LCM.

Mostly two pieces were presented but occasionally three or four pieces were performed by candidates. Many performed at Grade 6+ standard. Some candidates performed at Grade 5 standard and a small number at Grade 4 standard. Occasionally, candidates had completed the CAF form themselves and had tagged the highest Level of Demand, even though they were playing less demanding pieces. Teachers should complete the CAF form or at least check to ensure accuracy in this aspect.

Most programmes sat well within the 5–7 minutes time range. A few were slightly longer, but none excessively so. A few candidates presented short programmes, but none less than 4 minutes. There were a few instances of candidates repeating a section of the music to add length to their programme, even though it was not appropriate to do so in the context of the piece. There were also a couple of occasions when candidates performed half a piece which took away from the overall effectiveness of the performance. Both of these practices should be discouraged.

Most singers and instrumentalists were accompanied, either by piano or using a backing track. A minority of performances were unaccompanied and these did not tend to work well as candidates struggled to maintain a steady pulse.

## **Instruments**

Once again, singing and piano were the most popular instrumental choices in most centres. Much of the singing was in the Musical Theatre style and performed quite successfully. Where Musical Theatre performances were weaker, it was often on the technical side, especially in terms of intonation. Piano performances were less competent where candidates struggled with maintaining a steady pulse.

Although lower pitched instruments were less frequently presented, a wide spectrum of orchestral woodwind, brass and strings were present in this year's entries. The only exceptions were bassoon and tuba. Beyond this, saxophones, tenor horn and recorder were also heard by examiners. It was pleasing to hear instrumentalists retuning between pieces when it was necessary.

There were a number of guitar performances; acoustic, classical, electric and bass. Most were of a good standard.

Likewise, most performances on drumkit were competent. However, some used a backing track which included a click track. Where this was the case, the click track actually exposed rhythmic inconsistency rather than assisting the consistency of the pulse.

There were less Traditional Music performances this year compared to previous years. Most of these tended to be on fiddle although harp, piano and traditional guitar were also presented.

## **Performance Standard**

The majority of candidates played music which was Grade 6 or above, but some performed Grade 4 and Grade 5 music. Most candidates presented pieces that were well-suited to their ability level and showed off their strengths. However, some performances were over-ambitious in their choice of repertoire, leading to marks being lost unnecessarily because of inaccuracies and a lack of fluency, expression and/or stamina. Teachers should consider whether candidates are better to drop a few marks for the Level of Demand, in order to ensure a more accurate and controlled performance at a lower grade level.

The standard of performances was often more varied when three or more pieces were performed, and often there was one piece which was especially weaker. This was also the case when singers performed one Musical Theatre piece and one Classical piece and invariably, the Classical piece was less successful. Some Musical Theatre singers chose songs which were not suited to their vocal range.



## Viva

This year, the length of most vivas ranged from four to six minutes, with just a few very long discussions and a few which were very short. Some centres were not aware that the first question had been modified so that all candidates would discuss only two pieces of music.

All candidates were able to name two pieces of music from their programme and were also able to identify the styles of their pieces. Many candidates struggled with commenting on specific stylistic elements in their chosen pieces. Often, they were able to list generic stylistic traits but did not link these features to the piece of music that they had performed. In some instances, candidates spoke even more generally and merely named features from within a programme, rather than in each of the specific pieces.

Most candidates were able to identify challenges but an explanation of how these were overcome in their practice and preparation was often missing or weak. Where this question was most successful, demonstration was employed, along with indicating the specific challenge on the score.

The final question of the viva was often the least successful. Most candidates referred to specific recordings but did not reflect on how these had influenced their own playing. There was not always much evidence of wider listening or of an understanding of their own interpretation.

## Principal Moderator's Report

### Assessment Unit AS 21 Composing: Composition Task

#### Overview

In total, 49 centres (including 8 consortiums) submitted work for this unit, with 145 candidates presented for moderation. Whilst the largest centre submitted the work of 11 candidates for moderation, many centres had a smaller cohort. There was a greater spread of marks within centres rather than the bunching of marks in a small and narrow range. Teacher marking was generally more realistic this year with fewer centres being adjusted.

Teacher comments relating to compositions varied from brief, generic comments, quoting directly from the mark scheme to more comprehensive comments providing a detailed account of the compositional process and working methods of individual compositions. A small number of teachers did not submit any comments. The most helpful teacher comments clearly justified the marks awarded.

Once again submissions covered a variety of styles and genres, and a range of instruments and instrumental combinations. For Traditional Irish pieces, when composing in this chosen style there should be evidence of sophistication in terms of melodic writing and in particular, the development of musical ideas. Candidates should consider the assessment criteria and Progression of Compositional Skills to assist the composing process.

A number of candidates continue to write in the film genre, and this year there were examples of video game music. This again, is a challenging brief and can also be difficult in terms of accessing marks in the top band particularly in criteria (i) and (iv). Instrumental genres included string quartets, woodwind and brass ensembles, pieces for solo piano and vocal compositions. There were fewer examples of SATB choral pieces this year and there were more pieces written in the pop genre. The most successful pieces in this style demonstrated the candidate's knowledge and understanding of specific stylistic characteristics and writing for the chosen voices and instruments was idiomatic.

## **Criterion 1 Creation, Development and Organisation of Ideas**

Most candidates set out to compose a piece with a specific brief outlined in the commentary. In the most successful compositions, stylistic features were consistently maintained throughout. These pieces had a strong, memorable initial melodic idea, with balanced phrasing which was then developed using a variety of compositional techniques. The less successful melodies were often motivic or figurative and had limited opportunity for development. The developmental techniques should be incorporated appropriately and maintain the overall sense of musicality. Once again, the most common overall structure selected for instrumental pieces was ternary form. The most successful compositions demonstrated a good balance between sections and appropriate development of ideas in the return of the A section. Variation form was a popular structure for string quartets and often began with a strong theme which was then developed fluently and imaginatively.

## **Criterion 2 Use of Resources**

As in previous years, instrumental and vocal writing was reasonably idiomatic with some understanding of the chosen resources. It was evident in the most successful compositions that candidates had a knowledge and understanding of their chosen genre and clearly had experience performing within the style. This was particularly evident in the popular vocal pieces. String writing was largely idiomatic, with a variety of techniques such as pizzicato and double stopping often appropriately included. Successful compositions explored the full range of the instruments and writing was imaginative and stylistic. Lower scoring submissions featured musical textures which were overly busy and lacked clarity at times, which often resulted in obscuring the melodic line. Care should be taken that parts do not overlap as this again can obscure the clarity of the melodic line. Candidates should be mindful when composing for a solo instrument of the limitations in textural variety. Word setting should be fluent and coherent and follow the shape of the melodic line, as at times this was not always successful.

## **Criterion 3 Use of Harmony**

Harmonic handling was generally fluent with some candidates demonstrating the fluent use of harmonic devices to access marks in Band 4. These included clear cadence points, successful modulations/tonal shifts and fluent progressions appropriate for the chosen genre. There were some attempts to include chromatic harmony but these often lacked fluency and a clarity of harmonic progression, resulting in less successful compositions.

## **Criterion 4 Commentary**

The majority of commentaries were well written, providing a comprehensive overview of the piece using musical terminology and appropriate attention given to the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Timings were included in most commentaries and candidates should be reminded that this is most helpful during the moderation process as is the inclusion of a lead sheet for songs.

**Section 1** Candidates should clearly state the context and style of the composition and the musical influences. This section was at times sparse.

**Section 2** Candidates should outline the structure of the composition and explain how the melodic ideas have been developed. Often this consisted of a list of development techniques used with limited reference to specific sections of the composition. The more successful candidates arranged the information in this section in subheadings or in a table format.

**Section 3** The most successful candidates detailed which instrumental techniques each instrument was demonstrating, their role and how they contributed to create textural variety.

**Section 4** This section should provide a descriptive overview of keys, chords and chord progressions, cadences and modulations if used. A list of chords or general comments regarding the opening key is not sufficient.

## Assessment Unit AS 22      **Composing: Composition with Technology Task**

### Overview

Seven centres submitted work to be moderated which is an increase from last year when there was the option to omit this unit. However, the number of centres submitting work for this unit is still less than the pre-pandemic series. Adjustments were made to correct lenient marking by teachers and in some cases also severe marking.

Teacher comments were generally helpful and gave an insight into why marks were awarded. It is helpful if teachers include as much information on the eCandidate Record Sheet as they can regarding why marks are awarded and also why marks are withheld in each criterion. In some cases, comments were generic and repetitive for all candidates in a centre.

Where centre marking was lenient, this was usually in Criterion 1 and at times also in Criterion 2. Often marks were awarded in Mark Band 4 when Mark Band 3 was more appropriate. Centre marking for Criteria 3 and 4 was more often accurate or within the acceptable range.

A range of styles and genres were submitted from jazz pieces to rock, instrumental pieces and one song. The most popular genre was jazz, closely followed by classical string quartets. The most successful pieces of work had a clear genre with stylistic features clearly understood and reflected throughout the work. Submissions which did not have an appropriate focus from the outset, were less successful and often lacked a clear sense of style and purpose.

### **Criterion 1    Creation and Development of Ideas Based on a Stimulus**

Overall, both stimuli were popular, but Stimulus A was chosen by more candidates than Stimulus B. In some pieces of work there was an over-reliance on repetition of the stimulus. Candidates are expected to present the stimulus in the composition but there should be subsequent development of the stimulus chosen. When moving away from the stimulus material to new melodic ideas, candidates sometimes struggled to maintain a sense of melodic shape, balance, and phrasing. Theme and variation and ternary form were the two most popular structures employed by candidates and were often found in the most successful compositions.

### **Criterion 2    Use of Harmony**

The use of harmony by candidates was suited mostly to Mark Band 3 for much of the work that was moderated. The harmonic language employed by candidates was generally good but to access the top mark band a more sophisticated and nuanced use of harmony is expected. Sometimes cadences were not always clear or handled appropriately. There was limited evidence of candidates using modulation or tonal shifts which are also expected at this level.

### **Criterion 3 Use Technology, including Texture and Timbre**

Much of the work moderated was appropriately placed by teachers in Mark Bands 3 or 4. In the strongest submissions there was excellent use of technology, idiomatic instrumental writing and variety in the textures employed. Generally, and in comparison to last year, the use of technology by candidates was better with evidence of greater care taken regarding the balance of tracks and achieving clear mixes. In some cases, there were still examples of candidates applying extreme or inconsistent settings to panning and reverb. In a small number of works it was difficult at times to hear all the parts.

Much of the work submitted used sequencing technology, although some interesting submissions combined this with multi-track recordings. In some of these pieces candidates are to be commended for achieving professional-like recordings using advanced technological tools.

### **Criterion 4 Commentary**

The commentaries submitted this year ranged from satisfactory to comprehensive and most achieved marks in the upper end of Mark Band 2 or 3. In a small number of commentaries, candidates provided excessive lists and bullet points rather than providing an analytical account of the piece.

All candidates used the CCEA template to complete the commentary. However, occasionally information was placed in the wrong sections. Most candidates are now providing timings in their commentaries which is to be highly encouraged as this is very helpful during the moderation process.

## **Principal Examiner's Report**

### **Assessment Unit AS 31 Responding to Music: Test of Aural Perception**

#### **Overview**

This year's paper was well-structured and accessible for candidates of all abilities. The questions were formulated with clarity of language enabling candidates to understand what was required of them. Emboldened text highlighted specific requirements of many questions, and candidates should be reminded to read these carefully. As usual, the paper assessed a candidate's knowledge of three set works and two unfamiliar pieces of music. Rubric violation errors continue to be commonplace across the candidature and this was evident in Question 5, Part (f). Many candidates failed to pay attention to the particular focus of some questions and therefore lost valuable marks. This was particularly evident in Question 4 Part (f) and Question 5 Part (g), which both focused on instrumental scoring. Many candidates stated general Romantic or Baroque features which could not gain credit without the focus required. A smaller number of candidates than noted in previous years, continue to write extensive lists of answers, where perhaps only three melodic features are required. This practice should be avoided as it is rarely successful. Marks are most commonly lost when candidates fail to provide the specific detail required at AS Level, for example, stating 'sequence' rather than specifying that they have heard a descending sequence; or stating 'continuo' rather than the detail of harpsichord continuo which has been heard in the extract.

**Q1 Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 in Eb major (Eroica), Op.55, Mt.4, Bars 257–328<sup>1</sup>**

This first question on the paper produced mixed responses. Part (a) was not particularly well-answered for a set work question. The key was commonly misidentified as Eb major, rather than the correct answer of C major. G minor was another commonly seen incorrect response. Part (b) was better answered with violin and flute being credited frequently. Oboe, horn, clarinet, and bassoon were other answers frequently observed. In Part (c), dominant pedal and perfect cadence were well-answered, but the modulation was frequently identified incorrectly. The majority of candidates were able to access some marks in Part (d), with rising sequence, fragmentation and inversion commonly being credited. There were many incorrect answers of dotted rhythm in Part (e) but the correct answer of syncopation was frequently credited. Part (f) was generally well answered, although incorrect answers of sonata rondo were seen in some scripts, and this could not be credited.

**Q2 Rutter: For the Beauty of the Earth, Bars 60 to end**

Some candidates answered Part (a) in good detail, gaining the full two marks available. General answers referring to male and female voices, rather than the specific voicing of tenors and basses, followed by sopranos and altos, could not be credited. Abbreviations for voices could not be accepted. Answers that did not refer to line numbers but were chronologically noted were awarded credit. Some candidates failed to answer in the level of detail required and did not mention the unison pairing of voices, or the descant part. Mixed responses to Part (b) were seen, with descending sequence and imitation being the most correct answers. Augmentation was frequently circled in error. Many candidates did not know or could not correctly recall the key of verse four. There were many varied answers here, but stronger candidates were able to identify the B major tonality. The ascending sequence in the soprano descant part was well identified in Part (d), as were the octave leaps, but many other features included in the mark scheme were infrequently answered. Part (e) was better answered, with syncopation and the change of metre well-recognised. Answers in Part (f) frequently lacked specific detail, giving general comments regarding the use of arpeggios. The rising and falling pattern played by the flute and harp was the level of detail required for full credit. Pizzicato strings was well-identified in this question. The cadence in Part (ii) was frequently misidentified as perfect, likely confused with the final choral cadence, and failing to notice the focus of the question being at the end of the instrumental coda.

**Q3 Rodgers and Hammerstein: 'Soliloquy' from *Carousel*, Bars 205–231<sup>2</sup>**

Responses to this question, based on a set work, were disappointing. Marks were lower for this question as a whole, with Part (a) clearly challenging candidates. Triplet was the most common correct answer credited. Fewer candidates identified the four-note idea, or the central pitch of F. The cadence in Part (b) was better answered. The harmonic feature in Part (c) was poorly identified. Many incorrect responses mentioned modulation or perfect cadence. The rising sequence was better answered in Part (d), but the second mark for augmentation was infrequently credited. Dotted rhythm was well answered in Part (e) as was the cadence in Part (f). However, the key was not successfully answered by many. Lack of detailed responses prevented marks from being awarded in Part (g). Repeated quavers were recognised but not linked to lower strings. Descending pattern or scale was also frequently mentioned but not the fact that it descended chromatically. Modulation or change of key was a common incorrect answer.

**Q4 Dvořák: Slavonic Dance, Op.46, No. 7 in C minor, Bars 1–68**

A large majority of candidates correctly identified the metre in Part (a), but there was a mixture of major and minor answers for the tonality. Many candidates correctly identified the oboe and bassoon in Part (b) but clarinet, horn and even trumpet were frequent incorrect responses. Credit was most commonly awarded in Part (c) for falling sequence and dotted rhythm. Repetition was frequently answered, but lack of further detail prevented credit being awarded. Part (d) was not successfully answered, with weaker candidates scoring only one mark for pizzicato. Stronger candidates were able to identify the off-beat chords and the lower strings playing on the beat. It was observed that candidates who correctly identified the minor tonality in Part (a) correctly identified the modulation to the relative minor in Part (e). Candidates who had made an error in Part (a), stating major, commonly misidentified the modulation here as relative minor. The period of composition was quite well answered in Part (f), but Part (ii) was not as successful. Many candidates answered with general Romantic features such as rubato and lyrical melody. This indicated a lack of understanding of the focus of the question. Answers which correctly referred to the instrumental scoring were also frequently too general, stating the use of percussion or brass, without detailing the exact instruments heard in the extract.

**Q5 Handel: *Semele*, Air and Chorus, 'Endless pleasure, Endless love'; Extract A: Aria, Bars 1 – 41'; Extract B: Chorus, Bars 23<sup>3</sup>–41**

Many candidates gained credit for modulation to the dominant key in Part (a) with incorrect answers largely being subdominant. Part (b) was well-answered, with repetition, melisma, trill and dotted rhythm commonly and correctly identified. Aria was commonly correct in Part (c), although the other optional answers were also circled by some candidates. Similar to Part (a), answers varied between dominant and subdominant in Part (d). Responses to Part (e) were varied, although a large number of candidates were able to identify the imitation. Candidates found it hard to discern which voices were singing, and either stated male and female, which was too general to credit, or made errors in identifying the bass and alto voices. In Part (ii) homophonic texture was frequently confused with unison. The SATB choir was well-identified. Rubric violations were seen in Part (f) with some candidates circling three answers, thus losing a valuable mark. Rising sequence and suspension were commonly and correctly answered, but plagal cadence had been circled on many scripts. The period of composition was well-answered in Part (g), but similar to the previous question, the focus of instrumental scoring for Part (ii) was often overlooked.

## Assessment Unit AS 32      Responding to Music: Written Examination

### Overview

The written paper was accessible to candidates across all ranges of ability, with almost every script having answered all questions. The marks awarded ranged from the very low to very high, with a full range of varied responses in each section of the paper, and subsequent variety of marks awarded. The weakest responses showed evidence of a very narrow focus in the extended writing questions despite the clarity provided by the Advanced Information published earlier in the year. The work produced by the strongest candidates showed evidence of thorough revision with the ability to recall facts and musical detail relating to the set works, moving through the music in a chronological fashion. It should be noted that references to bar numbers are not accepted and candidates must link their information to the correct text. Failure to link musical features with the text continues to be the most common reason for loss of marks.

The standard of responses to Questions 1 and 2 showed better understanding of the questions overall, with genuine attempts to answer within the context and focus of each sub question. These first two questions were accessible to candidates of all abilities based on the range of marks observed. Question 3 Part (a) focused on the three elements of melody, tonality and harmony, and allowed candidates with excellent memory and understanding to access the highest mark bands. Weaker candidates tended to focus on the initial melodic features in their responses. Question 3 Part (b) was better handled by those who understood the structure of the text as it unfolded and these candidates discussed the music more successfully. Weaker responses tended to find it difficult to distinguish between the sections and harmonic features were therefore not correctly referenced. Question 4 Part (a) was the less popular option in Section D: Secular Vocal Music and the strongest responses showed an excellent understanding of rhythm and metre, connecting it to the text appropriately in the writing. Weaker responses failed to discuss the important rhythms and metres which were essential for a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the music. Responses to Question 4 Part (b) seemed to elicit higher marks, with weaker candidates able to gain credit for simple, un-referenced fundamental observations of the music, such as tonic key and 4/4 metre. Stronger candidates were able to access full marks due to a chronological discussion of each of the four presentations of the second theme.

#### **Q1    Mozart: Symphony No. 39 in Eb major K543, Mt. 1, Bars 1–25**

Many candidates responded well to this first question on the paper. Part (a) was well-handled and seemingly understood with a range of answers given within context. Very often answers of chromatic and appoggiatura were linked in the responses. In Part (b), many candidates correctly identified pedal and suspension, although both tonic and dominant pedals were mentioned. Dominant seventh was offered by fewer candidates. Part (c) saw a variety of responses, but most notably, many candidates failed to gain credit by simply stating their observation of triad or arpeggio but not specifying that it was rising or falling. This further level of detail in response is required at AS Level. Part (d) showed that some candidates are still learning the skill of chord recognition. The first chord was well recognised as Bb, but some candidates failed to find the seventh in the chord and therefore could not be credited. Many responses to Part (e) were more successful with a number of candidates scoring all four marks. All answers detailed on the mark scheme were seen on scripts, but 'in octaves' was least commonly seen. The majority of responses to Part (f) were accurate, although diminished could not be credited here. Incorrect responses were still harmonic in focus. Part (g) was not always successful, with perfect cadence

being answered almost as often as other types of cadence. The correct answer of sonata form was given by many in Part (h), but incorrect responses were commonly symphony, sonata rondo or binary.

**Q2 Haydn: String Quartet Opus 77 No. 2 in F major, Mt. 2, Menuetto, Bars 1–56<sup>1</sup>**

Many candidates were able to exercise the skill of chord and inversion identification successfully in Part (a). Where the correct chord was identified, the inversion would typically also be correct. The full range of marks was awarded across scripts. Part (b) was less well-answered with many candidates scoring only half marks. The most frequent error was G major instead of G minor. Part (c) was well-answered and Part (d) saw candidates identifying one or both textures. Most candidates offered unison/octaves in their responses. Descending sequence was the most common correct response in Part (e) followed by imitation, modulation, and inversion. Repetition was less commonly offered. Very few candidates recognised the extension of the falling third to a fourth. Part (f) was poorly answered with many incorrect answers being waltz. This showed a lack of familiarity with string quartet movements across the candidature.

**Q3 (a) Mendelssohn: Hear my Prayer**

This question was the least popular option across all four extended writing questions. However, it was well-handled in relation to the first half of the mark scheme in which the melodic features of “O for the wings” were identified well. Only a small number of candidates were able to identify the keys and modulations successfully. Responses which achieved marks in Levels 3 and 4 of the mark scheme were able to successfully reference the text at “wilderness”, for example, the repeat of “far away” moving to A minor, and the dominant 9th chord on “rest”. Candidates found it more difficult to accurately recall the musical detail in the section before the return of the chorus and access features on the second half of the mark scheme. The final cadence was frequently and accurately stated as perfect but could not be credited without the detail of its key. Many candidates failed to link the features of melody, tonality and harmony with the text, and thus lost marks in their answers.

**(b) Handel: Zadok the Priest**

This was the more popular option in Sacred Vocal Music, although many responses showed a tendency to lapse into irrelevant detail regarding texture or melody. This seemed hard to avoid. Weaker responses were frequently short and comments were very general without reference to the text. Stronger responses were well-detailed, accurately connected with the text and information was presented chronologically. Many candidates did not tend to write well about modulations, frequently describing them as imperfect cadences, rather than a perfect cadence in the new key. Candidates found it hard to write about and accurately reference the repeat of “Alleluia, Amen”. This section was poorly handled and writing contained little detail worthy of credit. Some scripts accurately recalled the key of F sharp minor but did not mention the perfect cadence at this point. Few, if any candidates, noticed the subtle wording change from “God save the King” to “Long live the King” for the return to the tonic key in the final bars.



**Q4 (a) Bernstein: Tonight Quintet**

This was the least popular option in Secular Vocal Music. The rhythm and metre foci of the question was not adhered to in weaker responses. However, some of the features were more successfully linked to the text in these answers. Comments in relation to the alternating metre and changes in metre were often inaccurate or not fully detailed in their description. Candidates found it challenging to limit themselves to the context of the question, frequently discussing instrumentation or presentation of the different character's themes in their writing. Stronger candidates were able to discuss the music chronologically and there was clear evidence of thorough revision and knowledge of the work through accurate descriptions of musical detail, accurately linked with the text.

**(b) Kern: Ol' Man River**

This was by far the most popular option in Section D, with the majority of candidates accessing the general points available on the mark scheme. The question was generally understood and well-handled, although some candidates failed to recognise that it was only necessary to discuss the second theme, choosing to write about all themes, rather than solely the 'Ol' Man River' theme. A small number of candidates did not always reference the four presentations of the theme, with weaker responses failing to reference the text. Comments regarding instrumentation or orchestration along with the vocal presentation were irrelevant and did not gain credit. Candidates of differing abilities were able to identify the finer detail of who carried the melody in the chorus, but it was not always successfully referenced. The strongest candidates gave a full description of each presentation, one by one, using accurate musical terminology.

## Assessment Unit A2 1      Performing

### Overview

In this, our second year of examining live performance since the pandemic, it was clear that candidates had benefitted from a more consistent year of learning and teaching on their chosen instruments and had enjoyed involvement in choral and instrumental ensembles in school music departments. The sense of confidence across the candidature had improved considerably since last year.

Centres were well-prepared for the arrival of examiners, with rooms being set up appropriately for performance. Teachers had CAFs printed and ready, and had very often prepared a schedule and running order for the examiner. This organisation is valuable to the smooth running of the day and helps candidates feel confident and prepared. Examiners are frequently working within two or three centres across one day, so the hospitality and refreshments are welcome and appreciated. Candidates were equally well-prepared, knowing their programmes and order of performance well enough to inform examiners.

In the majority of centres, accompaniments were played by external staff, and generally were extremely competent and helpful to the candidates.

## **Standard of Performances**

Overall, the standard of musicianship at A2 was fluent and mature in technical execution. A range of different techniques was witnessed across instrumental and vocal performances which was pleasing. Some candidates were performing above and beyond the standard of A2 and only a very small number of performances were competent enough to gain marks awarded in Mark Band 1 of the assessment criteria. Compared to last year, a greater number of performances were gaining marks in Mark Bands 3 and 4 which was a noted improvement.

## **Variety of Instruments/Voice**

A good range of orchestral instruments were examined this year, but there seemed to be fewer brass instruments than heard previously, particularly lower brass. There were notably fewer Irish traditional instruments/programmes this year. Electric guitar and drums continue to be popular across the candidature. Voice seemed to be the most commonly examined, with a range of classical, pop and musical theatre programmes presented.

## **Repertoire**

Repertoire was generally well-chosen for the ability of the candidates. A small number of candidates were performing repertoire that was beyond their ability and this affected the fluency of the music in performance. In some instances, there was an imbalance in the programme with one piece falling into Mark Band 4 and another into Mark Band 2. These performances were limited in number. Teachers should guide candidates at an early stage in their choice of repertoire, to help with consistency of performance across the whole programme.

Much music performed continues to be taken from examination boards syllabi, such as ABRSM, Trinity or LCM. This repertoire is well-chosen and appropriate in the majority of cases. Repertoire, with the exception of pop song choice, was appropriate to the mark scheme. In the area of pop song choice, it can be difficult to mark the technique of singers who are singing in a closed and restricted pop style. This does not easily align with good vocal technique and makes this category a challenge to mark adequately, even if intonation is good and various forms of articulation are used. The standard of repertoire in this genre is not always accurately defined and the challenge of singing this repertoire would not equate to classical, or indeed, musical theatre and the level of demand reached within these other styles.

## **Criterion 1 Technical Control and Accuracy**

Many candidates gained marks within Mark Bands 3 and 4, showing good command of their instrument with the technical demands of the music being well met. Errors in pitch, and intonation issues continue to be the greatest reason for loss of marks in this criterion. Intonation for many orchestral instruments was of a very high standard. However, this was more mixed in performances from string players and singers. A few performances showed a lack of preparation with music being inadequately learnt and therefore insecure or affecting the overall fluency. Nerves can also have a somewhat similar impact, but to a lesser extent. Centres should consider if they can provide additional platforms for performance throughout the year as this is always an advantage to candidates.

## **Criterion 2 Expressive Interpretation, Sense of Style and Communication**

Again, candidates commonly gained marks in Mark bands 3 and 4, with many performances showing a good or excellent understanding of the music, with well-performed dynamics and articulation. Where there were frequent errors of pitch and rhythm in performance, this commonly impacted upon the ability to communicate the music appropriately. Marks were most commonly lost in this criterion for lack of expression through a more limited dynamic range and candidates should not be afraid to fully explore dynamics appropriately for the style of the music. Facial expression and movement were well-captured by most singers. Often there was reticence to move whilst performing a more classical programme, but candidates should feel free to be at their ease. Some performances contained a good stylistic use of rubato, but at times this was under-used or at times the sense of pulse was lost, so care must be taken to fully understand and express the music appropriately. The expression based on the musical instruction on the page was generally well-performed, but the ability to understand and use the physicality of the entire body to perform is something with which some candidates struggle. This could be further explored by teachers and instrumental tutors alike, to develop more musical maturity in candidates' performances and to secure more marks in this criterion. It was pleasing to see that very few candidates showed limited understanding of the music performed and it was rare to see marks awarded in Mark Band 1 of this criterion.

## **Criterion 3 Viva Voce**

Teacher guidance for the viva voce is very important. Individual candidate's responses to this part of the examination varied widely. Some gave very superficial answers which did not display any depth of knowledge about the music or the learning processes that should have taken place. Others gave detailed answers displaying a sound knowledge and understanding of the music, insight into the learning process and a great deal of specialist knowledge about their instrument and the techniques required to perfect the performance. It was apparent that the amends to the viva voce for this year proved helpful to candidates. Answers to the first two questions were more often succinct with clear detail. This should continue to be encouraged, with more expansive detail provided for answers to Questions 4 and 5. Strong candidates were able to reflect on how they had achieved a high standard of performance and could reflect meaningfully on the impact and helpfulness of recordings listened to. Musical styles were correctly identified by most candidates, although in the following question there was often not enough detail provided on the style/period. Technical challenges were also quite well answered, but the responses to overcoming them varied, with weaker candidates answering this in very limited detail. The final question regarding recordings generally required much more reflection and answers needed to be more carefully thought through. Candidates who had prepared well were generally awarded a mark in Mark Band 4, and it was clear that good advice had been given by teachers and acted upon by candidates. Singers should avoid the tendency to focus on story lines and character details as this rarely provides musical detail necessary to gain marks.

## **Level of Demand**

The majority of the candidature gained full marks for Level of Demand, performing at Grade 7 level or above. Some candidates are performing above and beyond the level required at A2, with some diploma repertoire presented. This is always encouraging, but not necessary and in some cases, a more secure and accurate performance of a piece at a lower grade would have resulted in a higher raw mark. Teachers, not candidates, are requested to complete the CAF indicating the level of demand; there were more common errors seen this year. It should be noted that the grade identified must be the larger majority of the programme. In other words, if a candidate is performing one Grade 7 piece that is three minutes in length, and two Grade 6 pieces that total five minutes, then the Grade 6 box is the correct box to tick. A candidate will not achieve full marks for Level of Demand simply by performing one shorter Grade 7 piece in a programme of eight minutes. An examiner will alter the Level of Demand if it is deemed inaccurate.

## **Timing**

Programmes were well-planned with many candidates meeting the minimum requirement of 8 minutes. Performances of up to 10 minutes or more was less frequently seen this year, which is of benefit to the candidate whose stamina can fail them and subsequently result in a compromised outcome of marks. A small handful of candidates performed a programme that was under time, but this was markedly less common than last year.

## **General Comments**

Use of technology was appropriate this year, mostly used by drummers and singers who required the use of backing tracks. Click tracks were less commonly heard in drumkit performances and should continue to be discouraged as it is best for click tracks to be used in rehearsal only. As per JCQ regulations, mobile phones are not allowed in the examination room under any circumstances. Candidates may, of course, use an app on a phone for tuning, but this should be done prior to entering the examination room with the phone then left in a separate room for the duration of the performance. Some A2 candidates chose to perform on two instruments. This is permissible, but examiners frequently observed that the performance was stronger on one of these instruments. To perform less well on a second instrument always affects the marks adversely. It can also impact upon the viva voce, with answers commonly being less focused. Teachers should consider if there would be any benefit to the performer for them to perform across two instruments and guide candidates accordingly.

## Principal Moderator's Report

### Assessment Unit A2 21      Composing: Composition Task

#### Overview

In total, 53 centres (including six consortiums) submitted work in this unit, with the work of 186 individual candidates in total presented for moderation. Whilst two centres submitted the work of nine candidates for moderation, the majority of centres presented work reflecting smaller cohorts, with eleven centres each submitting the work of a single student.

In this series, candidates submitted compositions which encompassed a wide range of musical styles, genres and idioms. These included pop songs, SATB choral works and pieces for solo piano, along with numerous instrumental pieces inspired by Classical and Romantic compositional styles. Jazz-inspired pieces were also a popular choice, but there were fewer Irish traditional and programmatic submissions than in previous years. A small number of candidates chose to compose in minimalist and neoclassical styles. However, it should be noted that it can be difficult to apply the CCEA assessment criteria to these styles, which tend to be dissonant and frequently repetitive by nature.

During the moderating process it was evident that candidates had been afforded considerable latitude to compose in the styles in which they were interested, and this is to be commended. The most popular instrumental selections included string and brass groupings, solo piano pieces and compositions for solo instrument with piano accompaniment. Some candidates chose to compose for unusual instrumental combinations which were not particularly idiomatic or, indeed, successful.

For instrumental pieces, ternary form, rondo form and theme and variation form were the most popular formal structures selected. The majority of the pop songs presented were strophic in structure and most choral pieces tended to follow ternary form. Fewer pieces were through-composed than has been the case in the past, possibly as candidates now recognise that this structure can limit the development of initial musical ideas.

Across all centres, candidates' work was produced using Sibelius, Garageband or Logic software. The majority of recordings submitted were generally of good quality, and live recordings of compositions are to be commended. However, the quality of the final mix (especially of pop songs) could often have been approached with more care as, on occasions, individual parts were inaudible. Similarly, a number of vocal pieces were presented as wordless Sibelius recordings and these seldom did the composition justice. The inclusion of scores with instrumental and vocal pieces was a useful aid during the moderating process. Most songs were accompanied by lead sheets setting out the lyrics and chords.

The majority of submissions were accompanied by detailed teacher comments which explained the compositional process, outlined the most important features of the work and clearly justified the marks awarded by the centre. However, a significant number of centres did not include comments. Centres are encouraged to make comments to justify the marks awarded.

All submissions satisfied the two-minute minimum time requirement for this unit. However, a significant number of compositions went beyond the maximum three-minute limit. It should be noted that this can disadvantage a candidate. As a general rule, compositions tended to lose focus and started to meander after the time limit was exceeded.

## **Criterion 1 Creation, Development and Organisation of Ideas**

The majority of compositions initially conveyed a clear sense of style, although it was frequently the case that this discipline was not maintained as the piece progressed.

The most popular structure for instrumental pieces was ternary form, in which the initial “A” sections were generally successful, but the contrasting “B” and subsequent “A” sections were, for the most part, less effective. Rondo form was also a popular choice and, in the same way, where this structure was selected, the theme was typically the most successful section, while the episodes were less so. In theme and variation pieces, the most successful compositions benefitted from a strong opening theme and did not exceed five variations. Pop songs invariably followed strophic form and these were generally structurally coherent.

Melodic material was mostly fluent and reasonably stylistic, with balanced phrasing in evidence in most submissions. However, many candidates continued to struggle to develop their initial musical ideas and frequently relied on repetition at the expense of more imaginative developmental techniques. This was especially apparent in vocal compositions.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in Mark Band 2 or 3 for this criterion.

## **Criterion 2 Use of Resources**

In the best compositions, candidates showed an excellent understanding of their chosen resources, producing instrumental and vocal parts which were both idiomatic and imaginative, creating textural variety and clarity as the composition progressed. At the other extreme, some submissions displayed a very limited understanding of the instrumental resources and textures lacked clarity and variety.

While writing for guitar was generally effective, writing for the piano varied greatly in quality. Similarly, a large number of candidates chose to compose for string quartet. It was evident that many had no specific knowledge of this genre or the capabilities of the instruments, producing instrumental parts which were not particularly idiomatic and did not include any instrument specific effects such as pizzicato or double stopping.

In many compositions, lack of textural clarity meant that the melodic line was often obscured. Attempts at polyphonic writing were generally not particularly effective, and homophonic textures were generally more successful.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in Mark Band 3 for this criterion.

## **Criterion 3 Use of Harmony**

The effectiveness of harmonic writing varied significantly between submitted works. While many candidates were able to produce harmony at a high level which demonstrated a strong practical understanding of this element of composition, many other submissions displayed only a rudimentary knowledge and vague sense of harmonic pulse and progression. Most candidates displayed a confident use of primary and secondary chords, cadence points and simple modulations, but their work did not include sufficient harmonic devices to achieve a top band mark.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in Mark Band 2 or 3 for this criterion.

## **Criterion 4 Commentary**

Commentaries varied greatly in quality. The most effective commentaries were able to give a comprehensive description and analysis of the composition, but the majority provided only a general overview of the piece without any indication that the candidate had engaged critically with the compositional task.

Information was not always included in the correct area of the commentary and many commentaries fell well short of the 1200-word limit. The lack of time codes in some commentaries made the moderation process challenging, while reference to bar numbers in the absence of a score was of very limited use and should be discouraged. Spelling, punctuation and grammar were generally of a good standard and most candidates attempted to use appropriate subject-specific terminology.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in Mark Band 2 for this criterion.

## Centre Marking

The marking by individual centres was inconsistent. While some centres applied the CCEA marking criteria accurately, a significant number of centres were outside of the acceptable range, and some marked with excessive leniency across all criteria, particularly Criterion 1 (Creation, development and organisation of ideas).

## Assessment Unit A2 22      **Composition: Composition with Technology Task**

### Overview

Seven centres submitted work to be moderated with three of the seven centre's marks being adjusted to moderator's marks. Adjustments were made to correct lenient marking by centres.

Most teacher comments were helpful and gave an insight into why marks were awarded in almost all cases. It is important that teachers include as much information on the eCandidate Record Sheet as they can regarding why marks are awarded and withheld in each criterion. In some cases, comments by teachers were short and did not justify the marks awarded.

Centre marking was lenient usually in criteria one and two. Centre marking for criteria three and four was often accurate or within the acceptable range.

An interesting variety of styles and genres were submitted including Irish Traditional, vocal pieces, romantic styled pieces, TV soundtracks, Jazz and instrumental/chamber compositions. The most popular genre was romantic style chamber pieces. Candidates should be reminded that some genres, by their nature, may not allow them to meet all the assessment criteria required to achieve in the top mark band in each criterion. Many of the successful compositions had a clear sense of style from the outset and this was maintained throughout by including many of the characteristics of the chosen style.

### Criterion 1    **Creation and Development of Ideas Based on a Stimulus**

Both of the stimuli were used equally in most centres by candidates. In some centres, the same stimulus was used by all candidates.

Much of the work moderated successfully employed structures that provided scope to present the stimulus material and then develop it while also presenting new melodic ideas. The most popular structures used by candidates were theme and variation, ternary and rondo forms.

Teacher marking in this criterion was mostly lenient and often outside of the acceptable range. In many cases, Mark Band 3 would have been appropriate as the development of the stimulus in some pieces was limited to repetition or simple changes to texture and timbre.

## **Criterion 2 Use of Harmony**

For much of the work moderated, the use of harmony was suited mostly to Mark Band 3. Whilst the harmonic language employed by the majority of candidates was good, there were pieces that struggled to have a clear harmonic pulse or sense of progression. At the other end of the spectrum there was evidence of some excellent and stylistic harmonic writing that was in keeping with the candidates' chosen genres. Teachers' marking in this criterion was often lenient.

## **Criterion 3 Use Technology, including Texture and Timbre**

Overall, the use of technology was good in much of the work moderated. In the more successful pieces effects were used subtly to give warmth to the final mixes and achieve realistic sounds using sequencing technology. In some cases, candidates could have given greater thought and consideration to their chosen instrumentation and the 'space' they are in as part of the mix, as at times melodic material was not as prominent as it could be. The use of recorded vocals in some of the pieces was interesting and highlights how the stimuli can be used successfully in vocal genres.

Centres and candidates are reminded that at A2 Level, the submission should be written for at least six independent parts.

## **Criterion 4 Commentary**

Candidates provided commentaries that were generally good. Most were marked at the top of Mark Band 2 and teacher marking was within the acceptable range.

All candidates used the CCEA template to complete the commentary. However, occasionally information continues to be placed in the wrong sections. Information on the use of resources (Section Four) should highlight the chosen instrumental and/or vocal resources used. In some cases, there was only reference to the technological resources and tools that were used.

Most candidates are now providing timings in their commentaries and this is very helpful during the moderation process.



## Chief Examiner's Report

### Assessment Unit A2 31      Responding to Music: Test of Aural Perception

#### Overview

This paper was successful in allowing candidates of differing abilities to respond positively to the variety of questions on both familiar and unfamiliar music. It was encouraging that at the top end there were candidates who had obviously prepared thoroughly for this examination and were justly rewarded by very high marks. However, it was obvious that despite the advanced information this year detailing the set works being assessed, some candidates did not show even a basic knowledge of these set works. Quite often candidates were not awarded marks due to a lack of detail in their answers or a tendency to write overlong lists of information in the hope that they would be rewarded for an answer. Candidates should be advised to spend time reading questions carefully as there was a noticeable number who misread questions asking for a specific date of composition and incorrectly detailed a range of dates or a period of composition. Candidates should also take care when asked to circle two or three features, as some candidates circled too many responses and were subsequently penalised. Candidates are strongly advised to avoid regurgitating long lists of features and to be more selective in their responses. At A2 Level, candidates should also be mindful of the detail required, particularly in vocal extracts and remember to include the context of a feature, such as a specific word or line of text.

#### Q1    **Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra, First movement, Bars 149–230<sup>1</sup>**

The majority of candidates were able to identify the drone in Part (a) and some detailed that this is then repeated down a semitone. Only a few candidates mentioned 'harmonics' or 'syncopation' in describing the accompaniment at the beginning. A pleasing number of candidates scored two marks in Part (b) with 'dotted rhythm' and 'perfect fourth' the most popular features highlighted. Most candidates were able to identify the clarinet repeating the opening theme though the flute did appear as an incorrect answer. Candidates who had obviously revised this set work easily scored three marks in Part (d), though many responses detailed 'imitation' which was incorrect. Similarly, knowledgeable candidates easily scored two marks in Part (e)(i) with muted brass and strings and harp glissando the most common correct timbral effects cited. Candidates often lost marks with incorrect answers such as 'harp harmonics' or failed to provide enough detail to gain credit. Examples of this included simply listing effects such as mutes, glissandi or punta d'arco without detailing the actual instrument or family of instruments as detailed in the mark scheme. Many answers to Part (f) were incorrect.

**Q2 Byrd: Mass for Five Voices, Agnus Dei, Bars 33–53**

Many candidates had an accurate knowledge of the keys and cadences in this extract. Candidates should check that they detail their answers in the correct order as a few candidates wrote correct answers on the wrong line which could not be credited. In detailing keys, candidates should also write out the full word 'minor' as abbreviations are only appropriate for chords. Most candidates identified the vocal texture correctly in Part (c). In responding to Part (d) a significant number of answers lacked detail and correct features were not credited due to the lack of text reference for key melodic features such as the melisma, sustained note and falling fifth. The Renaissance context of this set work was well-known and the most common harmonic feature cited to support this answer was 'suspension'.

**Q3 Copland: 'Simple Gifts' from Old American Songs (Set 1), Bars 1–35**

The description of the instrumental introduction proved quite challenging and many candidates struggled to describe how the woodwind played the opening of the first two bars of the Simple Gifts melody, even though they did recognise that the instruments were playing in octaves. Weaker responses focused on incorrect cadential detail and the high register of the clarinet. Most candidates knew that the solo voice singing was a baritone while a significant number of responses incorrectly circled 'augmented' as the type of chord on the word 'right'. Candidates with a detailed understanding and knowledge of this vocal set work scored highly in Part (d) often detailing all four musical devices. Other responses struggled to use the term 'pedal' or failed to describe the type of pedal as tonic or dominant. In Part (e) many responses again identified the timbral effects but failed to detail the appropriate instrument(s). While a number of candidates were able to state that this was originally a Shaker song there was a wide range of incorrect answers including Quaker, African, Irish American and folk.

**Q4 Tchaikovsky: Variations on a Rococo Theme for cello and orchestra, Op.33, Theme, Bars 1–16 and Variation 6, Bars 1–26.**

The first question on this unfamiliar extract proved straightforward for many candidates though the solo instrument was sometimes identified as a viola rather than a cello. In Part (b) most candidates were able to recognise two of the harmonic features correctly. The piccolo appeared as an incorrect answer to Part (c) as opposed to the flute which played at the start of Extract B. As with the other short descriptive questions on this paper, candidates struggled to give an accurate account of the accompaniment. Some candidates lost valuable marks due to the use of abbreviations or a lack of musical terms such as 'pizzicato'. The date of this romantic extract was not well-answered with a wide range of dates suggested, revealing a lack of understanding of the nature of the solo instrumental writing.

**Q5 Marcello: Oboe Concerto in D minor, Mt.1, Bars 1–24<sup>3</sup>**

Many candidates could identify the texture in Part (a) as unison/octaves, but it should be noted that 'monophonic' was not an alternative correct response. Recognition of melodic features and ornaments was of a pleasing standard in Part (a)(ii) and Part (b), but again some candidates lost marks as they failed to detail the intervals/scale and sequence as either rising or falling. 'Grace note' was not an acceptable answer in Part (b). Recognition of the tonality at the beginning and end of the extract was generally well-answered. Suggested dates of composition spanned a very wide range. Those candidates who identified the period of composition as Baroque and cited an appropriate date, usually were then able to give the answers detailed in the mark scheme, though some candidates lost a mark due to simply stating 'harpsichord' and not 'harpsichord continuo'. Similarly, in Part (e) many candidates recognised that this extract was taken from a concerto but failed to include the word 'solo' or 'oboe' in their answer and as a result, did not gain credit.

**Q6 Bernstein: *On the Town*, “I Can Cook, Too”, Bars 1–38**

The majority of candidates found the question on this unfamiliar jazz extract very accessible and as a result scored highly. Most candidates managed to identify at least two rhythmic features correctly in the opening lines and circled the modulation to the key a tone lower in Part (b). As in Part (a), most answers scored two marks for circling two harmonic features correctly. The musical genre of the extract was easily recognised and only one or two candidates failed to circle ‘jazz’ as the Twentieth-Century style influencing the composer of the extract. The identification of features of the instrumental scoring was either very successfully or poorly completed. Candidates failed to gain marks as brass instruments were often identified but without the use of mutes, the piano was highlighted but without reference to jazz/vamping and the use of the double bass without reference to pizzicato.

## Assessment Unit A2 32      Responding to Music: Written Examination

**Overview**

There was a very wide range of marks for this paper with a pleasing number of candidates scoring into the mid 60s out of a total of 70 raw marks. While the range of questions allowed candidates of all abilities to access marks, too many responses indicated insufficient preparation or lack of revision by the candidate. This was disappointing given the detailed assistance of the Advanced Information this year and candidates knowing which set works were being assessed in three out of the four sections of this paper. At the lower end, there were some very low marks in single figures and often in these scripts the candidate had not attempted to answer either of the extended writing responses in Sections C and D. In terms of analysis, the first set work score question appeared more challenging than the unfamiliar score analysis in Question 2.

In the short-extended writing responses, candidates sometimes confused themselves with writing about other set works and simply listed features they thought might fit with the question. Some candidates wrote a lot of content, often into three pages but it was not worthy of many marks. While the quality of spelling overall was of a reasonable standard, the structure of written responses was more often confused and unclear with poor sentence construction. In all four options in Sections C and D, some candidates referred to bar numbers instead of text which was not useful or necessary or creditworthy.

A small number of candidates failed to complete a full written response for either Section C or D. Other candidates, rather than focusing on the question, chose to regurgitate everything they knew about the set work. As stated in previous reports, this approach is contrary to the objectives of this extended writing question and should be discouraged.

**Q1 Debussy: 'Nuages' from *Nocturnes*, Bars 43–83**

This set work score analysis proved challenging and highlighted that a number of candidates struggle with understanding which musical element or feature is the focus of a question. In answers to Part (a)(i) a significant number of candidates did not detail both chords correctly, yet in Part (a)(ii) it was encouraging that many correct answers identified the pedal. In Question 1 Part (b) triplet was the most common melodic feature cited and some candidates were not able to differentiate between the interval of a tritone and the correct answer which was that the cor anglais theme outlined or spanned a tritone. While many answers correctly referred to the opening theme of the movement or the clarinet and bassoon theme in Part (d), other responses showed a lack of awareness of the restatement of this opening theme in the oboes. The recognition of the key was generally known in Part (e) but identification of harmonic features in Part (f) was poorly answered. Some candidates cited melodic or rhythmic features, lists of intervals or referred simply to 'whole tones' and 'sevenths' without mentioning the word 'chords'. The majority of candidates struggled to identify both chords in Part (h) and more often G# or G#7 were detailed instead of the correct answer G#9. The impressionistic style of this extract was widely known and in Parts (i)(ii) a pleasing number of candidates accessed the full three marks. Other scripts lost marks for not connecting mutes or harmonics to an instrument or connecting them to the incorrect instrument.

**Q2 Beethoven, Septet in Eb, Op. 20, Menuetto and Trio, Bars 1–36<sup>2</sup>**

It was noticeable that many candidates scored more highly in the unfamiliar score analysis question than in the first score analysis question on the set work. The most common correct answers in Question 2 Part (a) were 'descending scalar', 'inversion' and 'anacrusis'. A number of candidates wrote 'dotted' instead of 'double dotted' or referred to the triad without stating that this was rising and falling. At A2 Level, candidates should aim to provide as much detail as possible, particularly in relation to melodic features such as scales, arpeggios etc. While fewer candidates recognised the turn in Part (b) a significant number were able to correctly analyse the two keys in Part (c). The recognition of chords and their position/inversion proved to be one of the most successfully answered questions on this paper. Some of the low scoring scripts often gained half their overall marks from this one question. The most common errors in this chord recognition table were stating C major instead of C minor and F major 7 instead of F7. In Question 2 Part (e) some candidates lost a mark for simply stating 'pedal' as the answer, instead of 'dominant pedal'. The cadence was widely identified correctly as 'perfect' in Part (f). In answering the final four-mark question, which was to describe the music played by the clarinet in the last five bars of the score extract, top scoring candidates were often identifying five or six features accurately. Some candidates lost marks by referring to 'repeated notes' which was too vague with the required answer being 'repeated Bbs' or 'repeated pitches'. Some candidates referred to 'repeated Cs', not taking account of the need to transpose the clarinet in Bb down a tone. Again, comments on the arpeggio needed to include "rising" and the fact that it was the tonic or arpeggio of Eb. 'Pedal' was not credited as the full correct answer was 'inverted pedal' which was identified by a pleasing number of candidates.

**Q3 (a) Mozart: *Kyrie Eleison, Requiem Mass***

This was the less popular option in this section on Sacred Vocal Music but seemed to allow for pupils of varying ability to demonstrate their knowledge. Candidates' responses varied greatly in standard, from no relevant knowledge of the use of instruments and melodic features of the two main subjects, to a very good knowledge and insight into these two aspects of the *Kyrie Eleison* from Mozart's *Requiem Mass*.

It was common for weak responses to show a complete lack of specialist terminology or knowledge related to the two foci of the question. Instead, many candidates wrote up to two full pages detailing bar by bar imitative vocal entries, the related keys and pitch of these entries and other irrelevance and generalities. These answers often failed to include even one relevant point to credit. Those candidates who did manage to comment on melodic features either completed this in detail or failed to gain credit for more general comments such as 'falling seventh' instead of 'falling diminished seventh', 'dotted' instead of 'dotted rhythm' and 'repeated notes' instead of 'three repeated quavers/pitches.' The majority of responses struggled to list the scoring accurately. Some candidates were able to identify woodwind and strings as doubling vocal lines, others unsuccessfully tried to pair voice parts with the instruments/parts. Some responses managed to gain credit in relation to the role of timpani and trumpet to reinforce cadence points, but very few candidates were able to successfully give specific locations/examples of this.

**(b) Fauré: *Libera Me, Requiem Mass***

In comparison to Question 3 Part (a), candidates could comment on any main musical features, yet some failed to mention some basic features of the central section of this "Libera me" such as the D minor tonality and homophonic SATB choral texture. Responses to this question on this set work revealed a clear dichotomy between candidates who had obviously revised thoroughly, could comment accurately and in detail on all the main features, and could cite chronologically the correct text location for these features. Weaker responses commented on the "Libera Me" opening section which was irrelevant, were unable to cite any text references and any correct features provided lacked sufficient detail to gain credit. Examples of this included comments on a 'pedal' instead of 'three-bar pedal', 'augmented', 'instead of 'augmented triad/chord on F' or 'perfect cadence' instead of 'perfect cadence in D minor'. Generally, the last sections of the text "lux perpetua" and "luceat eis" could have been explored in much more detail and with more accuracy.

**Q4 (a) Weelkes: *The Andalusian Merchant***

This question focusing on two lines of text from *The Andalusian Merchant* was far more successfully answered than Question 4 Part (b). There were plenty of opportunities for candidates to score highly and more than half of the responses recalled a list of features for both lines with a high level of accuracy. Many responses revealed a well-prepared and thorough knowledge of the two lines of text and included all the features detailed in the mark scheme. Some candidates lost marks in their comments on harmony in "how strangely". This was due to a lack of detail, such as generally highlighting 'diminished and augmented chords' rather than including the root of the chord, for example, augmented in F.

**(b) Handel: 'O Ruddier than the Cherry' from *Acis and Galatea***

While a popular choice, responses describing the central section of Handel's aria 'O Ruddier than the Cherry' produced a wide range of marks, from responses showing little understanding and weaker SPG to candidates fully understanding the context and preparing a well-structured terminology-rich discussion. Most candidates were able to acknowledge the two first points of the mark scheme about the type of singer and key, and some candidates were able to access the rising sequence at "no lily has no lustre", and the following doubling by the orchestra and modulation to C minor. Full mark responses thereafter structured their response chronologically, with a clear knowledge and understanding of the text setting, particularly in the repeat of "Yet hard to tame". These responses also included a detailed knowledge of all the features of the melismatic setting of the word "bluster". In weaker responses more often there were a lot of comments which could not be credited due to inaccuracies, limited detail or a lack of reference to individual lines of text. Some candidates discussed an incorrect part of this set work, such as the first section, wrote about a melisma on "cluster", and a baritone soloist; this revealed a limited understanding or knowledge of this central section.

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