

GCE



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

Summer Series 2024



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2024 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.

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GCE MUSIC

Overview

This summer series saw a pleasing standard of work across all components at both AS and A2 levels. With a return to full examination conditions, this was most encouraging and revealed how many candidates had adapted and coped well with the demands of studying the full specification, while developing their musical skills and understanding. Despite overall entry numbers being lower than previous years, there was still a wide range of marks awarded across most components. It was pleasing to see some high marks, notably in the two papers at both levels.

Principal Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1

Performing: Solo Performance

Overview

All examiners reported on a positive experience when visiting centres and were made to feel welcome. Accompanists were competent, if occasionally too loud, and schools using technology were well-prepared for their performances and organised before the examiner arrived in the centre.

The standard of performance continues to be slightly lower than seen in previous examination series pre-Covid. While most pupils were still playing at Grade 6 plus standard, there was an increase in the number of pupils opting to play at Grade 4 and 5 standard. There were also fewer outstanding performances and fewer pupils playing music of Grade 8+ standard.

Technical Control and Accuracy

Overall, the technical standard of performance was good with marks mostly awarded within Mark Bands 3 and 4. It was noted that many candidates were opting for slower and less technically demanding pieces. Pianists more often lost marks for ineffective or incorrect use of the pedal or for faster semiquaver passages that were not well articulated. Singers and string players tended to lose marks in this section for insecure intonation. Wind players often needed to work more on an inconsistency of tone or breath control.

Expressive interpretation, sense of style and communication

Similarly, marks awarded were mostly within Mark Bands 3 and 4. Singers often communicated a strong sense of style and showed an understanding of the songs performed. For many performers, secure technical control allowed them to enjoy expressing the style of the music. It was noted that many performers chose technically easier music that they could express more effectively.

Instruments/Voice

Voice and piano were the most popular instruments examined this year in most centres. Many of the vocal performances were in musical theatre style and were performed very successfully. There were also more individual programmes which included both popular and musical theatre repertoire. However, candidates should be mindful of performing songs in a modern musical or pop song style that have a very limited vocal range.

Performance on the drumkit was still a popular option, but candidates should aim to have the click track played through headphones, rather than this being audible to the examiner.

Very few lower strings were played in this series and traditional performances presented were mostly on the fiddle and tin whistle. Brass instruments performed this year ranged from cornet, trumpet to French horn and trombone with no performances on the tuba. Woodwind instruments were often limited to flute and clarinet, although there was one performance on the oboe.

There were many excellent performances on the guitar. Examiners noted that time was spent ensuring that sound levels were generally acceptable before the examination started, which was helpful in keeping to the time schedule. Once again, candidates must be aware that backing tracks cannot be played on a mobile phone in the examination.

Instrumentalists did not always take care with tuning in the examination room and this often negatively impacted their overall performance.

Repertoire

A large variety of styles were explored including classical, jazz, Irish traditional, musical theatre, popular and rock.

Graded music repertoire was still popular, with more contemporary piano pieces becoming popular choices in centres.

A minority of pupils performed on two instruments and while this is commendable, most of these performances produced a different standard on each of the two instruments. This often lowered the final marks awarded and candidates should consider this carefully when preparing for their practical examination.

The standard was often variable when three or more pieces were presented and often one piece was notably weaker. Many candidates would have fulfilled the five-minute minimum time requirement without including another piece and this would have improved their final mark.

Several candidates left out the more difficult sections of a piece which resulted in them being penalised or the level of demand being decreased accordingly.

Pianists and guitarists should be careful with pieces that include very repetitive riffs which do not allow the opportunity for technical display at Grade 6 level. Composers such as Einaudi or some contemporary rock songs do not stretch candidates beyond a syncopated ostinato or primary chord harmony.

Some excellent traditional performances were heard, but there was a need for more variety in some performances in this idiom. Examiners needed to hear a range of expressive interpretation, and this was best achieved in a range of dances and slow airs. There were some very long laments/slow airs which were technically very easy and dominated the overall programme.

Singers should ensure they choose songs that are within their vocal range.

Viva Voce

All candidates had access to the questions being asked by the examiner and in many centres, the Vivas had been well-prepared, and the marks awarded reflected this. However, in other centres, the Vivas lacked detail and failed to use music specific terminology or provide a personal insight into the performance.

Some of the Vivas were quite short, for example, 2 min 30 secs, but the majority lasted between 4–7 minutes in length. There were also some unnecessarily overlong Vivas, for example, up to 17 minutes. As a rule, the viva should not be longer than the actual performance.

Almost all candidates were able to identify the style of their chosen pieces, but many candidates struggled with describing specific stylistic elements in their chosen pieces. Often candidates mentioned generic stylistic traits without reference to the actual music they performed.

Challenges in music were identified in most cases but identifying how these challenges were overcome was less successful. ‘I played it slowly and then started to speed it up’ or ‘I played it over and over again with a metronome’ was not enough detail to access the top mark band. Demonstrating challenges on their instrument or pointing out challenges on scores tended to have more successful outcomes for candidates.

More often specific recordings were mentioned but with no personal reflection on how these had specifically influenced the candidate’s performance. Pop/rock/musical theatre musicians often mentioned performers who had influenced them, but this was more often in general terms and without reference to their own performance.

Principal Moderator’s Report

Assessment Unit AS 21 Composing: Composition Task

Overview

In total, 49 centres (including six consortiums) submitted work in this unit, with the work of 220 individual candidates presented for moderation. Whilst the largest centre submitted the work of nine candidates for moderation, the majority of centres presented work reflecting smaller cohorts.

In this series, candidates submitted compositions which encompassed a wide range of musical styles, genres and idioms. These included Irish traditional, pop songs, SATB and musical theatre vocal works and pieces for solo piano, along with numerous instrumental pieces in the Baroque, Classical and Romantic styles. There were successful examples of pieces in both the Irish traditional and programmatic genres. However, candidates should be mindful that compositions fulfil the assessment criteria, particularly criterion (i) and (iii), ensuring there is significant development of ideas, and that harmonic handling meets the required standard at AS Level.

For instrumental pieces, ternary form and theme and variations were largely the most successful structures employed by candidates. However, even within these structures some candidates failed to achieve balance within sections or achieve coherence throughout the piece. In vocal pieces, many candidates composed using an overall strophic structure and there was less evidence of through-composed compositions which can limit the development of ideas.

Compositions were mostly produced using notation software such as Sibelius and GarageBand/Logic Pro and recordings were generally of a good quality. Candidates should be commended for organising, rehearsing and submitting live recordings. Some candidates provided additional supporting documents such as scores and lead sheets and these were helpful during the moderation process.

Teacher comments were useful, with some centres providing detailed comments justifying why marks had been awarded in line with the assessment criteria. It was also helpful when teacher comments explained why marks had been withheld and highlighted, where applicable, any shortcomings. A small number of centres did not include teacher comments.

Overall, centre marking was broadly accurate. Where it was not reasonable, the marking was more often generous but within the correct mark band. Where marking was not accurate, it was almost always generous.

Criterion 1 Creation, Development and Organisation of Ideas

Most compositions 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. Melodies were generally strong and balanced and developed using a variety of compositional techniques appropriate to the chosen style. The melodies which relied heavily on motivic or figurative writing were generally less successful. Developmental techniques should be incorporated appropriately and maintain the overall sense of musicality. Most compositions were organised and in a clear structure and this was most successful in theme and variation and ternary structures. The most successful compositions demonstrated a good balance between sections and appropriate development of ideas in the return of an A section.

A large number of candidates achieved marks in bands three and four for this criterion.

Criterion 2 Use of Resources

Instrumental and vocal writing was largely successfully handled by many candidates, especially those writing for resources with which they were obviously familiar. It was evident that candidates had considered the range, instrumental techniques and appropriate stylistic features within the genre and writing for their chosen resources was therefore idiomatic. String quartets were especially successful in this criterion as they were able to provide a range of textural and timbral interest. Consideration should be given to wind players to allow opportunities for breathing, as often writing was relentless and phrasing lacked shape and direction. Some compositions lacked any exploration of the instrumental capabilities or had limited variety in the accompaniment. Candidates should be mindful when composing for a solo instrument of the limitations in creating textural variety. There were examples of successful compositions written for solo piano.

The majority of candidates achieved marks in bands three and four for this criterion.

Criterion 3 Use of Harmony

Harmonic writing was generally fluent and appropriate for the level required. Most compositions provided a range of harmonic features and devices and handled modulations successfully. Less successful pieces displayed awkward transitions between keys, unintended dissonance and a lack of clear cadence points. There were some attempts to include chromatic harmony but more often these lacked fluency and a clarity of harmonic progressions, resulting in less successful compositions. Candidates should be directed to the Progression of Skills document which outlines the harmonic requirements for this level.

The majority of candidates achieved marks in band three and four for this criterion.

Criterion 4 Commentary

There was a significant variety in the quality of commentaries. Candidates should clearly state the context and style of the composition and musical influences. This section was at times sparse. Those candidates who provided a comprehensive description and analysis of the composition were awarded marks in band three. However, a large number of candidates only provided a general overview of the piece with limited analytical detail. There is still a significant number of candidates who include bar numbers in their commentary with no score provided, which is very limited in terms of a reference point for the moderator. Candidates should be reminded that timings and lead sheets are helpful for the moderation process. A common feature of lower mark band commentaries was that information was not clearly organised or referenced in the appropriate section.

The majority of candidates achieved marks in band two for this criterion.

Assessment Unit AS 22 Composing: Composition with Technology Task

Overview

Eight centres submitted work to be moderated which is an increase from last year. Adjustments were made to marking when teacher marking was outside of the acceptable range. This was often in Criterion One 'Creation, development and organisation of ideas based on a stimulus' and Criterion Three 'Use and control of technological resources including texture and timbre'. Marking in Criterion Two 'Harmonic handling' and Criterion Four 'Commentary' was generally within the acceptable range, with mostly only minor adjustments.

Teacher comments were generally helpful and gave an insight into why marks were awarded. It is helpful if teachers include as much information as possible on the eCandidate Record Sheet explaining why marks are awarded or withheld for each criterion. In some cases, comments were generic and repetitive for all candidates in the centre or only cited the wording of the descriptors in the mark bands.

A range of styles and genres were submitted from jazz pieces to rock, instrumental pieces, chamber instrumental pieces and musical theatre songs. As highlighted in previous reports, successful compositions that achieve in the higher mark bands have a very clear style evident from the beginning and this is sustained throughout the piece. Candidates should be encouraged to choose a suitable style that will allow them to access all available marks. Choosing the correct stimulus that will fit this style is important. Candidates should then research the features and characteristics of the style to include the following: appropriate melodic developmental devices, a suitable form and structure, typical features of the style's harmonic language, characteristic and idiomatic instrumental or vocal resources and textural variety. Candidates should also consider how technology can be used to produce a recording that realises the candidate's intentions.

Criterion 1 Creation and Development of Ideas Based on a Stimulus

Both stimuli were popular overall, 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. While candidates are expected to present the stimulus in the piece, there should also be development of the stimulus in evidence. 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. It is important that there is balance between sections, regardless of the structure chosen by candidates. In some submissions, there was an imbalance between sections with some overly long passages alongside shorter sections and this impacted on the overall coherence of compositions.

Criterion 2 Use of Harmony

The harmonic language employed by candidates was mostly at a high level with much of the work achieving marks in Mark Bands 3 or 4. Work in these mark bands featured clear and fluent harmonic progressions with a range of chords used in appropriate inversions. Harmonic devices, appropriate to the chosen style, were also used successfully by many candidates including the use of pedals, suspensions and modulations.

Criterion 3 Use of Technology, including Texture and Timbre

The majority of marks were awarded in Mark Bands 3 and 4 and over half of centre marking was accurate or within the acceptable range. Work awarded in Mark Band 4 demonstrated excellent use of technology to capture/input, edit and mix tracks to achieve balanced and polished recordings. As in previous years, much of the work submitted uses sequencing technology. However, this year it was interesting and pleasing to see more use of multi-track recording combined with sequenced tracks. Overall, work submitted with recorded live tracks showed excellent understanding of mic choice, placement and the use of EQ and compression overall. In some pieces of work there were balance issues making it difficult to clearly hear each part within the mix.

Writing for the chosen resources was largely idiomatic and suitable to the candidates' chosen styles. It was clear that when candidates were successful, they were writing for instruments or voices with which they were familiar. Some candidates chose over-ambitious briefs in writing for many instruments, usually in the film music genre, and this was not always successful. Many candidates were more successful when writing for smaller chamber groups or rock/popular ensembles.

The use of texture by candidates overall was satisfactory. However, in some pieces of work there was a lack of variety with similar or repetitive accompaniment patterns being overused throughout the work. Successful pieces of work used texture as a means of achieving variety between the different sections of their work.

Criterion 4 Commentary

The CCEA template was used appropriately to submit commentaries. However, candidates are advised to check carefully the information that they include in each section. In section one, stronger commentaries detailed a clear chosen style and then provided features of this style that they planned to include in their work. In section two, the chosen structure should be clearly stated, and an account of each section should include musical ideas and the development of these ideas that takes place. In section three, there should be a clear harmonic outline identifying the key, choice of chords, use of cadences, modulations and any other harmonic devices used. In section four, candidates should provide information on the resources (vocal, instrumental or electronic) used on each track and how they have chosen to write for them. In section five, candidates should describe how they have used technology to record, capture/input, edit, process and mix each track and master the recording.

Most candidates did not submit scores, but it was helpful that accurate and appropriate timings were included in many commentaries.

Chief Examiner's Report

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

Overview

This aural perception paper was consistent with previous years, testing a candidate's knowledge of three set works across each area of study, along with two unfamiliar pieces of music. Questions were well-worded and clearly laid out on the paper, with emboldened text to add emphasis to certain key words for candidates. As reported in previous years, candidates commonly lost marks for not being specific enough in their answers, or for answering in a list format, when only one or two answers were required. This continues to be a violation of the rubric and in these circumstances, only the first answer or first two answers can be accepted relative to the wording of the question. Candidates continue to lose marks needlessly due to both poor examination technique and a failure to pay attention to the focus of the question. Examiners observed confusion over musical terminology in candidates' responses, specifically between a scale and a sequence. This is discussed further in the comments on Question 1 below. Rubric violations were commonly seen in the multiple-choice circling answers, when candidates either circled too few answers losing potential marks or circling too many answers and thus losing a mark. There was a significant variation in total raw marks across the candidature, from marks in the low teens to marks in the high 50s.

Q1 Mozart: Symphony No. 39 in Eb major K543, Mt 1, Bars 26–97

There was a very mixed range of responses in Part (a). As mentioned above, there was some confusion between scale and sequence and many candidates did not give full enough answers to credit. Examples included identifying a triad or scale without reference to whether this is ascending or descending. Repetition on its own was also not enough to gain a mark. Appoggiatura and inversion were frequently correctly identified. Sequence, imitation and arpeggio were common incorrect answers. In Part (b) most candidates were able to gain credit, with the flute being cited by most candidates. The most common incorrect response was the oboe. Many candidates successfully answered Part (c) with all possible answers correctly identified. Ascending sequence was the most common response seen on scripts. Part (d) was the most successful of the multiple-choice circling questions with many candidates scoring at least two marks here. On occasions, some candidates only circled two possible answers or more than three, losing valuable marks. There were mixed responses in Part (e) and unfortunately, on some occasions, the keys were listed in the wrong order. G minor was also a common incorrect answer. Part (f) was generally well answered, although incorrect answers of sonata rondo were seen in some scripts, and this could not be credited.

Q2 Mendelssohn: Hear my Prayer, Bars 34–78

There were a large number of correct responses in Part (a) although incorrect answers such as homophonic were common. The key was more successfully identified than the metre in Part (b) with many variations appearing on scripts. The cadence was for the most part correctly identified in Part (c), but confusion with an interrupted cadence was seen in some scripts. At times a lack of detail prevented marks being awarded in Part (d) and references to a high note could not be credited, nor octave leap without the direction detailed. Unfortunately, some candidates also incorrectly identified the pitch as high E or high F, which could not gain credit. The texture in Part (e) was very well answered across a large majority of scripts. Diminished seventh and tierce de Picardie were common correct answers in Part (f), although tonic and dominant pedals were confused on many occasions. For a set work question, the responses in Part (g) were disappointing. Baroque was frequently and incorrectly answered, and the accompanying feature was even less successful. There was a variety of incorrect answers that did not relate to the melody and there were instances where the candidate had not understood the focus of the question. Part (h) was well answered.

Q3 Schönberg and Boubil: 'One Day More' from Les Miserables, Bars 26–44

Identification of the time signature in Part (a) produced a mixed response, despite being a set work. The voice in Part (b) was better answered. The dotted rhythm in Part (c) was quite often confused with Scotch snap, as was the direction of the sequence in Part (d). Many candidates failed to access full marks in Part (e) due to a lack of detail in their answer. Answers of SATB without linking to choir or chorus failed to receive any credit, as consistent with marking in previous years. Homophonic texture was frequently given as a correct response. The identification of the cadence in Part (f) was more successful than the key in many scripts. Part (g) was not particularly well-answered. Scale was very often confused with a sequence and answers lacked enough detail to be awarded marks. Candidates did not link musical detail to the instruments playing and in a small number of scripts where instruments were linked, the incorrect musical detail was recalled and could not gain credit. The cymbal crash was quite often recognised but the snare drum roll was rarely observed, quite often confusing this with a timpani roll. Very few candidates scored more than two marks for this question. Part (h) was more successfully answered with most candidates scoring at least one mark for repetition.

Q4 Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 22 in Eb major K482, Mt 3, Bars 1–59

There was a very mixed response in Part (a) with anacrusis and ascending sequence the common correct answers. However, this was, at times, confused with an ascending scale. Repetition on its own was not enough to be awarded a mark and this vague answer was seen on many scripts, along with answers of repeated notes, which could not gain credit. Many candidates failed to identify the repeated pitches correctly or could not express their answer appropriately. Ornamentation was too general for credit. Responses in Part (b) were either tonic or dominant, with the latter incorrect answer commonly seen. Clarinet and bassoon were popular answers in Part (c), along with oboe and flute, which were both incorrect. Most candidates scored at least one mark in Part (d) with diminished seventh and inverted pedal the most commonly correct answers. The vast majority of candidates found the time signature in Part (e) difficult to identify and four/four incorrectly appeared on many scripts. As in previous years, many candidates did not gain credit in Part (f) for simply stating concerto without referencing the piano or solo. Other incorrect answers included symphony. The period of composition in Part (g) was generally well-answered with marks frequently awarded in Part (ii) for predominance of strings. There were some other features of Classical music listed but these were not relevant to this particular extract, or indeed the focus of the question, which was instrumental scoring.

Q5 Verdi: Requiem, Requiem and Kyrie Eleison, Bars 62–86

Most candidates scored one or two marks in Part (a) although at times rising and falling sequence were confused. Suspension and falling sequence were the most common correct responses. The texture was well answered in Part (b). The cadence was more successfully identified than the tonality in Part (c) although on a few occasions these answers were written on the wrong answer line and therefore could not be credited. Description of the instrumental accompaniment in Part (d) was not well-answered and responses again revealed candidates' confusion between sequence and scale. Marks were mainly awarded for lower string descending scale and chromaticism. Once again, answers were not always detailed enough for a mark to be awarded, with many responses failing to connect the musical detail and instruments together. However, the voice type was well-recognised in Part (e). In most cases the vocal ensemble was also identified correctly in Part (f), but unless it was linked with the choir or chorus, the mark could not be awarded. Responses were on the whole mostly accurate in Part (g). The period of composition in Part (h) produced mixed responses and influenced the answers given in Part (h)(ii). Candidates who had answered Part (i) incorrectly commonly gave incorrect responses relating to Baroque or Classical features. Marks were frequently awarded in Part (ii) for correct responses such as lyrical melody, use of chromaticism and seventh/extended chords. Teachers and candidates should note that 'dramatic dynamics' is not a suitable description and could not gain credit as an alternative correct answer for a wide range of dynamics or sudden change of dynamics.

Assessment Unit AS 32 Responding to Music: Written Examination

Overview

The questions on this written paper were accessible to candidates of all abilities, evidenced by the diverse range of marks awarded. Many candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of Question 1 and Question 2, making genuine attempts to answer within the context and focus required by each sub-question. This indicated that the questions were clear and appropriately framed, allowing candidates of all abilities to engage with them effectively. Question 3(a) and Question 3(b) appeared to be attempted by candidates in equal measure, with Question 4(b) notably the more popular choice for candidates in this second half of the paper. Responses in extended writing questions varied from being detailed and musically accurate, to showing little musical understanding and ability to answer questions within their context. Overall, there were more written answers than usual gaining one mark out of a possible three for QWC due to fragmented sentences that appeared like bullet points and poor spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The paper allowed those who had an in-depth knowledge of set works to demonstrate this and expand upon extending writing responses appropriately to gain credit, worthy of the knowledge displayed. The marks ranged from very low to extremely high, with one candidate losing only one raw mark on the entire paper.

Q1 Vivaldi: Concerto in G major for 2 Mandolins (RV 532), Mt. 2, Bars 1–13

Some candidates found it a challenge to include the right level of detail in relation to conjunct movement and repetition in Part (a). The mark scheme required the direction of movement of the conjunct melody and detail regarding repetition of pitches. Repetition in general was vague and could not be credited. The most common error in Part (a) was the incorrect identification of ascending sequence. There was a limited number of scripts that gained credit for rising third, or rising tritone. Part (b) was well answered with only a handful of candidates being unable to identify the intervals. In Part (c) the key of G major was well-answered, but not all candidates secured A minor and E minor. Incorrect responses commonly mixed up major and minor tonality. Part (d) demonstrated a wide range of responses. The most common responses were descending sequence and imitation. There were many responses which incorrectly listed the dotted rhythm in Section B as a developmental device. Circle of fifths, antiphonal and ornamentation were all other common incorrect answers, indicating a lack of accurate knowledge of developmental features on the part of some candidates. Part (e) was highly successful with some candidates recognising all four features, rather than three required by the question. The most common pitfall were responses which lacked “steady/repeated” with regards to quavers, or a response stating “repeated notes” which failed to specify that the pitches were repeated. Part (f)(i) was well-answered, but in Part (ii) many candidates did not respond with specific melodic features, indicating a lack of awareness of the focus of the question. Incorrect responses were “predominance of strings”, or “use of continuo”. Many responses also listed “ornamentation” without specifically referencing trill. In Part (g) many candidates incorrectly responded ritornello, (perhaps getting confused with the form of the first movement studied) and there were also some incorrect responses of concerto or rondo. A reasonable number of candidates correctly identified the form as binary.

Q2 Schubert: String Quartet No. 13 in A minor, D804, Mt. 2, Bars 1–27

Candidates who had scored well in Question 1, generally also scored well in this unfamiliar score extract question. The responses to Part (a) were mixed, with many gaining credit for the first chord, but making errors in the following two chords. Part (b) continues to be a challenge for many candidates who are unsure how to label seventh chords. Candidates should not write major above seventh chords, nor label a chord A dominant 7 when the answer is A7 as this implies a different chord entirely. Those who failed to gain credit for the correct chord often gained credit for the correct inversion. Responses in Part (c) were occasionally identified as diminished and could not be credited. Part (d) was well-answered, although a handful of candidates wrote the key and cadence on the wrong answer line in error. These answers could not be credited. In Part (e) many candidates could not gain credit for omitting tonic and failing to identify the tonic pedal in full. Part (f) was well-answered and in Part (g) use of appoggiatura was the most frequently incorrect response. Answers of ornamentation were too general to gain credit, but specifying the trill was credited.

Q3 (a) Gibbons: This is the Record of John

This question, which dealt with the general musical features of the final chorus in Gibbons' "This is the Record of John," revealed a significant disparity in understanding amongst candidates. Weaker responses often failed to reference the text and exhibited confusion about changes in texture. Overall, candidates' responses to this question were mixed, highlighting both strengths and areas needing improvement. Most candidates correctly identified the key. However, very few candidates successfully identified the time signature. In terms of identifying the vocal ensemble, most responses correctly noted the SAATB choir. However, a recurring error was the inclusion of a countertenor along with SATB, which was incorrect. Candidates often had difficulty distinguishing textural changes within a line. For instance, the phrase "and he said" is homophonic, but many candidates found it challenging to pinpoint this, instead stating "and he said I am the voice of him that crieth" was homophonic. Similarly, the transition to a fugal texture at the phrase "I am the voice" was often inadequately explained. Identifying the change of texture at the final cadence also proved problematic, with candidates frequently failing to link this change of texture to the correct phrase of text. Furthermore, candidates struggled to identify the order of fugal entries, making it difficult for them to provide a detailed analysis of this aspect of the piece. Overall, this question revealed that many candidates found it challenging to discuss the textural and structural features in depth.

(b) Rutter: For the Beauty of the Earth

This question was the slightly more popular option and was handled much more successfully by those who had a clear understanding of the structure of the text as it unfolded. These candidates were able to discuss and analyse the music more successfully, for example, referencing the descant with the correct text. However, weaker responses tended to either focus on incorrect verses or lacked clarity and specifics when discussing variations in the vocal texture. A common error was the incorrect identification of the key as B flat major. When candidates correctly referenced the text, there was frequent misuse of the term "mordent" in place of "melisma" or "upper auxiliary note" indicating some confusion regarding accepted musical terminology. Candidates often failed to receive credit for many correctly identified features of the soprano descant as they did not reference the text heard in the rest of the ensemble. Another frequently invalid point was the identification of syncopation at "this our joyful hymn." Many candidates found it difficult to explain textural changes within a

phrase accurately, or they often omitted mentioning a voice when discussing who was singing the melody which prevented them from receiving full credit. Additionally, the key was often not used to accompany the identification of cadences. Another common error was the incorrect assertion that the piece ended on a perfect cadence. Many candidates mistakenly mentioned an “ascending sequence” rather than scale. Many responses lacked the detail required, with candidates unable to relate to the context of the question, quoting different verses and different vocal settings and entries from those verses.

Q4 (a) Rodgers and Hammerstein: Soliloquy

This option was the most popular choice in this section. The strongest responses demonstrated an excellent understanding of harmony and tonality, effectively connecting these elements to the text in their analysis. Weaker responses often overlooked harmony and tonality, focusing predominantly on melodic material, which limited their potential for higher marks. Very few candidates identified the details of the semitonal changes within the harmonic ostinato. Additionally, the first three modulations were infrequently identified, with most candidates only detailing one modulation. The material leading up to the “My boy Bill” section was generally less detailed in candidates’ responses. However, at the “My boy Bill” section, most candidates were successful in identifying G major as the key and noting the presence of diminished sevenths in certain sections of text, indicating a stronger understanding and familiarity with this particular section of the piece.

(b) Bernstein: Tonight Quintet

Responses to this option generally elicited higher marks. Candidates showed familiarity with the lyrics, referencing the text with greater fluency and accuracy and following the chronological order. This suggested that candidates were more comfortable and confident analysing and discussing the text in this section. Many candidates successfully identified the beguine rhythm, although fewer noted the presence of cross rhythms. Many candidates also correctly identified the descending sequence at “the minutes seem like hours” successfully and gained credit. Many incorrectly identified dotted rhythms as a feature of the melody, showing confusion with the dotted minim and crotchet motif. The doubling of melodic material by the cello and violin and the canonic entries were frequently noted, but often misclassified as melodic rather than textural analysis. Consistent with mark schemes for other options, and in previous years, modulations and cadences could not gain credit without the additional information of a correct key and location.

Principal Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Performing

Overview

This year saw a successful examining series with performance examiners visiting centres across Northern Ireland. It was pleasing to see an increased level of confidence in the candidature in this third year of return to live performance. Candidates benefit from ensemble playing and singing within their own schools, and the full return to extra-curricular music making since the end of Covid restrictions has had a positive impact on repertoire, performance standard and poise and confidence during these examinations.

Standard of Performances

A large majority of candidates gave performances that were technically assured, fluent and expressive. Occasionally, the technical demands of the music were beyond the candidate and a compromise in the level of demand of the music would have been a better option, in order to access more marks overall. Several candidates performed above and beyond A2 level, giving enjoyable and musical performances that evidenced their musical maturity and hinted at a future which could involve music at a professional level.

Variety of Instruments/Voice

Most commonly examined were vocalists, pianists, orchestral instruments and guitarists. Fewer drummers and Irish Traditional players than usual were examined this year. Singers continue to offer programmes of Musical Theatre and Classical genres.

Repertoire

As in previous years, there was a wide range of repertoire performed. Styles ranged from Baroque to twenty-first century and programmes were generally contrasting in style and well-planned. Occasionally, a candidate chose to perform on two different instruments. This is acceptable, but usually does not benefit the candidate as one instrument is often stronger than the other and this affects the marks awarded. Some singers performed Classical programmes when their voice was more suited to Musical Theatre or Pop genres. Candidates are best advised to play to their strengths and perform the genre which compliments them best, or in which they can engage more effectively in terms of the style and expression. Most candidates performed pieces from UK examination board syllabi.

Criterion 1 Technical control and accuracy

Most candidates were able to access marks in Mark Bands 3 and 4, with a very small number of marks awarded in Mark Band 2. Well-prepared candidates were able to access higher marks with excellent levels of fluency and accuracy being heard. Some singers were accurate in pitch and rhythm, but tone and intonation caused a loss of marks. Fluctuating intonation was also the most common reason for loss of marks for instrumentalists. At times performances across the candidature were not always rhythmically secure, but largely this did not interrupt the fluency of the music. Performing from memory is not essential and does not gain additional marks. It is often not helpful for candidates when unexpected nerves cause memory issues. Music can be helpful to prompt a nervous performer, particularly when maintaining fluency and accuracy which is a large part of this criterion of the mark scheme.

Criterion 2 Expressive interpretation, sense of style and communication

Overall, there was a high standard of musicianship seen through the ability to communicate the music effectively. Styles were generally well-understood with suitable dynamic shape in the performance to convey this understanding. Tempi were well-chosen by the majority of candidates. Occasionally, phrasing could be broken or laboured due to nerves. This is more commonly seen in singers and wind players. Baroque pieces and Da Capo Arias performed by singers used the appropriate ornamentation. Candidates who were awarded marks in Mark Bands 2 or 3 tended to have a more limited dynamic range in their performances. Most performances were awarded marks in Mark Band 3 and 4, with some candidates communicating the music extremely well, showing a high level of musical maturity. Candidates who were awarded marks in Mark Bands 1 or 2 struggled to convey understanding of the style and the performances were often limited or mechanical in their communication with less dynamic colouring evident.

Criterion 3 Viva Voce

The Viva Voce section of the examination continues to provide differentiation for candidates who are gaining full marks in the first two criteria of the mark scheme. There continues to be a wide range of ability displayed in answers to questions. The introduction of a change to the first question last year was absorbed by all this year and continues to provide a greater focus in answers at the beginning of the discussion. Answers to Question (i) and Question (ii) should be brief and factual. Some candidates found it hard to expand upon their answers in detail to Questions (iii), (iv) and (v). Challenges were often readily discussed, but some candidates failed to state how they overcame these challenges and did not display any knowledge of the technique required to play their instrument, or any points of learning in this aspect. Where musical scores were used and demonstration occurred, candidates tended to showcase their knowledge and ability at a higher level. Candidates who answered at a higher level were able to discuss at least two points of style, two challenges and two recordings. All candidates were able to state several recordings they had listened to, but fewer managed to state how these had impacted on their own performance and answer the question fully.

Level of Demand

Candidates tended to perform at Grade 7 level or included a combination of pieces which were a combination of Grades 6 and 7. In this case, the Level of Demand mark awarded should be the one which applies to the greater majority of the programme in terms of timings. Centres are advised to check the timings of this in rehearsals prior to the examination.

Timing

Candidates and teachers were well-prepared with regards to the timing of programmes and in ensuring these met the requirements. A time penalty for a short programme was applied to a couple of performances this year, but in general, there were fewer performances that were excessive in length and unnecessarily exhausting for the candidate.

General Comments

Teachers and candidates were well-prepared this year, with examiners frequently presented with a carefully timed schedule for their visit and CAFs completed accurately in advance. This is particularly helpful as examiners commonly may have up to three or four centres per day. Centre hospitality is always welcomed due to the distance covered by examiners and some centres kindly offered lunch, or snacks along with tea and coffee which was greatly appreciated. Candidates were often punctual and had already warmed up and rehearsed with their accompanists or backing tracks. Many centres continue to hire accompanists for the performance examinations. This is now becoming more of a standard practice and candidates tend to benefit from the musical maturity of their accompanist, resulting in more sensitive and secure performances overall. Backing tracks were used successfully in many centres, with free standing laptops/devices disconnected from school Wi-Fi. It is preferable that drummers have a click track in their ears, rather than this being an audible part of the backing track. Smart watches and mobile phones were all removed from the examination room in advance, with no issues arising.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 21 Composing: Composition Task

Overview

In total, 51 centres (including eight consortiums) submitted work in this unit, with the work of 180 individual candidates in total presented for moderation.

Candidates submitted compositions encompassing a wide range of musical styles and genres. These included pop songs, SATB choral works and pieces for solo piano. Instrumental pieces inspired by Classical and Romantic compositional styles were a popular choice, as were vocal and instrumental Jazz-inspired pieces.

During the moderation process it was evident that the majority of candidates had once again been encouraged to compose in musical genres and styles with which they were familiar, and this is to be encouraged.

The most popular instrumental selections included string and brass groupings, solo piano pieces and compositions for a solo instrument with piano accompaniment. However, some candidates chose to compose for unusual instrumental combinations which were not particularly idiomatic, or in many cases, successful.

For instrumental pieces, ternary, rondo and variation form were the most popular formal structures. The majority of pop song submissions were strophic in structure and most choral pieces tended to follow ternary form. A small number of pieces were through-composed, limiting the scope for the development of initial musical ideas.

Across all centres, candidates' work was produced using either Sibelius, GarageBand or Logic software. Recordings submitted were generally of good quality, with many centres providing live recordings of compositions which is to be commended. However, the quality of the final mix of recordings 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 which did not provide a satisfactory stylistic realisation of the composition.

The inclusion of scores with instrumental and vocal pieces was a useful aid during the moderation process. Most songs were accompanied by lead sheets outlining 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 piece and clearly justified the marks awarded by the centre. However, a significant number of centres did not include comments, and this lack of centre input was not particularly advantageous to the candidate or helpful to the moderation process.

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

Criterion 1 Creation, Development and Organisation of Ideas

Centres should consider the following factors when applying this assessment criterion:

1. **Style** – Compositions should convey a **clear and consistent** sense of style. The chosen style should be maintained throughout the course of the piece.
2. **Structure** – Compositions should follow a **coherent and logical** formal structure.

Ternary form continued to be the most popular structure for instrumental and choral style pieces. In the majority of submissions, the initial 'A' sections were successful. However, the contrasting 'B' and subsequent 'A1' sections were frequently less effective. Imbalance in the length of these sections often disrupted the overall structure of the composition. In addition, melodic material often tended to meander and lose a clear sense of direction as each section progressed.

Rondo form was another popular choice for instrumental compositions. Typically, the rondo theme was the most successful section of the piece with the episodes weaker, frequently being short and melodically less distinctive than the initial theme.

Theme and variation form was the chosen structure for many compositions this session. The most successful compositions benefitted from a strong opening theme, generally comprising of at least 16 bars. Shorter themes often produced a very sectional and frequently disjointed outcome. The best compositions did not exceed five variations.

Strophic form was the chosen structure for the majority of pop song submissions and was generally handled successfully with good contrast produced between the verse, chorus and bridge sections of the song.

3. **Melody** – melodic material should be consistently reflective of the chosen style of the composition. Melodies should be fluent and well-shaped with balanced phrasing and a balance between conjunct and disjunct movement.
4. **Development of ideas** – the development of ideas should be appropriate to the chosen style and should produce a musical outcome. Some candidates relied heavily on repetition as a developmental technique. In other submissions, candidates attempted to include too many developmental techniques (which were often inconsistent with the chosen style) and frequently produced an outcome which was over-complicated and not particularly musical.

Most candidates achieved a mark in band two or band three for this criterion.

Criterion 2 Use of Resources

Both the use of resources and use of texture should be considered when applying this assessment criterion.

1. **Resources** – In the most successful compositions, candidates displayed an excellent understanding of their chosen resources, producing instrumental and vocal parts which were idiomatic, imaginative and stylistic. At the other extreme, some candidates displayed a very limited understanding of their instrumental resources, creating parts which were not completely idiomatic and sometimes unplayable. In particular, writing for the piano varied greatly in quality. Many candidates chose to compose for string quartet, and it was evident that they had no particular knowledge of this genre or the capabilities of the instruments, producing parts which were not idiomatic and did not include any instrument specific effects such as pizzicato or double stopping. Writing for voice was generally successful in pop style compositions, but often less idiomatic in choral compositions.
2. **Texture** – Compositions should include variety and contrasts of texture, but also textural clarity. While many compositions conveyed these features, in others a lack of textural clarity often resulted in the obscuring of the melodic line. Homophonic textures were generally more successful than attempts at polyphony.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in band three for this criterion.

Criterion 3 Use of Harmony

The effectiveness of harmonic writing varied significantly this session. While some candidates were able to produce harmony at a high level, many other submissions displayed only a rudimentary knowledge of harmony, conveying a 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. Clarification of the expectations for this criterion at A2 level can be found in the CCEA document *GSCE/GCE Music – Progressions of Compositional Skills*.

The majority of candidates achieved a mark in bands two or three for this criterion.

Criterion 4 Commentary

Commentaries varied greatly in quality. While some provided a comprehensive and analytical description of the composition, the majority of commentaries provided only a general overview of the piece. Information was not always included in the correct section of the commentary and many commentaries this session fell well short of the 1,200-word limit. The lack of time references in some commentaries made the moderation process challenging, while references to bar numbers in the absence of a score was of very limited use.

It should also be noted that extended discussion relating to software packages, recording procedures and technical effects is not particularly relevant to this unit option.

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 band two for this criterion.

Centre Marking

While some centres applied the CCEA marking criteria correctly, a significant number of centres were outside of an acceptable range and marked with excessive leniency across all assessment criteria, particularly Criterion 1 (Creation, development and organisation of ideas).

Assessment Unit A2 22 Composing: Composition with Technology Task

Overview

Five centres submitted work to be moderated which is a decrease from last year. The total number of candidates who submitted work for this component was fifteen.

Marking by centres was either largely accurate and aligned with the acceptable range or lenient on occasions.

The centre's comments on the eCandidate Record Sheet were helpful, often giving an insight into why the mark band was chosen and justifying the marks awarded. It is helpful if teachers include as much information as they can regarding why marks are awarded or withheld in each criterion.

In the work submitted this year there was an array of chosen genres and styles from Irish Traditional and folk pieces to Neo-classical and Jazz. Compositions that were achieving marks in the top band in each criterion were successful in establishing the chosen style from the outset and maintaining a sense of character with the features of the style exhibited throughout the work.

Criterion 1 Creation and Development of Ideas Based on a Stimulus

Much of the work was typical of the top of Mark Band 3 or the bottom of Mark Band 4 in this criterion. Stimulus A and Stimulus B were both used equally across the moderation sample. The majority of candidates used their chosen stimulus successfully to develop ideas through fragmentation and other techniques and devices. In a minority of work submitted, there continued to be a reliance on repetition or an overuse of techniques that tended to cause some incoherence. Use of the Progression of Composition Skills support document is recommended but caution must be taken against including too many techniques which can affect the clarity of the melodic line. The most popular structures were ternary and theme and variation. Contrasting middle sections or episodes continued to challenge some candidates in terms of creating fluent melodies which complement but also contrast with the stimulus.

Criterion 2 Use of Harmony

Harmonic handling by candidates was largely successful overall. All of the work submitted for moderation was either accurately marked by teachers or only slightly lenient. All work was placed either in Mark Band 3 or 4. It was pleasing to see some very fluent and excellent harmonic language being employed by many candidates. Overall, harmonic progressions were clear with an appropriate pulse and successful use of cadences. Modulations or tonal shifts provided harmonic variety and advanced harmonic tools that were appropriate to the candidate's chosen style were often used successfully. In a few cases, harmonic devices were employed that were inconsistent to the candidate's chosen style and this did disrupt what was for the most part successful harmonic writing.

Criterion 3 Use of Technology, including Texture and Timbre

All candidates were awarded marks in either Mark Band 3 or Mark Band 4 in this criterion and this highlighted the successful use of technology, texture and timbre to achieve good or excellent recordings that were successful realisations of their intentions. Instrumental writing was successful in most cases, especially when candidates were writing for resources with which they were familiar or had researched suitably in order to write for the resources in an idiomatic fashion. Many candidates utilised a variety of textures which helped achieve contrast between sections of their work. Overall, the use of texture was effective or excellent. However, in some cases only simple textures were used and there was a reliance in places on unison writing which is not appropriate for this level. Centres and candidates are reminded that at A2 Level, the submission should be written for at least six independent parts. The use of technology was very good in much of the work moderated, with candidates successfully using sequencing or multi-track recordings. In some submissions, candidates who combined both are to be commended for their success in what can be a challenging and ambitious brief. The use of effects and technological tools used by candidates to mix their recordings was often very good but occasionally there were issues with balance or inconsistent application of effects to different tracks.

Criterion 4 Commentary

Commentaries were mostly appropriately placed in Mark Band 2 and more often at the top of this band. Teacher marking in this criterion was mostly accurate. To be awarded a mark in Mark Band 3, it is expected that the commentaries are analytical in all sections. In some commentaries there was limited information in sections four and five and in others there were repetitive comments throughout each section.

Chief Examiner's Report

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

Overview

This paper was successful in allowing candidates to access the full range of marks and display their aural recognition skills across a variety of question types on both familiar and unfamiliar music. The standard of responses was encouraging given that this summer series was a return to pre-pandemic examination conditions with no advance information as provided last year. At the top end there were candidates who had obviously prepared thoroughly for this examination and were accessing total marks in the 60s. Candidates are reminded to read questions carefully during the pauses, as there were more instances this year of candidates only circling two instead of three responses in this multiple-choice style of question. Papers still reveal the tendency for candidates to regurgitate lists of musical terms in the hope that some of the responses are accurate. This is to be discouraged as in questions requiring one or two specific responses, such as the metre or tonality of the extract, only the first response on the answer line will be credited. Weaker responses tended to show a lack of knowledge, detail or use of musical terms, which is essential at A2 Level. In the longer and more challenging description responses, candidates still struggle to focus in detail on the specific features in the question needed to gain credit. Overall, the mark scheme was straightforward and should prove to be a useful tool and resource to inform classroom teaching.

Q1 Ravel: Rigaudon from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, Bars 35–92

The majority of candidates were able to cite the key and cadence and oboe playing the melody at the beginning of the extract. In Part (b)(ii) fewer candidates were able to provide a response with specific detail such as the descending scale in cellos and double basses or lower strings. As this was a set work, cello or double bass alone was not sufficient to gain marks and while many responses cited the rhythmic ostinato, the drone was rarely attributed to the viola. In Part (c) a wide range of woodwind instruments was given and even some brass instruments, which revealed a limited accurate knowledge of this set work passage. The majority of candidates recognised the mordent at the beginning of Section B. Responses to Part (e) were poor with many incorrect answers such as harp harmonics and pizzicato or divisi strings. Reference to the use of mutes was either too general, for example, muted strings instead of cellos, muted brass instead of muted trumpet or horn or not attached to a specific instrument at all. The majority of candidates were able to identify the rigaudon dance style and twentieth-century neoclassical style correctly.

Q2 Chilcott: *Kyrie* from *A Little Jazz Mass*, Bars 1–42²

The questions on this set work extract proved straightforward with a pleasing number of candidates scoring full marks. Identification of the harmonic features and key in the introduction were well-answered, as was the identification of vocal textures in Part (c). A few candidates wrote more than two answers and only the first in each answer line was marked. The majority of candidates identified syncopation, often along with Beguine, but shifting accents was a less common correct answer. Descriptions, referring to misplaced accents or tied notes, were common but did not receive credit. The majority of candidates were easily awarded full marks in identifying the three instruments playing in this extract and the style of music which had influenced the composer. A keyboard was not an acceptable answer in Part (e).

Q3 Handel: 'O Ruddier than the Cherry' from *Acis and Galatea*, Bars 1–31

The majority of candidates were able to identify the descending sequence in Lines 1 and 2 but there were many incorrect answers in this question with references such as falling leaps, anacrusis, disjunct and rising sequences, which were not creditworthy. Recognition of the two keys in Part (b) proved challenging and revealed a general lack of awareness or knowledge of the tonality in this opening section. The majority of the candidates identified the type of solo voice as bass, though this was mistaken for baritone in a number of scripts. Many responses identified the sopranino recorder as the woodwind instrument playing in the extract. However, stating that the solo instrument was a recorder or soprano recorder did not gain credit. As in the first question, describing the melodic material and its development proved challenging in Part (e) with few answers correctly describing the descending semiquaver scales which were used in a descending sequence. With three possible answers in Part (f), the majority of candidates were awarded the marks available, with only a few responses incorrectly suggesting recitative as an answer.

Q4 Mozart: Bassoon Concerto in Bb Major, K191, Mt. 3, Bars 51–88

This unfamiliar extract proved accessible for many candidates who scored highly. Identification of the triple metre, relative minor key and solo bassoon was generally well-answered, though there was a range of other woodwind and even brass instruments suggested as the solo instrument. In responses to Part (d) some candidates only referred generally to concerto and did not specify solo or bassoon. Recognition of the dance style and date of composition was correct in over half the scripts, with waltz and dates in the late Romantic the most common incorrect answers in Part (e) and Part (f)(i). The more perceptive candidates easily recognised aurally the appoggiatura and the scalar and triadic nature of the melody. Many candidates found it difficult to focus on the question with answers including orchestral and instrumental features. Other candidates referred generally to the phrasing but did not detail the two or four bar balanced nature of the phrasing, a typical feature of the Classical style.

Q5 Vautour: *Sweet Suffolk Owl*, Bars 1–51

This proved to be a highly successful question for many candidates, particularly in the correct identification of the melodic device, vocal textures and cadences. Recognition of melodic features in Part (d) proved slightly more demanding, although most candidates were able to comment correctly on the melisma. Again, the majority of candidates identified the extract as a Renaissance madrigal, although justifying this was more difficult for some. The unaccompanied/a cappella nature of this genre and the use of word painting were the most common correct answers appearing on scripts in answering Part (e)(ii). Very few candidates mentioned one voice to a part and other answers talked generally about general Renaissance features such as false relations, suspensions and frequent polyphonic textures, which are not specific to the madrigal. Candidates are reminded again to read questions carefully, as some answers to Part (f) cited dates instead of identifying the period of composition.

Q6 Bartók: *Romanian Folk Dances*, No.2 (complete) and No. 4, Bars 1–18

Compared to previous papers, many candidates coped well with this unfamiliar extract related to the twentieth-century orchestral area of study. Again, identification of the opening minor/modal tonality, metre and use of the clarinet to play the melody was well-answered. Recognition that the melody, when repeated, was up an octave and doubled in the violins was also generally accurate. The majority of candidates easily recognised the perfect cadence at the end of Extract A but identification of the two rhythmic features at the beginning of Extract B was less successful. Many candidates listed up to as many as six rhythmic features but only the first two on each line were accepted. Descriptions of the accompaniment in Extract B were generally weak with many pupils incorrectly talking about pizzicato lower strings, instead of clearly specifying the double bass. There were also many answers referring generally to the use of strings and failing to specify upper strings or that the strings were playing chords. Only the more aurally perceptive candidates could describe accurately what each of the individual string instruments was playing as an accompaniment to the melody. Approximately half of the candidates identified the extract as nationalistic, with the most common incorrect answer being neoclassical.

Assessment Unit A2 32 Responding to Music: Written Examination

Overview

This written examination allowed candidates who had prepared and revised thoroughly and developed strong analytical skills to access top marks. Total raw marks ranged from single figures up to as high as 69/70. The paper allowed candidates plenty of opportunities to display their knowledge and understanding across a range of question styles.

In the first two score analysis questions it was pleasing that a significant number of candidates had many successful responses. More often this was where candidates accessed the majority of their marks. In the two extended essay questions some candidates were clearly well-prepared, producing two excellent responses and writing in a clear, concise manner, with detailed comments and accurate text references. However, a significant number of candidates appeared to struggle with writing enough content for the extended responses or failed to use the correct musical terminology or make accurate text references when writing about a specific musical feature. It was clear that some candidates who performed poorly in Sections C and D struggled with recalling the set work accurately, specifically the capacity to chronologically formulate an answer based on the structure of the music. This resulted in large sections of music not referred to at all, or confusing responses where the candidate wrote very generalised comments. These text responses were also usually full of superfluous, irrelevant information and repetition of points. It was noted that there was an increase in the small number of scripts in which candidates did not complete an extended writing for either Sections 3 or 4, and as a result could not access any of the 30 marks available.

Consideration of QWC by examiners revealed that pupils still find writing detailed sentences a challenge in these conditions. Many candidates seemed unrehearsed when it came to sentence structure and accurate referencing as part of a writing style. Most grammar and spelling performances were basic to good rather than very good/excellent with many basic musical terms spelt incorrectly. Legibility was a challenge in a few scripts, and this proved challenging for examiners, notably when deciphering answers relating to keys and chords.

Q1 Bernstein: *Three Dance Episodes from On the Town*, Mt. 1, 'The Great Lover', Bars 1–40

Most candidates scored well in the first two questions on this set work. The majority were credited for pedal in Part (a) with fewer mentions of dissonance/semitonal clash. In Part (b) a few candidates missed a mark by only stating 'octave' rather than 'spans an octave'. Recognition of chords in Part (c) was well-answered but it was still surprising to see candidates failing to recognise what were essentially less challenging chords in this set work. More often those candidates who misidentified the chord also missed the correct inversion. Similarly, Part (d) was well-answered, but again there were some candidates who failed to correctly identify the three straightforward keys. The unison/octaves texture in Part (e) and rhythmic features in Part (f) were easily identified but shifting accents only appeared in higher scoring scripts. The influence of jazz on the composer was well known in Part (g)(i) but details of the instrumental scoring outlined to support this answer were less successful. While some candidates were able to describe the scoring in detail, other candidates failed to provide the depth of knowledge required at A2 level for a familiar set work which has been studied in detail. Some candidates mentioned that the drumkit, rather than the snare drum, was played with brushes and another common error was to mention the piano but omit details of the tonic/dominant vamp.

Q2 Mozart: *Symphony No. 40 in G minor K550*, Mt. 2, *Andante*, Bars 1–27⁴

The level of accurate responses for this unfamiliar score analysis was pleasing with many candidates accessing full marks for this question. The identification of the key and cadence was well-answered. Candidates should be reminded of the need to write the name of the cadence, for example, perfect, plagal etc., rather than using roman numerals in their response. In Part (b) the mark scheme allowed most candidates to achieve three marks. However, a significant proportion of candidates missed out on marks when stating 'passed to viola' instead of using specific terminology such as 'imitated'. Only the candidates with stronger responses identified that the viola and second violin were paired in thirds. Answers to Part (c) and Part (d) were mostly correct. A pleasing number of candidates achieved the full eight marks available in Part (e) for identification of the four chords and their position/inversion. However, the most common error in this type of question continues to be the confusion between a seventh and a major seventh chord. The use of inversion, imitation, modulation and sequence appeared as correct developmental techniques in many scripts. Some candidates mentioned ascending and descending sequence as two separate points which could only be credited as one technique. A few more perceptive candidates talked about the intervallic changes in detail, while others listed up to six or seven techniques, many of which were not applicable. These included fragmentation, diminution and augmentation and candidates should be advised not to take this 'long list' approach when answering this style of question in the hope that some will be correct. The majority of candidates successfully identified the key in Part (g) though there were some unusual answers which were not in any way closely related to the tonic key.

Q3 (a) Byrd: *Kyrie* from Mass for Five Voices

This was noticeably a more popular question than Question 3(b). However, many candidates seemed to rely on writing everything they knew about the set work, rather than answering the question and focusing on vocal scoring and texture. Many answers included comments on melodic and harmonic features such as tierce de Picardie and suspensions, which could not be credited. Some candidates did order their answer following the structure of the three parts of the Mass, but others struggled to refer to the “Kyrie” and “Christe” text. The order of vocal entries was often incorrect, particularly in relation to the first and second tenor parts. Weaker and very short responses managed to gain a few marks for the mention of general features such as the overall SATTB scoring and the imitative vocal textures. In the final “Kyrie” candidates showed a knowledge of the two beat intervals between entries but the internal dominant pedal was often called an inverted pedal, which was not creditworthy. Details of cadences were sometimes mentioned but not always in the context of a homophonic texture. In contrast, a few candidates had obviously revised this set work movement thoroughly and showed a detailed knowledge of the order of vocal entries and distance between them, the fugal nature of the first Kyrie with the tonic and dominant relationship of the entries and the internal pedal in the second Kyrie.

(b) Faure: *Libera me* from Requiem Mass

There were mixed responses to this less popular question which focused on three different musical aspects of the final section. Most candidates were able to talk accurately about some of the melodic intervals attached to the correct text and also the rising sequence. Very few responses referred to the appoggiatura Bb on “Domine”, or the lower auxiliary note at the end of the “die illa” phrase. The use of a baritone soloist and SATB choir was frequently mentioned alongside the opening unison texture for “Libera me”. Fewer candidates referred to the repeat of the “Libera me” and the divisi tenors and basses at this point. Details of the instrumental accompaniment were often missing in responses and some candidates found it difficult to term the rhythmic motif an ostinato. While there was a general reference to strings accompanying, candidates needed to state that the strings were pizzicato and playing with the organ to gain credit. At the top level, candidates showed a detailed and impressive knowledge of the new four bar ostinato and its fragmentation, the tonic pedal and the divided violas and cellos in the re-entry of the soloist in the closing bars.

Q4 (a) Schumann: *Widmung*

Both options were equally popular in this section and responses were generally successful. Candidates normally achieved some marks in their opening statements for basic information such as the overall key, metre and the rising/falling arpeggios in the piano accompaniment. In addition, successful candidates were able to note specific features connected to the correct text references. All terminology and detail in the mark scheme appeared somewhere in scripts, which showed that candidates were aware of the expectations of the question and the level of specialist terminology required in answering such a question. Candidates should be mindful of the level of detail required to gain credit, for example, stating diminished seventh chord on G for “Grab” as opposed to generally talking about the use of diminished seventh chords. Similarly details of cadential writing should include details of the key at the cadence point. When candidates were not credited for musical features, this was usually due to citing incorrect text or missing essential detail. Examples included, mentioning a sixth on “Wonn” rather than a rising sixth and reference to a high pitch rather than stating ‘to high F’.

(b) Copland: “Simple Gifts’ from *Old American Songs*

There were mixed responses from candidates who attempted this question on “Simple Gifts” which required them to provide detail on the introduction and first verse only. Weaker candidates often initially mentioned the key and metre with some reference to the scoring and two-bar fragment of the melody in the introduction. Thereafter, candidates sometimes struggled to obtain additional marks due to over general or inaccurate comments which could not be credited. In more successful responses, candidates tended to talk about the introduction accurately followed by some detailed identification of the musical features in both the solo line and accompaniment. The final few bars “Twill be in the valley of love and delight” was rarely discussed, as were the chord progressions accompanying the vocal line.

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