



General Certificate of Education

MUSIC 1271

MUSC1

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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MUSC 1

General

This is the second year of the new AS specification and the format of the question paper is well-established. It consists of a listening section based on musical excerpts (Section A), a choice of two essay questions on the set work (Section B) and a choice of two essay questions on a chosen Area of Study (Section C). After the CD of music excerpts (lasting approximately 30 minutes) candidates had the remaining one and a quarter hours to complete their two essays.

The paper has continued to elicit a wide range of responses with candidates achieving a correspondingly varied range of marks. There were some very good responses to the essay questions in sections B and C, and examiners have again commented on how much they have enjoyed reading essays which are well-informed, detailed and show a real enthusiasm for the works studied.

There were occasional instances of candidates misunderstanding or ignoring the precise wording of the questions in sections A and C, and there were a few instances of candidates allowing insufficient time to complete both Sections B and C adequately. The spread of marks across all sections of the paper suggests that it was successful in differentiating between candidates.

Section A

The excerpts in this section are not related to the Set Work or to any particular Area of Study but can be drawn from any period of musical history. The list of features and terminology on page 6 of the Specification provides the basis for the knowledge and understanding which are tested in the questions in this section; an understanding of the meaning of the technical terms used should guide candidates to an appropriate response.

Question 1

This question was divided between two excerpts. The first excerpt (questions 1(a) to (e)) was taken from Haydn's Horn Concerto No. 1 in D major (first movement). Most candidates answered questions 1(a) – (d) correctly but in (e) there were responses which appeared to result from a lack of understanding of cadences or an inability to recognise them aurally with confidence.

The second excerpt (questions 1(f) to (i)) was from Handel's *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*. Responses to question 1(f) suggested that many students are not able to recognise, or do not understand, the different kinds of texture outlined in the Specification. Although the majority of candidates answered question 1(g) well, some candidates only underlined two answers instead of three. There were many correct answers to question 1(h) but some candidates confused the oboes with flutes or clarinets while others identified an oboe but named another instrument as well. A look at the number of marks available (1 mark) would have helped avoid the latter mistake. The wide range of answers given to question 1(i) suggests that candidates find this type of aural recognition difficult.

Question 2

The excerpt for this question was from Faure's *Pavane*. Many candidates gained full marks on the melodic dictation in question 2(a), perhaps because they recognised the sequential pattern from the previous bar. Most candidates answered question 2(b) (cadence) and 2(c) (tonality) correctly. In question 2(d), most candidates recognised the technique – *pizzicato* - but candidates should be aware that when the question asks for a musical term the correct term is required: thus a descriptive word such as “plucked” will not gain the mark.

Most candidates correctly identified the melodic feature in question 2(e), the texture in question 2(f) and the perfect cadence in 2(g), although a few candidates thought the texture was polyphonic/contrapuntal.

Question 3

For this question the excerpt was taken from Poulenc's Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone.

The range of responses to question 3(a) indicates that many candidates find it difficult to recognise intervals aurally. Most candidates were able to give a suitable time signature in answer to question 3(b). Although many candidates identified the instruments correctly in question 3(c), references to the tuba and various woodwind instruments were frequent. A few candidates responded with both trumpet and cornet, but only one mark was allowed for this combination (although, as the mark scheme shows, cornet was accepted as an *alternative* to trumpet). There were many correct responses to question 3(d) although a small number of candidates underlined either only one answer or three answers. It is important that candidates read the rubric carefully, as the question clearly asked for two answers.

A wide range of responses was given to 3(e), which may point to a lack of understanding or knowledge of ornaments. Many candidates found question 3(f) difficult, and incorrect answers which referred to the dominant (D major) or subdominant (C major) were frequent.

Question 4

This excerpt was taken from the third movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 101 and the score was provided.

Question 4(a) elicited a wide range of responses. A number of candidates correctly identified the chord and some went further by correctly naming the inversion, although this was not required for the marks. Many candidates recognised the dominant (V), but did not identify the seventh (V⁷), and so only gained one mark. A few candidates gave the correct chord number but contradicted themselves by writing the letter names of the notes incorrectly.

In question 4(b) the cadence was identified correctly by the majority of candidates. However, in question 4(c) most candidates only identified one of the two clarinet notes correctly. A common mistake was to refer to the note C, when it should have been C#. The wide range of responses to questions 4(d) to 4(f) suggests that many candidates do not understand the alto clef and that candidates need to read the questions more carefully. In particular some questions asked for a precise location including bar *and beat* number. Candidates often failed to give a bar and beat, or made surprising errors such as naming *beat 4* when the time signature was 3/4. From the comparatively few candidates who gave the correct answer to question (g), it appears that many candidates do not understand this harmonic feature or cannot identify it from a score. However, question 4(h) was answered more successfully.

Section B

The set work, Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in C, K551, *Jupiter*, 1st and 3rd movements, seems to have continued to challenge and engage candidates as revealed in the variety and depth of their responses. Question 5 was by far the most popular of the two questions, perhaps because of the variety of ways in which Mozart uses his material and resources in the first movement or because the movement's energy seems to capture candidates' interest. In both questions, however, there was a tendency for many candidates to write answers which did not focus on the question and gave the impression that they had prepared for only a limited range of possible responses.

It was also noticeable that some candidates spent time copying out musical quotations from the score. Although this practice was less evident than last year, it is important to remind candidates that this is a time-consuming activity which is wholly unnecessary: candidates have access to an unmarked score in the examination and could support their answers by accurate reference to bar numbers.

A few candidates numbered the questions incorrectly. Candidates need to be careful to indicate clearly which question they are answering, since material which is irrelevant to the question will not be credited.

Question 05

This question demanded a lot of detail focussing on orchestration. Many candidates clearly engaged in a discussion of Mozart's orchestra and how it is used structurally, harmonically and dramatically throughout the movement. The better responses provided detailed references and were written with authority and understanding; they explained, amongst other features, the role of the instruments and the limitations of the natural trumpets and timpani, while discussing the use of imitation and antiphony and other textural details. These responses also displayed a confident use of appropriate musical terms. However, some candidates did not provide the required focus on the question and could have gained more marks by making clear musical references to the score. Many candidates based their answers on the Exposition and wrote very little about the Development or Recapitulation. Some candidates wrote about the structure and/or tonality and did not focus on the question; some provided only minor detail from the score without any discussion of how the orchestra was being used.

It was also noticeable that a number of candidates still do not understand the Italian terms used to describe the instruments in the score. Some wrote about the *fagotti* or *corni*. *Trombe* was often interpreted as trombones while *Corni* was wrongly translated as cornets or trumpets. Some candidates also referred to clarinets.

Question 06

This question was answered successfully by a minority of candidates, who gave a detailed account of how Mozart uses rhythm and tonality in the third movement using a wide range of appropriate technical terms and accurate references to the score. Many candidates, however, did not answer the question fully, often commenting on the tonality but with little or no reference to rhythm; some wrote in detail about the *Minuet* but referred only briefly to the *Trio* or overlooked it altogether.

Section C

Candidates offered a wide range of responses. The better answers provided the same depth of detail as the better essays on the Set Work, including accurate and relevant musical quotations/references to the score to support the points made, and displaying a clear understanding of and engagement with the music studied. Scores of the works studied for the chosen Area of Study may **not** be taken into the examination. As with Section B, candidates need to take care over question numbers, otherwise they risk failing to gain credit because their answers are not relevant to the question. It must also be stressed that candidates need to pay attention to the precise wording of the question so that they do not waste time writing about matters which are not related to it.

Choral Music in the Baroque Period

Although this Area of Study was chosen least often, a high percentage of students who answered questions 7 and 8 gained marks in the top mark band.

Question 07 – This was the most successfully answered question in Section C, and candidates who achieved the top mark band showed a real enthusiasm for the music, giving detailed and informative accounts of two arias which were well-selected to provide a variety of contrasting points. These were supported by judicious and accurate references to the score. Less successful essays lacked sufficient accurate detail, or focussed on the text rather than the music. Some candidates wrote about duets; although this was acceptable, examples of duets were unlikely to provide as much relevant detail for discussion as examples of solo arias.

Question 08 – Again, candidates in the top mark band chose a range of musical examples to illustrate their answers, and focussed clearly on texture and harmony. They demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the chosen pieces, supported by detailed musical examples. However, responses were less successful if, despite referring to a number of pieces, they did not focus on texture and harmony and did not contain much specific detail. Again, these candidates often wrote about the text rather than the musical features, and/or mentioned some musical features but without conveying a clear understanding of the meaning of the musical terms, or used vague terms such *thick* or *thin* to describe texture.

Music Theatre: a study of the Musical from 1940 to 1980

This was the most popular of the three Areas of Study, with *West Side Story*, *Oklahoma*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Les Miserables* continuing to dominate, since all contain ample musical material to enable candidates to write about solos or choruses in detail and with confidence. There were some candidates whose choice of music was not wholly appropriate to their chosen question.

Question 09 – The question asked candidates to write in detail on two contrasting *choruses*. Some candidates wrote informative and detailed accounts of two choruses. However, some engaged in too much storytelling, at the expense of sufficient musical detail for marks in the top band. In a number of cases candidates selected ensembles - which did not offer enough opportunity to write informatively about choruses (given that ensembles often contain a significant amount of solo work). A few candidates wrote about one solo and one chorus and this too is likely to have disadvantaged them.

Question 10 – This was the most popular question in Section C. A number of candidates chose appropriate material which focussed on melody and harmony. The weaker answers often lacked focus and accurate musical detail, were repetitive or were based on an injudicious choice of musical examples. Here too there was a tendency to tell the story, rather than to describe the music. A few candidates wrote answers which were more appropriate to question 9, commenting on choruses rather than solos. Some candidates also wrote about ensembles, or one solo and one chorus.

British Popular Music from 1960 to the present day

This Area of Study was again a popular choice and the most successful answers came from candidates who demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and gave clear musical examples relating to the question - rather than candidates who just wrote about their favourite groups. In many cases candidates' answers were general, lacking depth and focus.

Question 11 – Some candidates chose pieces which enabled them to comment successfully on the different uses of melody and form/structure. However, others did not focus on the question, adopting a 'write all you know' approach containing little specific musical vocabulary or detailed reference to the music.

Question 12 – Many candidates' responses to this question demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of technology and its development during this period, but comparatively few candidates related this to a detailed discussion of at least two pieces of music. Some candidates listed a variety of recording techniques with little or no reference to specific pieces of music.

Conclusion

In this second year of the examination, teachers are to be congratulated on integrating the knowledge and experience gained from last year into preparing their students for this examination. Many candidates displayed a real engagement with the subject and have developed new skills which they can take forward to meet the demands of study at A2.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

Grade Boundaries and Cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA website.