



General Certificate of Education

MUSIC 2271

MUSC4

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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MUSC4

General

The first examination for MUSC4 contained some features familiar to centres which had entered candidates for the legacy AQA Specification and some new areas. 40% of the marks came from Section A, a listening test based on unfamiliar excerpts of music; this was followed by essay questions on the chosen set work in Section B (30% of the total marks) and on the chosen Area of Study in Section C (also 30%). The CD of music excerpts lasted approximately 45 minutes after which candidates will have had about 90 minutes to complete their two essays.

The paper elicited a good 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, with several examiners commenting on how much they had enjoyed reading essays which were detailed and showed real engagement with the music studied; this was particularly true for Section C.

Some candidates found difficulty in time management, for example writing too much on the Set Work and leaving insufficient time for Section C. Teachers are advised of the need to encourage their students to write essays 'against the clock' when preparing for these sections of the examination.

Section A

The excerpts in this section were not related to the Set Works and were drawn from any period of musical history. Knowledge likely to be tested in this section may be found on page 20 of the Specification; teachers and students are advised to read this carefully in order to be familiar with what may be asked. Regular practice in listening skills would pay dividends – more marks are available in Section A than for questions on the Set Work or Area of Study. It would also be well worth identifying with candidates the different approaches necessary for each style of question contained in this section.

Question 1

Three short excerpts here: *Jig* by Boyce/Lambert, *Andante* by Reicha and *A Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square* by Manning Sherwin.

These questions were generally well-answered, with many candidates scoring 8 or more marks. If there was a problem it was in differentiating between tonic minor and relative minor.

Question 2

Variation 8 'W.N.' from the *Enigma Variations* by Elgar.

Again this was answered fairly successfully by most candidates, although several offered 'fourth' or 'fifth' for the interval between the clarinet parts. Some found questions (d) and (e) challenging – these two parts of the question almost require a dedicated listening for each (one focussing on melody and one on rhythm) to ensure success.

Question 3

Dove Sono from The Marriage of Figaro by Mozart

A large number of candidates found this question difficult – some failing to gain any marks at all. Identification of chords and cadences and melodic dictation are essential skills which need regular practice. The number of marks allocated to each question part gives a clue to the detail required: in 3(b) there were 2 marks, thus 1 for the chord and 1 for the inversion. This chord (Ic) was part of a cadential 6/4 progression which is part of the basic knowledge required at A2. Similarly in 3(f) there were 2 marks, one for chromatic and one for appoggiatura. The melodic dictation in 3(e) was a huge problem for many – there seemed to be very few answers where all four notes were correct and on many occasions not only were the notes wrong but the actual direction from one note to the next was incorrect. Puzzlingly, this sometimes happened in cases where answers in the rest of Section A were exemplary.

Question 4

Intermezzo from Concerto for Orchestra by Bartok

This question, like question 3, discriminated well. The key to success was commenting on obvious features and some candidates did themselves no favours by writing at length but with little relevance to the question. For instance in 4(a) the last note of the motif was played **three times**, in 4(b) the oboe melody was **lower** and in 4(c) **harp chords** were used – three marks already.

It was a disappointment that many candidates thought that this *modal* music was *atonal*.

Section B – Set Works

Answers were fairly equally divided between Mahler and Vaughan Williams. **Questions 5 and 7**, which asked for concentration on specific sections of the works, often led to very good answers. The best approach is to go through the movement chronologically and it is also important that equally detailed attention is given to **each section of the movement** asked for in the question. Many candidates ran out of time before the end of the movement or gave the recapitulation fairly short shrift. Some, unfortunately, misread the question, either discussing the development only, or starting from the beginning of the development and continuing to the end of the movement.

Failure to locate musical quotes exactly was common, and mention of harmonic ideas was also lacking in some scripts. The latter was indeed very prevalent in those answers which tended towards being descriptive, ie what the candidate **saw** on the page, as opposed to what he/she **heard**. It cannot be stressed more strongly that if only the **visual** aspects of the work are noted then the candidate can only achieve up to **half marks** for that answer.

It was noticeable that many candidates had copied out musical quotations from the score in response to their answers. Since candidates are allowed to take an unmarked score into the examination, this is an unnecessary and time-consuming exercise. Accurate bar numbers would have been sufficient to identify the location of musical features.

It is important to use technical language correctly in this section of the paper, and it is specifically mentioned in the mark scheme. There is no need to explain, for instance, what Sonata Form is but, on the other hand, it is insufficient to describe the opening of the Vaughan

Williams Symphony as 'Mixolydian' without explaining exactly what that means in this context and what evidence there is in the music.

As a general rule candidates should be made aware that the kind of response required in the more 'open-ended' **questions 6 and 8** should be as detailed as in the more specific questions. Whilst there were many very good answers, some candidates tended to come rather unstuck either by going briskly through the whole of the symphony, thus writing at length, or by discussing only one movement. To answer this sort of question thoroughly, short sections - two or three at the most - spread through the whole symphony should be investigated in detail.

Centres used a variety of editions for the set works, but should note that if bar numbers are absent from the score they **may be written in** to enable candidates to locate musical examples accurately.

Section C

Candidates offered a wide range of responses to the questions in this section. Many of them were a pleasure to read, showing work as detailed as that for the Set Work questions. Many candidates added musical quotations - in practice these did not always add to the understanding of the answer presented and often gave the impression that candidates were determined to write out whatever quotes they had memorised, regardless of whether they were relevant to the question.

An important point to remember is that this section requires candidates to **write in detail about the music they have studied**. Questions in this section are necessarily open-ended and, no matter how they are phrased, are a means to elicit from candidates a detailed appreciation of some of the music they have experienced whilst giving them a focus for their writing. Teachers are encouraged to make sure that their candidates understand that this is the case and that there may be different ways of approaching the question. The mark scheme shows this, referring throughout to the quality of responses in terms of candidates' **references to music**, although there must obviously be marks for how well the essay addresses the question set.

English Choral Music in the 20th Century

Belshazzar's Feast, *Dream of Gerontius* and *War Requiem* were all very popular here as were some smaller-scale works by, for instance, Jonathan Harvey, John Tavener and Herbert Howells.

Question 9 was the more popular and excellent marks could be gained by referring to the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ways in which composers chose to set words. To secure high marks it was important to refer to the text as this was the focus of the question. Some candidates wrote very generally about their favourite passages, for instance from *Belshazzar's Feast*, without this focus and so did not maximize their mark although it was obvious from the way they wrote that they knew the music well.

Question 10 attracted some excellent responses. The question was phrased in this way to enable candidates to write about more extended solo passages (like *Sanctus Fortis*) or shorter solo passages where there is interplay with the chorus (such as at the end of Part 1 of *Dream of Gerontius*). There were some splendid answers showing different ways in which composers integrated soloists into choral music, referring to *Gerontius* and *A Child of our time*.

Both questions could equally well have been attempted by using anthems (such as Harvey's *I love the Lord*, Parry's *I was glad* or Tavener's *The Lamb*) or service music such as Stanford's

Magnificat in G. Music for smaller forces is just as appropriate for this topic as the large-scale choral and orchestral repertoire.

Chamber Music from Mendelssohn to Debussy

There were some excellent answers to **Question 11**, which produced discussions of one, or at the most two, movements from the output of one of the chosen composers. The majority of candidates had studied the works in question thoroughly and, with very few exceptions, revealed a detailed knowledge of the music. It was sufficient to write informatively and authoritatively about one movement to illustrate the 'contribution' asked for in the question.

Question 12 offered the opportunity to choose two movements from the **same work** or from **different** works by the **same or different** composers. There was thus huge scope and there were many extremely good answers, for instance essays discussing the Schumann and Brahms piano quintets. Candidates wrote with enormous enthusiasm for music which they had quite obviously found rewarding to study.

Four Decades of Jazz and Blues

Musical detail is just as important here as in the other Areas of Study. Many responses to **question 13** dealt with biographical rather than musical matters. On the face of it, writing informatively about this music may not seem an easy task as, for the most part, there are few scores to study. However, discussion of the structure, the harmonic vocabulary used, the different approaches to improvisation, melodic and rhythmic characteristics and the different forces used, with reference to specific pieces, could easily have produced a very satisfactory outcome. Too much delving into the background of the musicians, relevant though it might have been to the character of the music played, resulted in less successful responses.

Question 14 intended a focus on concert or composed music – consistent with the reference in the specification to orchestral music drawing on Jazz and Blues influences. Credit was given for work on any music outside the jazz world whether or not strictly 'European' (Europe being loosely interpreted as the European 'scene'); thus Gershwin and Copland were allowed as well as Ravel and Milhaud. Some candidates unfortunately wrote exclusively about jazz, producing answers better suited to Question 13, and examiners gave credit where appropriate to produce the best outcome for the candidate.

Conclusion

Teachers and students are to be congratulated on their careful and detailed preparation and enthusiasm in tackling new works and a new listening unit so successfully.

We hope that students will be able to take forward skills learned in this unit and develop them in their future musical endeavours.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

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