



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2011**

**Music**

**MUSC1**

**(Specification 2270)**

**Unit 1: Influences on Music**

***Report on the Examination***

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## MUSC1: INFLUENCES ON MUSIC

### General

This is the third year of this AS specification and the format of the question paper is now 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. As in previous years, there were unfortunately instances of candidates misunderstanding or ignoring the precise wording of the questions and some candidates failed to allow sufficient time to complete both Sections B and C adequately. The spread of marks across all sections of the paper suggests that the examination was again successful in differentiating between candidates.

A general observation by examiners this year was that an increasing number of centres failed to fasten answer books together securely (e.g. by treasury tags), and in some cases unsecured booklets were not put inside each other. This is an important issue, since it is easy for the work of a candidate to become mixed up with others in the centre if the booklets are not secured.

### Section A

As in previous years, 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 Grieg's '*In the hall of the mountain king*' (Peer Gynt). Most candidates found this question to be straightforward and most scored well. However, for 1(c) some candidates did not recognise that the two instruments were both bassoons and a number of candidates also found it difficult to ascertain the correct interval, an octave, in 1(d). The second excerpt (questions 1(f) to (i)) was from '*Take 5*' by Desmond/Brubeck. Again, most candidates answered the questions in this excerpt successfully. However, some candidates only gained one mark in question 1(f) by writing just 'saxophone', whereas they could have gained the second mark by identifying the type of saxophone.

#### Question 2

The excerpt for this question was from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Many candidates found the melodic dictation in 2(b) challenging, with relatively few candidates being able to record all the intervals correctly, although some did achieve all four marks on this question. Many candidates successfully identified the performing technique in 2(c) as tremolo/tremolando, and it was encouraging to see that the majority attempted to use a

technical term in answering the question, rather than a general description. In question 2(d) most candidates gained one mark by stating that the opening melody was now played on horns or brass, but few achieved both marks by also recognising that it was played an octave lower.

### Question 3

For this question the excerpt was taken from Mozart's *'Horn Concerto No. 4' (3<sup>rd</sup> Movement.)* Many candidates found question 3(a) challenging and could not identify the interval heard at the beginning of the melody. 3(b) also caused problems, with candidates failing to recognise that the piece was in compound time. Most candidates answered questions 3(f) and 3(g) correctly, but there was a mixed response to questions 3(d) and 3(e), suggesting that many had difficulty in connecting the technical terms with the music.

### Question 4

This excerpt was taken from the third movement of Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 4* and the score was provided. Candidates found this to be the most difficult of the four questions in Section A. Some candidates scored zero, or only one or two marks. This may have been caused by difficulties in reading the music and a lack of knowledge of music theory, but there were many instances where candidates did not read the questions carefully and failed to give a precise location or sufficient information when directed by the question. For example, questions 4(b) and 4(f) asked for both a bar and a beat number. Candidates often neglected to provide the latter.

Many candidates failed to recognise the ornament in 4(a) and could not locate the appoggiatura in the first violin part in question 4(b). The cadence in 4(c) was correctly identified by many candidates. There was a mixture of responses to 4 (d). Answering this question correctly depended on understanding the key at the relevant point in the score. Some candidates also only gave one bar number, although the question asked for 'bar numbers', while others gave bar numbers which extended beyond the correct range; responses of both types displayed a lack of understanding. Question 4(e) was allocated 2 marks for fully describing the chord, but some candidates gave a partial description only, without identifying the chord's position/inversion. Others failed to score any marks on this question. Questions 4(g) and 4(h) were answered more successfully.

## Section B

The set work, Mozart's *Symphony No. 41 in C, K551, Jupiter*, 1st and 3rd movements, has continued to challenge and engage candidates in its final year as the work for study. It was encouraging to see that fewer candidates wasted time this year by copying out musical examples from the score. Question 5 was by far the more popular of the two questions.

### Question 5

In responses to this question, strengths were the detailed discussion provided by some candidates with clear references to the score. The most successful essays gave consideration to the whole of the exposition while weaker responses dealt with some sections in more detail than others. However, even the higher scoring responses sometimes failed to discuss the more intricate harmonic language used by Mozart, such as a valid explanation of the use of the circle of fifths and a clear location of it. Some responses dealt only with the first subject while others ventured into the development as well.

Time management seemed to be an issue here, so that later landmarks in the exposition, such as the 'buffa' theme and codetta, were not discussed in as much depth, or were left out entirely. Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the motifs used by Mozart, although sometimes discussion was restricted to the first subject only, or there was scant reference to the bridge passage and second subject. Many candidates seemed unsure of the term 'antecedent- consequent', with some suggesting this related to bars 1 to 4. There were also some examples of confusion with octaves and unison, and in recognising instruments. For example *Tromba* was mistaken for trombones and *cornò* for cornets, with some of the instruments being referred to by their Italian names e.g. *fagotto*, perhaps suggesting that the candidates did not know what the instrument was.

### Question 6

There were some successful responses although, again, some essays went beyond the scope of the question by commenting on the Trio, despite the question clearly referring to the Minuet only. The best essays discussed the whole of the Minuet in detail, using appropriate technical terms and clear locations. Less successful responses were often unbalanced, focusing on only part of the Minuet (often the first 17 bars) in some depth while omitting or skimming over the rest of the Minuet. While candidates were often able to comment on melody, structure and texture in some detail, few candidates discussed Mozart's use of rhythm and rhythmic features, or harmony, which are central features of the Minuet.

## Section C

Candidates again offered a wide range of responses; the better answers provided a similar depth of detail to their counterparts 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. An overall observation by examiners is that most candidates have not studied the music in sufficient depth and detail to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding in this section. In particular, references to musical examples are too often general and locations are unclear. When writing about music which is set to a text candidates could quote the words where a particular musical feature occurs. However, some candidates answered questions without any reference to the text except for a general title or number. On the other hand, some responses were so involved with the context that little musical detail was given. Candidates need to be encouraged to find the right balance so that they can gain credit for their musical knowledge and understanding.

### Choral Music in the Baroque Period

This Area of Study was chosen by about a quarter of all candidates. Many demonstrated a considerable depth of knowledge and engagement with the music they had studied.

### Question 7

Most candidates gave good definitions of the two main types of recitative and many demonstrated detailed and specific knowledge of a number of musical examples. However, some responses failed to refer to the text and where only two short examples were chosen there was little scope for much detailed discussion. The best answers demonstrated knowledge of a wide range of examples; here candidates were able to refer to harmonic, rhythmic, textural, melodic and instrumental features, discussing their use by relating them to specific examples.

### **Question 8**

As in Question 7, candidates who achieved high marks in this question were able to discuss the musical features by relating them to interesting and varied musical examples, while commenting on all of the elements outlined in the question. This gave candidates the opportunity to relate the music to the text and/or occasion. While many gave specific examples, some wrote about the music in more general terms, and it was not uncommon to read essays which did not address all the musical elements mentioned in the question, particularly harmony and tonality. Some did not discuss how the mood or effect was created, concentrating on context without sufficient musical detail to support it.

### **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*, *Oliver*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Les Miserables* continuing to dominate.

### **Question 9**

The question asked candidates to write in detail on two contrasting passages from different musicals. Generally, there were some very good responses, which gave detailed accounts of how a wide range of musical elements had been used to enhance the drama, with specific musical examples. Less successful essays were often very general with little musical detail. Some candidates did not choose wisely, selecting passages which were not contrasting and therefore limiting their response. In this situation only the passage discussed in most detail was credited with any marks. Occasionally the passages chosen were from the same musical, which was contrary to the terms of the question.

### **Question 10**

This question was less popular than question 9, although many candidates did give some good examples of ensembles which focused on the music. However, in some essays there was often too much context and not enough musical detail. Even the more successful responses often avoided detailed discussion of melody, harmony and rhythm, and the way in which the different vocal ranges contributed to the effectiveness of the ensemble.

### **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**

This was the more frequently chosen of the two questions on this Area of Study. However, responses to this question varied considerably. A few candidates wrote little about the actual music, while others wrote in detail and showed a real engagement with the group or artist. In some cases candidates had obviously tried to write about their favourite artist/group, and it was debatable to what extent the chosen subject had made a significant contribution to music of this period. In some cases the artist/band had little or no connection with or influence on British Popular Music since 1960. As with any essay in this examination, it is important to focus on musical detail. In many cases responses were limited in their discussion and musical examples. This was evident even in the case of the most popular

choice – the Beatles - where discussion was often restricted to a few musical examples and did not demonstrate an understanding of their musical style.

### **Question 12**

This question gave scope for a detailed response with examples of songs which used instruments and technology in interesting ways. In a significant number of scripts candidates disregarded the terms of the question and tried to credit a song as belonging to either the 70s or the 90s when it came from neither of these decades, or wrote about artists/groups who were not within the Area of Study. No credit could be given in these cases. There were some successful discussions of songs by Pink Floyd but often Oasis featured as the 90's group with little emphasis on their use of technology. The most successful answers chose songs which provided an opportunity to discuss a wide range of instrumental and technological effects and devices and to support the discussion with detailed examples.

### **Conclusion**

In this third year of the examination, teachers are to be congratulated on integrating the knowledge and experience gained from previous years into preparing their students for this examination. Many candidates displayed a real engagement with the subject, and have continued to demonstrate a greater understanding of the set work and Areas of Study, developing skills which they can take forward to meet the demands of study at A2. It is important that, in preparation for the examination, students are advised to read questions carefully, and to provide in their answers appropriate musical information together with detailed references to the score in Section B and relevant and detailed musical examples in Section C.

### **Mark Range and Award of Grades**

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

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