

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCE Music 6MU06 01

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Introduction

The first section of this paper tests musical skills of aural perception based on unfamiliar pieces of music. In the second section, candidates are required to show knowledge of set works from the New Anthology of Music through stylistic analysis and require the ability to compare and contrast two musical features across three of the set pieces.

In terms of assessment, the two listening questions (questions 1 and 2) have 10 and 18 marks respectively. For question 3 - Music in Context, candidates are required to answer two out of three questions worth 13 marks each. The exam concludes with question 4 - Continuity and Change in Instrumental Music, where candidates answer one of two questions based on two musical elements across three set pieces.

Responses to Question 1 (Comparison) seemed comparable or slightly improved upon previous years with many good answers on instrument recognition, playing techniques and writing about rhythmic and melodic features of the two pieces.

Question 2 (Aural Awareness) is a challenging section of the paper and candidates need to keep persevering with practise of aural dictation, identification of chords, keys and cadences in preparation for the exam.

In the case of Question 3, the most popular option proved to be question (b) on Gabrieli followed by (c) Purcell and then (c) Stravinsky. There were many good responses across the three essays although it must be stressed that candidates need to read the question carefully in order for their response to be focussed and relevant.

For question 4 (a) comparing and contrasting rhythm and texture in pieces by Beethoven, Louis Armstrong, Cage was an overwhelmingly popular choice, with fewer candidates opting for (b) which involved comparing and contrasting harmony and tonality in pieces by Corelli, Haydn and Tippett.

On the whole, candidate performance on Unit 6: Further Musical Understanding has shown improvement across the paper from last year and particularly in the area of writing about the set pieces, where the best pieces of work showed considerable knowledge across all three pieces, strong analytical skills with secure use of technical vocabulary, fluent writing skills and a well structured essay.

Candidates should be reminded not to write in pages of the paper not specifically allocated for a particular response, e.g. using the blank pages for Q 3 (c) to continue an answer for 3 (b), or continued their answers in Question 1 outside the answer lines provided (particularly question 1c). The lined paper provided underneath the essay title for questions 3 and 4 should be used wisely for the essay rather than for overly spacious planning, which whilst being a sensible process, could equally occur on other areas of blank paper in the answer booklet.

Question 1 (a)

The question involved identification of the two instruments playing at the start of Excerpt A. A pleasing number of candidates correctly named flute and clarinet, achieving full marks for this question, and showing strong skills of instrument recognition. Occasionally oboe was given as an incorrect woodwind alternative or instruments used later in the excerpt were named.

Question 1 (b)

This question was often correctly answered with candidates opting for any two of the three main violin performance techniques (pizzicato, glissando/portamento or multiple stopping) used in excerpt B for this two-mark response. The most common incorrect answers referred to articulation such as 'staccato' or 'legato' instead of performance techniques.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates found comparing and contrasting rhythm and melody in both excerpts more challenging. Many wrote descriptively but lacking in technical vocabulary about the instruments, or wrote about playing techniques or textures. Responses often demonstrated lack of succinct writing skills and wrote about areas other than rhythm and melody. Candidates found it hard to write about the melody of Excerpt A with the precision that was required in the mark scheme, however more often gained marks for describing the rhythm of Excerpt B.

Question 1 (d)

Candidates sometimes selected the correct time-span of 1905-1930 but there was some confusion with many thinking that it had been written at a later date. Option C, 1945-1970, was a common incorrect response.

Question 1 (e)

Some linked the excerpts to Ravel, but all the other alternatives were frequently offered, and Tippett was a popular answer. This was despite candidates having studied set works by Tippett and Cage this year. It is important that students undertake wider listening as part of their A2 course in order to familiarise themselves with the style of the set composers studied and indeed the music of other composers writing at a similar time.

More use of rubato in A than B. B then begins with a strict crotchet beat. The melody of B is much more chromatic than A, which is mainly diatonic. Long, sustained notes can be found in A with fast runs by the harp. More accented notes can be found in B in the pizzicato. The melody of A is more conjunct than B. Use of glissandi and pizzicato can be found in B but not A.



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Examiner Comments

This response made five valid points and therefore gained full marks:

Excerpt A: rubato, long sustained notes, fast runs in the harp.

Excerpt B: more chromatic than A, accented notes.

Melody of B uses syncopations. Melody of A ~~was~~ has a lower and higher range. Flute melody in A moves stepwise/conjunct with occasional leaps. Piano melody in B uses dotted rhythm in the beginning.



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Examiner Comments

This response obtained two marks for rhythm descriptions in Excerpt B. They identified syncopation and dotted rhythms.



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Examiner Tip

Try to cover both both excerpts and both musical elements equally. Notice that there had been no mention of the rhythmic features of Excerpt A or melodic features of Excerpt B.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates found this aural dictation question challenging. Generally rhythm was attempted with more successful results than pitch.

Challenges of rhythm included the tied note followed by 3 semiquavers in bar 3. In terms of pitch, chromaticism in bars 2-3 and the leap of a perfect 4th in bar 3 were frequently incorrect and as a result pitches were then at the wrong intervallic distance.

This is an example of a full marks answer.

2 Aural Awareness

You will hear an excerpt of music **five** times. The playings will be separated by pauses and the length of each pause will be announced.

In order to answer the questions you should also refer to the separate skeleton score.

- (a) Write out the melody line of bars 8 to 10 (beat 1). You may work in rough on the skeleton score, but you **must** copy your answer onto the staff below.

(8)



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Examiner Comments

This is an excellent answer which gained full marks 8/8 where the candidate has achieved 10 correct pitches and 10 correct rhythms. The exercise was notated with clarity.

2 Aural Awareness



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In order to answer the questions you should also refer to the separate skeleton score.

- (a) Write out the melody line of bars 8 to 10 (beat 1). You may work in rough on the skeleton score, but you **must** copy your answer onto the stave below.

(8)



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This candidate achieved 5 correct pitches and 8 correct rhythms, giving a total of 13/20 and giving a mark of 5/8 on the marking system.

As with many candidates this year, rhythm was better attempted with just the tied area in the middle causing problems. Generally the correct melodic shape was demonstrated but they missed the chromaticism in bar two and the upward leap of a perfect 4th in bar 3.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Practise working with intervals to help judge melodic distances and leaps.

Question 2 (b)

Most candidates correctly identified the dissonance. The cadences of imperfect and perfect were sometimes correctly identified. Key descriptions of Eb major and C major were not so reliable though.

Question 2 (c)

Chord description continues to be problematic. Well over half of all candidates achieved no marks for this question, few achieved one mark and just a small minority gained two marks. A few candidates recognised Chord A as being chord V, although several wrote V⁷, which gained no marks (it is important not to assume that a dominant chord will always have an added 7th). Even fewer candidates were able to identify Chord B as being an Augmented 6th.

Question 2 (d)

Some candidates corrected identified Beethoven as the composer but all the other alternatives were frequently offered and Handel was a common incorrect alternative.

Question 2 (e)

A good number selected 1805, but there was confusion experienced here with other options being chosen and many incorrectly opted for 1775.

Question 2 (f)

The vast majority of candidates successfully identified opera as the correct genre.

Question 3 (a)

The Stravinsky proved to be the least popular of the three choices but there were many good, detailed responses to this question. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and wrote about all three movements of the contained in the anthology rather than just the Sinfonia, despite the movement name being in bold type in the question. Others focussed more on a comparison of the original Gallo trio sonata with the Stravinsky movement in question. Many candidates showed that they understood the Baroque and twentieth century features which made this piece Neoclassical and the best answers structured their response coherently in this manner. Candidates most frequently referred to standard both conventional Baroque devices and twentieth century treatment of instruments, performance indications, harmony and rhythm. There were times when candidates could have delved into more detail in order to achieve a greater number of illustrated points. For example, this could have included not only naming the typical Baroque structure, but giving the bar numbers of sections or not only recognising modulations to related keys, but going that little bit further to name the keys with a bar number.

- 3 (a) Explain how the **Sinfonia** in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite* is a fusion of eighteenth- and twentieth-century musical styles.

(13)

Stravinsky largely kept the melody the same from the original 18th C piece, but introduced ornamentation such as trills (b. 7-9, ^{by Pergolesi} ~~once~~ 1st Bassoon 1) and gruppetti (b. 5, violin 1). Typical features of both 18th C and 20th C are the ascending sequence (bar 21-23) and also a descending sequence in bar 7. Also the diatonic melodies are typical of both styles.

Rhythmically, there is evidence of syncopation in violin 2 (b. 17-18) and also changes of time signature to $\frac{2}{4}$ (b. 11) and $\frac{3}{4}$ (b. 12), features of both 18th and 20th C styles.

Harmonically speaking Stravinsky uses typical devices such as suspensions (b7-9, solo quintet) and a circle of 5ths (b.37-40) but he also 'spices' up the harmony with added 9ths (bar.3), a Gmaj⁷ chord (bar 7) and ~~we~~ weakens the bassline at the end (b.43-removal of Double Bass)

The Tonality is functional in G major with modulations to related keys: D major (b.19), B minor (b.26), E minor (b.29) and A minor (b.31). Such modulations are typical of both 18th and 20th C styles. ~~The~~ The structure is that of a classic 18th C Rounded Binary.



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Examiner Comments

This response achieved full marks of 13/13, made up with 11 illustrated and 2 basic marks.

Illustrated points:

- Original Pergolesi
- Ornamentation
- Sequence
- Syncopation
- Changes of time signature
- Suspensions
- Circle of 5ths
- Added 9th's
- D major and B minor (max. 2 keys)
- Weakened bass line
- Basic points:
- 18th century structure
- Binary form

This candidate has written in a succinct manner organising each paragraph by musical element (melody, rhythm, texture, harmony, tonality, structure). Almost all technical points are backed up with a correct bar number location from the piece.



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Examiner Tip

Use the musical elements of Melody, Rhythm, Texture, Harmony, Tonality, Structure to guide and organise your work.

Question 3 (b)

The Gabrieli was the most popular of the question 3 options and candidates often demonstrated good understanding of both the compositional features and the contextual characteristics of the performance venue and the instruments used. Candidates frequently showed knowledge of the variety of different textures and the harmonic devices typical of the time. There was, however, sometimes confusion as to where antiphonal exchanges occurred and the difference between antiphony and imitation. Candidates often knew that the writing was unidiomatic but did not go that stage further to explain why in order to secure an illustrated mark. Likewise, they often knew that the structure was through-composed but very few mentioned the bar numbers of the sections within this structure. Candidates need to understand the importance of using the blank anthology to substantiate their music points.

Gabrieli's ^{Jonata} ~~plano~~ ^{piano} ~~pim'e~~ ^{forte} contains many features which were typical of its time. The piece is historically very important, as it was one of the first pieces to ever specify dynamics. At the start of the piece, the note lengths are long and sustained, but towards the end has a much more lively feel and shorter note lengths. The piece is split between two four-part groups, which means that there are many parts where the ~~the~~ players are playing in antiphony. For example, coro 1 ~~has~~ plays a melodic idea in bar 31 and coro 2 ~~imitates~~ ^{plays} it a fourth lower, from bar 34. The rhythms that are used are relatively simple, and movement is not conjunct as there are many leaps. There is ~~constant~~ homophony, for example in bar 40, but the texture is mainly contrapuntal. The piece has two key centres based on modes - the piano section is the Dorian mode in G, and from bar 25 it changes to the Mixolydian mode in C. The piece ends on a tierce de picardie, and there are many cadences - including perfect, plagal and phrygian. The harmony is functional. The phrasing is periodic. The piece stays in duple time nearly throughout the whole piece, though there are occasional $\frac{3}{2}$ bars, for example bar 44. The range that all the parts use is quite limited, and there are frequent scalar patterns, for example bars 55 and 42. The rhythm gets slightly more complex towards the end, featuring many more semiquavers and dotted rhythms.



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Examiner Comments

This essay achieved 10/13 marks made up through a combination of 6 illustrated points and 6 basic.

It matched the top of the "Confident" mark descriptor in the mark scheme.

This candidate clearly has an understanding of the piece and makes a fair number of points but does not always offer further explanation or evidence from the anthology.

Illustrated points:

- Note lengths are long and sustained and shorter towards the end
- Antiphony
- Homophony
- Dorian mode in G
- Bar 25 mixolydian mode
- Tierce de picardie
- Basic points
- First to specify dynamics
- Two groups
- Contrapuntal
- Perfect and Plagal cadences (max.2)
- Scalic patterns, acceptable for conjunct



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Examiner Tip

Put the blank anthology to good use and back up musical points with well chosen and correctly located examples from the piece.

Question 3 (c)

The question on the Purcell's recitative and aria was the second most popular option but candidates seemed to encounter some issues with not relating their knowledge to the question being asked. They appeared to write about its expressive features, focussing upon Dido's state of mind (a previous question from June 2010), rather than adapting their knowledge to the set question relating to Baroque features. Candidates were often able to write fluently about the treatment of the melody and harmony. A surprising number however did not mention the ground bass which is synonymous with this work, or go further for illustrated points to describe musical characteristics of this device. Where tonality is mentioned as a feature, candidates should identify the key in order to illustrate their point.

It was typical of the time for the music to reflect the mood of the piece and the word setting to enforce this. The fact that the piece is minor throughout (Cm for 'Belinda' and Cm for 'laid in Earth') shows this. Words such as 'darkness' (bar 2 'Belinda') and 'laid' (bar 8 'laid in Earth') are emphasised through the use of melismas to portray Dido's grief. Purcell has written the voice part to be conjunct and so has written idiomatically, a technique now much more common than it was in renaissance music. His use of a ground bass that repeats 11 times is typical of the period with the repeats showing the monotony and sadness of the piece. The use of melody dominated homophony was very typical for vocal works of the time with string accompaniments and so Purcell has made 'Dido' the melody here. The use of chromaticism was also typical for the time, seen in bar 2 in 'Belinda' the A^b and bar 6 E^{\sharp} . Homophony was still common in the period and bar 50 and 55-56 exemplify this. The bombadic rhythm was beginning also seen in that period and Purcell uses one at the end of 'Belinda' and the word 'come' in bar 8⁴.



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Examiner Comments

This essay achieved 6/13 marks made up through a combination of 4 illustrated points and 1 basic.

Illustrated points

- G minor throughout for the aria,
- Melismas
- Chromaticism
- Lombardic rhythm
- Basic point
- Ground Bass



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Examiner Tip

Read the question carefully.

Make sure that you can back your points up with further information and good examples from the anthology.

Question 4 (a)

It was encouraging to see many examples of well written essay showing considerable knowledge of the set pieces and the best examples backed up their musical points with well chosen illustrations. There are still many candidates who give a string of basic points, without offering much in the way of substantiating illustration. It is possible to earn a reasonably good mark using the latter approach, although it should be remembered that the highest mark bands will not become accessible. It is for this reason that candidates are provided with a blank copy of the anthology in the exam and they should ensure that they provide evidence for each musical point made with an accurate example using precise bar numbers from the anthology.

Candidates should be reminded that whilst it is important to produce a well structured and coherently organised essay, a lengthy introduction and conclusion is not necessary and will not achieve additional marks. In this section of the exam, credit is only available for analytical features and not for historical or contextual information. Examiners commented upon it being common for the entire first page to be spent on a lengthy introduction about the background of the composer and the piece for which candidates gained no marks at all.

Candidates should ensure that they choose a question where they have a good knowledge of all three set works. It was common to see notable imbalance of knowledge across the three set works or in the most extreme cases the omission of one musical element or entire set work.

In this question, candidates were required to compare and contrast the use of rhythm (including metre) and texture of the set works by Beethoven, Louis Armstrong and Cage. This question was an overwhelmingly popular option and there were many extremely well written, coherently structured and thorough accounts of these set works.

It was pleasing to see candidates showing a good understanding of the wide variety of textures used across these pieces. However they often found it more challenging to write specifically about the use of rhythm, with metre being a problematic area. It is important when writing about metre that candidates should give a full musical description. For example writing that the Armstrong was in 4/4 would gain no marks, whereas writing that it is in quadruple time would gain a mark. Whilst a small number of candidates had shown an understanding of the micro-macrocosmic scheme of the Cage, many candidates avoided writing about this and indeed found it difficult to give explanation to the Cage. With the Cage, candidates sometimes did not make it clear as to which sonata their bar number reference referred to.

Question 4 (b)

In this question, candidates were required to compare and contrast harmony and tonality in the set works by Corelli, Haydn and Tippett. This question was a significantly less popular choice than the previous question. However it was often answered well with these two musical elements going hand in hand. Candidates are required to be precise at this level and should be reminded that pedal notes must be described as being either tonic or dominant, keys should be illustrated with a bar number and suspensions must be given appropriate figuring. Candidates often showed a secure understanding of the Corelli and generally in relation to the Haydn. However the Tippett was sometimes completely ignored or written about in a sparse manner or with some confusion. Whilst some candidates had clearly learnt the tonal centres, their understanding of the music was less convincing.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- In Q1 comparison questions, be sure to indicate the excerpt of music you are writing about.
- In Q1, write only on the lines provided, the amount of space provided gives some idea of the quantity of information required.
- Questions 1 and 2 draw on music which has some connection with the works you have studied for the Music in Context and Continuity and Change Areas of Study, i.e. genre, structure and/or historical period.
- In the aural dictation exercise, take care to work out intervals correctly, listening carefully for close semitone movement or for where leaps occur.
- In Q3, you can answer in bullet points, and should avoid an extensive introduction.
- In Q4, it may be helpful to set out your lines of enquiry briefly, but again extensive introductions will probably not gain many marks.
- Choose accurate and well selected examples from the anthology to back up your technical point.
- When writing about metre in question 4 always give a full description referring to the number of beats in the bar. 4/4 should be written as quadruple time.
- Keep to the point and avoid repetition.
- Keep listening to your set works, but also make sure you explore the works of other pieces by the same composer and works of composers in the same genre.

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