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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In Music (9MU0/03)  
Examination Paper Component 3 –  
Appraising

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## **Introduction**

In this paper candidates are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements, language and context, in relation to music they have studied through the set works, and also to unfamiliar music. They are required to demonstrate and apply musical knowledge - Assessment Object 3 (AO3) and use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgments - Assessment Objective 4 (AO4).

Section A of the paper comprised Questions 1-4 and was worth 50 marks. Questions 1-3 were based on excerpts from set works from three areas of study, with an audio track and skeleton score. Question 4 consisted of an aural dictation exercise of pitch and rhythm. Section B, worth 50 marks in total, comprised an essay question based on a piece of unfamiliar music, worth 20 marks and an essay focusing on a set work, worth 30 marks.

In the listening questions, candidates were tested on aural skills applied to the excerpts. This could include identification of instruments, intervals, chords, keys, cadences and musical devices. Candidates were also required to write more fully and describe particular elements, for example the melody or texture of a specific passage or the entire excerpt.

Question 5 tested the ability of the candidate to write about an unfamiliar piece of music that was related to one of the areas of study. An audio track was provided but no skeleton or illustrative score.

Question 6 required candidates to write an essay from a choice of three options, each from a different area of study, based on a set work. Candidates were presented with three musical elements on which to focus. No audio was given but an illustrative excerpt of several pages of the score was provided in the resource booklet.

For both questions 5 and 6, candidates needed to produce a well-structured essay with fluent use of musical vocabulary in relation to specific musical elements and with explanation of the effect created. Essays should have made links with the context and referred to a variety of examples of other relevant pieces of music, which had been embedded throughout the essay, in order to justify their points.

Time management is important with this paper, which is entirely in the hands of the candidate for the duration of the examination. Quite frequently, it was clear that Section A had been approached thoroughly, but Section B had insufficient time, with short or insubstantial essays. It is essential that candidates approach

the exam with a clear time plan of how long to spend on each question and adhere strictly to this structure. It is advisable to practise writing timed essays as part of their examination preparation.

### **Danny Elfman, Batman Returns: Birth of a Penguin Part I**

1a) This question required candidates to describe musical features which create suspense in the opening bars. It is important that candidates use evaluative skills to make a judgment as to which musical features from the various elements creates this effect rather than writing down everything that they hear. Candidates responded well to this question and common correct answers were low pitch, slow tempo, piano/quiet dynamic, pedal note, crescendo, ascending melody.

1b) Many found this skill of interval recognition challenging. Candidates should be reminded that they should describe the musical quality of the interval (for example major, minor, perfect) as well as its numerical value.

1ci and ii) Candidates found the oboe more difficult to identify, with other woodwind instruments being named instead. The celeste was a frequent correct answer due to its unusual and distinctive sonority.

1di) Some correctly identified the texture of bars 22-25 as monophonic or octaves. Homophonic was a common incorrect answer as the music was not chordal.

1dii) In this question candidates were asked to describe the texture of the bars which followed in bars 26-31. Some identified the homophonic/chordal texture but others mistook the more intricate layers of texture as incorrectly being polyphonic. Some did not hear the more detailed textures such as ostinato or the arpeggios.

1e) This question required candidates to describe the tonality of the entire excerpt. Popular answers included unrelated and sudden modulations with some able to identify one or more keys used throughout. It is important that candidates observe the number of marks available for the question, in this case three, and make that number of musical observations.

## **Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique: Movement I**

2ai) Candidates were mostly able to identify the structure as sonata form.

2aii) Some identified the exposition, but other sections were incorrectly named. It is important to listen regularly to the set works and be able to identify the start of important sections within the overall structure.

2b) Most identified the flute as being the instrument which doubled the 1<sup>st</sup> violins throughout the excerpt, occasionally some mistook the sound for other woodwind instruments.

2c) There were some good responses to this question describing the melody. Many candidates identified features such as diatonic, idee fixe, triadic and syncopated. Candidates should be encouraged to give specific answers rather than making general comments, for example they could only gain credit for writing ascending at the start as the overall shape of the phrase descended half way through.

2d) Candidates found this comparison question more challenging. Many heard that the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase was lower and that there were more leaps and a higher pitch. It is important to remember to listen out for similarities also, such as the rhythm and syncopation and some bars and similar melodic shape.

2e) Candidates found these two intervals really challenging and often the numeric distance between the notes was incorrect and many not hearing that one was major and the other minor.

2f) This question required candidates to describe the texture of the excerpt. This was answered well with many identifying monophonic or unison, melody and accompaniment and writing about the string chords which accompany.

2g) It is important that candidates learn the date of composition to achieve an understanding of the context of the piece.

## **Anoushka Shankar, Breathing under Water: Burn**

3ai) Most candidates correctly identified the solo instrument playing at the start as the sitar.

3aii) Candidates were required to describe the melody in bars 1-2 of the excerpt and there were many good responses. Musical features which were frequently identified were improvised, conjunct, ornaments, syncopated. Due to the shape of the phrase not being entirely ascending or descending, candidates needed to state ascending at the start for a mark and later descending for a mark (or similar wording).

3b) In this question candidates needed to describe the melody in bars 9 to 12 of the excerpt. It was important to notice that there were four marks on offer so sufficient points needed to be made. Candidates often wrote about the following features: descending, conjunct, ornamented, repeated notes, syncopated.

3c) Most candidates identified this section as the chorus or refrain.

3d) The two correct answers in this multiple choice question were lack of cadences and static harmony. Candidates should approach this style of question by considering possible correct options and eliminating those that are incorrect.

3e) Fewer candidates identified the instrument as the sarangi than the sitar in question 3ai.

3f) Candidates were required to describe the popular music features which made this song an example of fusion music. Common correct answers were the verse chorus structure, the use of technology, identifying an electronic instrument. Some however did not read the question carefully and wrote about the Indian features instead.

#### **Question 4**

It was really pleasing to see good success with the aural dictation question with a range of marks achieved up to and including full marks.

In general, candidates notated the rhythm with a good level of accuracy with crotchet followed by two quavers being a common rhythmic feature in this excerpt however the dotted rhythm and triplets providing greater challenge. It is important to always check that the number of beats in each bar are in agreement with the time signature.

Pitches provided a greater challenge although many candidates successfully linked the conjunct movement to the given material at the start and end. There were a few leaps which caused problems and the semitone movement in the middle.

#### **Question 5**

This question required candidates to use their aural skills to identify musical features from an unfamiliar work. Candidates had to draw upon their knowledge and understanding of a particular genre related to an area of study, in this case vocal music, and link their observations to the question. They were required to explain the effect of the musical features and justify their points with examples from other relevant works from their own wider listening.

The best examples were presented in a clearly structured and coherent manner, often organising their features into paragraphs that focused on each musical element. Candidates were able to write fluently about the piece, with a strong grasp of technical vocabulary and covering a full range of elements. They connected their musical features to the question. The essays often demonstrated a wide and interesting variety of set works and demonstrated genuine understanding of the related piece. Wider listening typically included the set works of Bach's *Ein feste Burg*, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* but also various movements from Handel's *Messiah*, choral works by Haydn and Bach and Romantic repertoire across different genres.

Essays in the lower bands usually had a limited number of musical observations across the elements, lacked explanation of musical observations, did not link features to the question, or pieces of wider listening were not used to support points made. In these essays very few links to wider listening were made and the essays were often short.

The question gave lots of options for candidates to relate their musical features to: the translation of the text as “Lord have mercy”, the large-scale piece, the early Romantic period and the composer’s quote. The mark scheme requires elements to be linked to the question, and clearly linked to the question for level 5 work.

Candidates most often wrote about the SATB choir, the soloists, the different types of texture, the contrasts of dynamics with more detailed essays exploring aspects of melody, harmony, rhythm and tonality.

It is essential that candidates allow sufficient time to listen to the audio track several times, make notes, plan and then write their essay. It was pleasing to see some candidates use the first page of the answer space for planning purposes. Candidates should consider each of the elements in turn: Tempo, metre and rhythm, Melody, Harmony, Tonality, Structure, Texture, Sonority, Dynamics.

## **Question 6**

This question required candidates to show knowledge of three elements from one of the set works and they were given a choice of three set works from different areas of study.

Most importantly, candidates needed to use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about the music. This was achieved by giving musical explanations of the effect of their observation, making links with the context in which the piece was created and making connections with other relevant pieces of music. Candidates should try to embed wider listening links fluently throughout the essay and give a short explanation as to how the composer has used that feature in the linked piece.

The best examples of essays were clearly structured and coherent, organising musical features into paragraphs that focused on each musical element. Candidates were able to describe the piece with a strong grasp of technical vocabulary across the three elements and were able to explain the musical effect of each feature. Musical features were then linked to an example of wider listening which they showed knowledge of in order to justify their point. Simply naming a piece of wider listening provides an illustration, whereas explaining the effect of the linked piece creates a justification.

Where essays were placed in the lower mark bands, this was usually because musical observations were limited, and the effect was not explained. In some essays there were no, or very few and inconsistent, links to wider listening. It is



important that candidates name both the composer and piece, rather than making a loose reference to a composer alone, and show a sense of understanding the comparison.

Please note that candidates do not gain credit for referring to bar numbers. Some candidates over-relied in the illustrative pages of the score in the resource booklet. This resulted in only writing about the first section of the piece and the latter being entirely neglected. The illustrative pages are provided simply as a helpful reminder and candidates should know knowledge beyond that, to the end of the piece.

The indicative content section of the mark scheme is quite extensive, but not exhaustive, and candidates are not expected to include all features in the mark scheme. Greater emphasis is placed on explaining the effect of their musical observations so their piece of writing becomes an evaluative discussion, with wider listening fluently embedded throughout the essay to justify the points they have made.

Candidates should show some knowledge of the musical context of the piece perhaps as an introduction and/or making references throughout the essay in conjunction with their musical observations. It is important that they do not spend time writing extensive introductions with a page or more of biographical and non-musical information.

### **Question 6a**

The Mozart was a popular choice and candidates seemed to enjoy writing about the Quintet, showing knowledge of the context, background information and storyline. They often showed good understanding of different features of Classical harmony, with the textural variety also being successfully described. Tonality however was frequently less secure with many not getting beyond the tonic and dominant keys. Wider listening was often taken from the vocal music set works but others showed good knowledge of different Mozart operas and Classical repertoire of different genres.

### **Question 6b**

The Courtney Pine was also a popular choice and candidates wrote with interest about the context the different styles and influences on this song. Candidates wrote about sonority in most detail with a wide variety of different techniques and timbres used, some melodic features were identified and a basic understanding of structure was shown. Wider listening was diverse from a multitude of different popular and jazz genres.

### **Question 6c**

The Stravinsky was a slightly less popular choice and candidates wrote with knowledge and enthusiasm about the context and background to the ballet. Sonority was often quite well covered but melody and rhythm were less fully described. Candidates were sometimes distracted by writing about other musical elements, not required in the question. Wider listening often used other ballets by Stravinsky and repertoire by a range of other 20<sup>th</sup> century composers.

### **Paper Summary**

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

- Manage your time effectively for the exam. Create a time schedule and keep closely to it, leaving enough time for questions 5 and 6. Do not spend too much time on the listening questions at the expense of the two essays; the essays are worth 50% of the exam. Practise writing essays under timed conditions and ensure that handwriting is legible.
- Listen to the set works as often as possible in order to become familiar with them.
- Learn the key features of each set work, including common musical devices and main keys used.
- Know the context of each set work, including the date of composition, and be able to describe stylistic features in relation to the period in which it was written, or to the genre to which it belongs.
- Practise aural skills on a regular basis. This should include pitch and rhythm dictation, identifying instruments, intervals, chords, keys and cadences.
- Listen widely to related repertoire for each area of study and set work. Perhaps create a listening list/log/diary, which could include pieces from

all areas of the course, such as pieces for your performance or music that has inspired your composition.

- In the essays give specific examples of wider listening by naming a piece and the movement, rather than just a composer. Try to justify the connection by writing a small amount of information to describe the example.
- In questions 5 and 6 do not just list the musical features but give an explanation of the effect of each feature. Then, link your feature to an example of wider listening with an explanation as to how that feature is used in the linked piece.
- When learning about the set works, identify the most important musical features for each element. The illustrative pages of the score are included a useful reminder of the piece, but only represent a proportion of the piece/movement and you should show knowledge of the entire piece/movement specified in the question beyond the illustrative pages. You are not required to refer to bar numbers.
- Develop your essay writing skills to produce a well-structured piece of writing with wider listening examples embedded fluently throughout.

