

Report on the Units

June 2008

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

It is always sad to note that the media take such a depressingly negative view of the achievements of pupils when analysing the annual release of public examination statistics. Any rational examination of the quality of material produced by the best-performing candidates in each unit of this session's Music examination would quickly dispel any notion that standards had fallen or that the examination itself has progressively 'dumbed down' over the last eight years.

Examiners would wish to be among the first people to congratulate our young musicians on their achievements. It is always a privilege to assess the work of candidates, and at the top end there is much that is truly outstanding and of a thoroughly professional quality. Examiners' concerns lie also with those candidates who fail to achieve the highest standards of which they appear to be capable in some areas of the examination, and it is hoped that advice offered in this report and in those that follow it will help to guide teachers and candidates towards meeting the demands of the examination units more effectively.

The foundation blocks of knowledge, skills and understanding underpinned the previous UCLES A-level Music syllabus and formed the basis of the current GCE specification at all stages of its construction. This link will also carry through to the new A-level specification, which is for teaching from September 2008 and will be examined for the first time at AS-level in June 2009. It is right that candidates should be rewarded appropriately for what they know, what they can demonstrate and what they understand.

Candidates today live in an information-rich society: the growth of media outlets and the internet have made it much easier for candidates to access a wealth of information that was generally not available to previous generations. While much of this technological development has been a thoroughly beneficial step forward, candidates need to be cautious in their approach to a surfeit of information, and discerning in its use.

As a basic requirement, information needs to be checked for accuracy and reliability: acquiring an item of information is of no use if the information is suspect or, worse, inaccurate. Information providers in electronic or published form can be of variable quality, and examiners expect candidates to check the accuracy of their information against the evidence of the music to ensure its veracity.

Acquisition of information is not the same as knowledge or understanding, both of which require information to be absorbed and consolidated at a deeper level. In this respect examiners frequently express concern for candidates who have clearly acquired accurate information but who fail to demonstrate the level of knowledge and understanding necessary in order to use this information to address a particular problem posed by the examination.

Identifying that a particular performer makes a clear *rallentando* at a specific point in a performance is not the same as knowing *how* this contributes to the effective interpretation of the music or understanding the more significant subtleties of a particular performer's interpretation of a written score. Similarly, identifying a particular chord progression or harmonic cliché is not the same as acquiring the compositional knowledge, practical skill and musical understanding to be able to manipulate this information and use it convincingly to inform individual original creative work.

In the written Units (2552 and 2555) this session, far too many candidates simply produced lists of information they had read, picked up via the internet or had been taught, and failed to relate this to particular questions. In such situations, examiners have to impose mark ceilings on answers that contain much accurate information that is simply irrelevant. Some of the most prominent examples seen this year included essays that gave descriptions of Britten's instrumental and melodic vocal writing in answer to a question that asked for knowledge of

Britten's use of *tonality* for dramatic effect (**Question 20** in Unit 2555); detailed information on the relationship between listening and candidates' composing work in a question that required candidates to explain ways in which listening had influenced their *performing* style or technique (**Question 26** of Unit 2555); and detailed histories of the development of recording technology in a question that required knowledge of the importance of musicians' *contracts* with recording companies and radio stations (**Question 38** of Unit 2552).

In many ways, advice that has been given to examination candidates for the past fifty years or more (*"Read the question carefully"*) still holds true for today's candidates. Examiners would also wish to add "...and answer it, not the question you would like to have been asked" to this advice.

Examiners' Reports should help candidates and teachers to prepare effectively for the demands of each unit, and many comments indicate the ways in which candidates failed to meet specific demands in the units. Some reports provide helpful Teachers' Tips in order to draw attention to the most common observations made by examiners as a result of their detailed scrutiny of candidates' answers.

The new OCR specification for Music is now available on the OCR website, together with mark schemes and specimen assessment materials. These have also been compiled on a CD that is available from OCR. Senior examiners believe that the new specification maintains the musical breadth and academic rigour of the current specification but also opens new and exciting possibilities for a range of candidates coming from a variety of backgrounds within the A-level framework.

Centres following the current specification will find that much is already familiar to them, and transition to the new specification should be relatively smooth.

OCR will be running a series of INSET sessions in the Autumn, presented by senior examiners, in order to help prepare teachers for the new specification, and individual INSET visits to a centre or a teaching consortium may be available by arrangement with the Qualifications Manager for Music.

At all stages, the senior Music examiners are concerned to listen to the views of candidates and teachers and offer help and advice in meeting the demands of the OCR GCE Music specification during this time of transition.

Candidates and teachers need to be aware that the final assessment session for AS Units 2550, 2552 and 2553 will be **June 2009**, and that the final assessment session for A2 Units 2553, 2554 and 2555 will be **June 2010**. The first assessment session for the new AS Units (G351, G352 and G353) will be **June 2009** (running alongside the final session for the current AS units), and the first assessment session for the new A2 Units (G354, G355 and G356) will be **June 2010**, (running alongside the final session for the current A2 units).

2550 Performing

OCR's examiners would like to thank Directors of Music, Examinations Officers and departmental secretaries for the care taken in timetabling practical examinations and for sending helpful information to the examiner. In almost all centres it was apparent that much preparation and thought had been given to ensuring that recitals ran smoothly, to time, and were as enjoyable as possible for the performers, examiners and – if invited – candidates' audiences. Some were slotted into the school or college day, others were presented in evening recitals with substantial audiences present, often at venues away from the school or college, such as local churches and arts centres. Examiners do not mind at all relocating for organ recitals or (tuned) percussion performances!

Examiners are also grateful for the help given with directions to centres and parking, finding hotels where necessary and with trains and even ferry timetables.

Examiners would like to acknowledge the help given by centres in having Section B ensembles on-hand (string quartets, wind ensembles, backing bands, percussion groups and even whole choirs and gamelan ensembles) – often for multiple performances – and providing some excellent accompanists who were helpful and supportive to nervous candidates. Where pre-recorded backing tracks were used, these were generally well-organised and ready to go, with levels preset, but some performances were affected by poor balance, jumping CDs, false starts or unfamiliarity with introductions.

As a team, we experienced many thrilling and accomplished performances in all styles, with many maxima attained. Candidates, teachers and examiners all appear to value the live assessment that OCR offers in this most immediate of the performing arts. It is central to OCR's approach that examiners – who are all musicians and performers themselves – enjoy meeting younger musicians and that, in turn, the candidates can enjoy playing or singing to an approachable and sympathetic examining team. This approach will continue into the new specification from 2009.

Examiners are still encountering many candidates who are offering pieces beyond their ability, and often the struggle for fluency or even the notes, precludes much expressive or stylistic detail from emerging. Repertoire should be chosen that facilitates the demonstration of technical control, stylistic understanding and fluency and accuracy.

Candidates **may** wish to introduce their pieces, or to put songs in context, and – if an audience is present – to acknowledge applause, the accompanist or any backing players. In many centres there was a real sense of occasion and the examiner was able to be embedded in the audience or the department in a less intimidating manner. Ideally, balancing of electric instruments and amplifiers should take place before the performance begins and candidates on these instruments need to consider how they link their recital pieces with an audience present. Dynamic levels **must** be appropriate to the acoustic and size of the performance space. Page turners are very welcome in the examination room (please do not ask the examiner!) and it is quite acceptable for a member of staff to contribute to the ensembles/duos offered as part of the performances.

By once again using minidisk wherever possible this session, examiners have attained a better quality of recording, making the process of moderation and possible appeal easier and more accurate. Please note that centres (and audiences) are **not** permitted to record the performances, either aurally or on video. Examiners will bring their own supply of disks, and most examiners will also bring their own recording equipment. However, thanks are due to centres which have provided recording equipment – although it is the examiners' responsibility actually to record performances and check levels.

Another pleasing aspect of this year's performances for 2550 was the wide variety of styles and instruments offered for assessment. Examples included: a candidate offering tuned percussion for Section A and a marimba duet (with a parent) for Section B; a candidate who played Corelli on the violin for Section A and then fronted a number by The Zutons for Section B. There were also some folk instrument recitals, a clutch of counter-tenor performances, some gamelan ensembles and an impressive skiffle band.

Only a very few recitals were clearly last-minute offerings; some were short (as brief as 2 minutes for Section A, including all repeats) and a number were long (the record this year was 19 minutes; the specification gives 8 minutes as the maximum). Nevertheless, examiners heard countless recitals that had clearly been planned in detail, tried out in public before the examination, and delivered with confidence and flair. Short over-runs, for the sake of artistic integrity, are not frowned upon. Candidates should not wait for the examiner between pieces, but present them as if in a recital with appropriate gaps or as a 'set' at a gig.

At least **two** pieces should be performed for Section A (Specification: page 10), which may be from the same work provided that they demonstrate a **range** of techniques and expressive understanding.

Candidates **must** provide the examiner with copies of their music for **both** sections (solo parts of accompanied pieces will suffice). This is vital in order for the examiner to assess accuracy and performance directions and, later, for the process of standardisation and in the event of a possible result enquiry. All photocopies will be destroyed once the process is completed. It is at sometimes not helpful if the presented edition is widely at variance with that which the candidate has prepared.

Downloads from the internet or photocopies from guitar magazines should be 'marked up' as fully as possible, with stave notation alongside tablature. Providing music after the performance is **not** acceptable, especially as the examiners' letters to centres in advance of visits confirm that copies will be required to facilitate assessment. Equally unacceptable is the presentation to the examiner of a CD recording of an intended performance. Keyboard and guitar candidates should be dissuaded from performing **accompaniments only** (usually to songs) without incorporating the solo/voice line (as one might encounter in a song transcription) in the texture, or without the intended soloist.

As all examinations are recorded onto minidisk or (occasionally) cassette tape, examiners need to mark up their own supply of these with the information provided by centres. This information is needed **a week earlier** than the visit.

The information needed by the examiner is:

- name and number of candidate;
- whether entered for AS or A2;
- instrument and programme for Section A (**with timings and grades**);
- instrument and option for Section B (**with timings and grades**);
- a timetable for the visit;
- directions to the centre; and
- photocopies of all music to be performed

Examiners' contact details (including email addresses) must **not**, under any circumstances, be given to candidates (so that music or CDs can be sent on); all contact with an examiner must be made through the centre.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

Looking forward to the new specification (in which this unit's code will be G351), OCR will be retaining Visiting Examiners, who will conduct the **three** sections of the examination – the Recital, the Discussion (Section B) and the Section C option – very much as they do now, and all three will be recorded. The Discussion and the Improvisation option will be conducted *in camera* although an audience is still welcome for the Section A recital of pieces (which should, as now, show “a range of techniques”) and the other Section C options, if chosen. Centres are directed to page 12 of the new specification, which details the changes in the requirements for performing own compositions.

2551 Composing 1 - Principal Moderator's Report

General Comments

Whilst this is the last season of full assessment for Unit 2551, the following comments are useful for those re-submitting work for the final re-sit opportunity next year. The continuity of many aspects of the specification means that observations will also have relevance for the equivalent unit in the new specification, G352: Composing 1.

Administration

Moderators continue to be grateful to centres that present coursework in an efficient and timely way, adhering fully to the requirements of the specification and following the guidance in the Instructions to Teachers.

However, a significant number of centres delay the process of moderation and the following check list is a reminder of the most important administrative issues.

- In the unlikely event of any delay in sending the work to arrive by 15th May, centres must contact OCR **before** the coursework deadline.
- Centres should send **all** the Coursework Cover Sheets to the moderator together with the MS1 and Centre Authentication form, CCS 160. If there are 11 or fewer candidates, the portfolios should also be sent. A sample chosen on the basis of information provided on the Coursework Cover Sheets will be requested from centres with more than 11 candidates.
- Care should be taken in the addition and transfer of marks on the Coursework Cover Sheet in order to avoid arithmetic errors.
- For exercises in Section A, work must be dated and the composer acknowledged.
- Given material must be clearly marked as distinct from that added by the candidate. This is especially important when exercises are notated in their entirety on computer.

Centre Assessment of Coursework

Moderators are encouraged by the increasing numbers of centres that are able to objectively and accurately apply the assessment criteria in awarding of marks to candidates. Teacher comments by way of justification or clarification of the marks awarded are very helpful to moderators, as is the underlining of relevant phrases in the criteria. Annotations on the candidates' work in line with the assessment categories have also demonstrated a secure grasp of the criteria by teachers and moderators state that, where such evidence of thoughtful marking is observed, assessment tends to have a greater degree of accuracy.

Evidence in the work presented for moderation suggests a wider range of marks than teachers are awarding. The widest range of marks should be used in assessment, particularly where a category such as Technique has several strands to consider: bass line shaping, continuation of texture, modulation and voice leading. Moderators are always pleased to see the submission of annotated work, giving them a clear picture of the course dynamics between teacher and pupil. It is far less helpful to submit unmarked 'fair copies' in Section A, as if this was an examined unit.

In Section B, some centre assessment continues to over reward arrangements when the candidate has provided little more than a transcription of a well-known version of a lead sheet. Some of the best arrangements added sufficient original material and displayed a level of ingenuity and invention in structural terms as to create a genuinely transformed musical outcome.

The work presented by candidates for moderation

Section A: The Language of Western Tonal Harmony

The choice of appropriate teaching materials is important and the OCR specification allows considerable flexibility to enable teachers to match exercises to candidates' strengths and interests. Some important considerations are:

- Refer to the specification to ensure that the requirements are covered across the range of exercises submitted.
- Use a variety of exercises to allow for differentiation
- Be cautious about the use of commercially available materials that may provide excellent preliminary exercises, but have too much 'help' given by way of cadences / modulation indications for final submissions where candidates need to be able to recognise such features for themselves.
- The importance of a progressive approach cannot be over-stated. Candidates should always add chord symbols to the melody and learn how to shape bass lines effectively before going on to full texture work.
- Ensure that candidates move from root position work to a full understanding of the role and correct use of inversions.
- Widen the range of vocabulary further according to the list in the specification.
- Ensure that a range of melodic material is worked with; a submission made up entirely of chorale or hymn style exercises does not allow adequate exploration of a range of harmonic rhythm with its associated understanding of melodic passing notes of various kinds.
- Technical matters - chord spacing, voice leading, avoidance of consecutive fifths and octaves and necessary procedures in minor key work, for example – all need to be thoroughly understood.
- Some candidates were attempting exercises that were too challenging. In some cases, exercises that have been deemed suitable for Unit 2554: Composing 2 had been inappropriately attempted by candidates.
- In order to show 'continuation of texture' an incipit is essential; this provides a starting point, which is effectively a benchmark of harmonic and textural style – a model of good practice for the candidate.

Section B: The Expressive Use of Instrumental Technique

Moderators observed some "stunning compositions and excellent arrangements" in this section. One moderator observed, "Some successful compositions were a sheer joy to listen to".

Materials and Use of Medium / Structure and Technique

Candidates often presented well-shaped initial materials but failed to display the necessary technical expertise to develop and transform these ideas in appropriate ways. All too often, simple repetition was a common device used to extend compositions. Teachers might usefully give guidance on rhythmic extension and manipulation of motifs as well as ways to enable contrast of texture. It was a common weakness that candidates used all the instruments throughout the entire composition rather than giving attention to alternative textural possibilities. Candidates were comfortable writing idiomatically for one or two instruments but, with additional preliminary research, might go on to write much more effectively for an extended range of instruments.

The computer should not take the lead in the shaping of ideas and materials at the expense of idiomatic writing for instruments to be played by performers in a live context.

Notation and Realisation

The quality of scores was markedly improved this year with far fewer candidates failing to understand the importance of comprehensive performance directions, including phrasing and articulation marks. One exception is in the area of initial score direction, where many candidates simply give a metronome marking. In the commentary, one candidate talks of his intention “to make my arrangement exciting and exhilarating for the listener” – what better way to do this than an appropriate opening descriptor in addition to the metronome marking, crotchet = 140.

Those centres that were able to facilitate live recordings of candidates’ work frequently went to considerable lengths to do so. The benefits to the candidate were clear. Nevertheless, with competent use of technology (use of ‘plug-ins’, multi-track facilities etc.) many candidates were also able to produce expressive realisations of their intentions. Those submitting a bland, unedited midi version of their work were not able to access the full range of marks.

The Instructions for Teachers makes it clear that a separate recording should be included in each candidate’s submission. As part of the assessed portfolio, it is the candidate’s responsibility to produce and oversee the recording of his or her own composition. A recording for each candidate helps to reinforce the concept of the integrity of a candidate’s portfolio as a self-contained examination document and is a requirement of its submission.

Contextual Awareness

The commentary provides the candidate with a further opportunity to demonstrate ‘aural familiarity’ with a range of music that has informed the compositional process. An important concept here is the way in which composers have always learned in response to the work of others; this model is an important one for student composers to embrace. It is important that candidates link to their own work the insights gained from careful listening. Additionally, moderators have identified a tendency for candidates to provide a description of the composition itself rather than explain the **process** of their work. Candidates should explain the factors which lie at the heart of the decision making process and for this reason a completely retrospective description is to miss the point of how listening informs the composing process as it happens.

Authenticity, plagiarism and pastiche

Some candidates find original composing difficult; indeed the specification encourages that very process which has been in evidence throughout history, namely, that composers ‘walk in the footsteps of others’. There is evidence that for some candidates, the understanding of the boundary between pastiche and plagiarism is not clear. Certainly, any approach that takes a notated idea and ‘changes some notes’ is treading on dangerous ground. Teachers have the difficult task of keeping ahead of developments in technology that may offer ‘banks of ideas’ for composing. It becomes even more imperative that teachers are involved in the day-to-day work of their students and satisfy themselves that submissions are indeed the work of the candidate.

Concluding Remarks

A great deal of enthusiastic commitment has been witnessed in the work of candidates this year. Teachers and moderators, however, have a great deal of empathy with the statement contained in the commentary of one candidate:

“If I was to undertake this task again I would be sure to do things differently... I would improve my time management. I tried to wait for inspiration to come to me and not vice-versa so in the end I believe I may have paid the price in slightly procrastinating when it came to creating parts (sections) of my piece.”

In the midst of all teachers have to do in support of their candidates’ learning in this unit, perhaps a more important issue is expressed above, namely that the imparting of a consistently and productive work ethic is one of the most important life-skills to be encouraged.

2552 Introduction to Historical Study

General Comments

The format of this paper is now well established and it is clear that most candidates are familiar with the requirements of the Unit. Nevertheless, examiners this session still saw scripts in which candidates has answered questions on both extracts in **Section A** and has consequently penalised themselves by allowing insufficient time to answer fully questions in **Sections B** and **C**. While there appears to be signs of improvement in general performance within **Section B**, examiners remain concerned that significant numbers of candidates provide answers that suggest only cursory study of the prescribed repertoire. This trend is especially worrying when seen across all scripts from an individual centre. **Section B** is based on repertoire that is studied prior to the examination, and it should contain few surprises for candidates who have explored the repertoire in some depth. However, there is a suggestion that in some cases preparation of this material is left until relatively late in the course and then undertaken at a level of musical investigation that is too superficial for Advanced GCE level.

Previous areas of weakness in the Unit, such as melodic dictation and appropriate focus in the context essays, are demonstrating noticeable gradual improvement, and examiners were delighted to see many examples of melodic dictation that received full or nearly full marks. At the same time, many candidates now demonstrate a strong awareness of context in their writing for **Section C**, and the majority of essays show an appropriate focus on the question. The weakest performers tend to be candidates who use **Section C** simply to list what they know or have been taught and show no ability to use their knowledge to meet the requirements of a specific question.

As always, reports such as this, and INSET sessions offered by OCR, are the main means of communicating examiners' findings to candidates and centres. Many examiners are serving teachers who are delivering the OCR specification in their own schools and are keen to offer advice and assistance to those who seek help. It is disappointing, however, that many centres seem not to take advantage of these valuable lines of teacher support.

Candidate choice in **Section A** this session was much more evenly divided between the 'classical' example (from a Beethoven set of variations) and the 'contemporary' example (from Jerome Moross' score for *The Big Country*) than in many previous sessions, where the overwhelming majority of candidates have opted for the 'classical' work. Whatever choice is made, examiners hope that some candidates hearing this music for the first time in an examination may be enticed to explore the piece further, increasing their musical knowledge.

Finally, some administrative pleas from examiners:

- (1) Many candidates, at the end of the examination, place the Insert inside the question paper and also wrap the tag around itself a number of times. This binds the sheets of paper together tightly and makes it impossible for an examiner to open the paper. This means that an examiner has to spend time separating the question paper and the Insert before marking can commence. It would be very helpful if candidates could ensure that they tag items together in the order question paper + additional answer paper (if used) + Insert. This will help examiners enormously, and the tag should be slipped simply through the holes at the top left-hand corner of each booklet or sheet. The tag will hold sheets together securely; there is no need to wrap the tag around itself.
- (2) Candidates and centres need to check carefully to ensure that every question paper is accompanied by an Insert. Every year OCR has to chase a number of missing Inserts, and a missing Insert can cost a candidate valuable marks. In addition, a number of candidates forget to complete candidate and centre details on the front of the Insert as well as the front of the question paper.

Teacher Tips for the Unit

- **DO** prepare candidates to answer questions on all **THREE** prescribed orchestral works and all **THREE** jazz recordings. A gambling technique in this area is not advisable and can have disastrous consequences for candidates.
- **DO** help candidates to explore the prescribed repertoire at an appropriate level of depth. Many candidates suffer from a superficial grasp of surface details in the music. The most successful answers suggest that candidates can draw on relevant detail from the music, and also know the works thoroughly as a result of repeated, consistent and attentive listening.
- **DO** help candidates to engage with aspects of the Area of Study tonality from an early point in the course, so that they become confident in writing about aspects relating to chords, harmonic progression, keys and cadences. Evidence suggests that candidates remain less secure in this area than when dealing with other aspects of music such as structure and scoring. In tackling questions relating to tonality and harmony, they should be drawing upon work covered in connection with Unit 2551's study of The Language of Western Tonal Harmony.
- **PLEASE** remind candidates that they should answer questions on **EITHER** Extract 1A **OR** Extract 1B, but not both! Previous reports have commented that a preliminary 'dry run' of a full paper as a mock examination can be a useful means of identifying (and helping) individual candidates who might fall into the 1A plus 1B 'trap' in the real examination session. As in previous sessions, candidates who attempted to answer questions on both extracts in Section A generally found that they had insufficient time to answer questions in Sections B and C in sufficient detail.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- Extract 1A** BEETHOVEN, *Variations for piano, violin & 'cello on "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu", op. 121a*, Theme, 46²-70² bars, Variation X, bars 304⁵-326⁵ & Allegretto, bars 397⁶-421³. Serkin, Horigome & Wiley (1983), Sony Classical SMK 47296, tracks 8 (00'00"- 00'47"), 18 (00'00"- 00'36") & 19 (00'00"- 01'00" [Total length of recorded extracts: 02'23"])
- 1) Many answers used capital letters to outline the structure successfully. Examiners also allowed credit for perception of a four-bar phrase structure and acknowledgement of the anacrusis at the start of phrases.
 - 2) Many candidates gained full marks for their answers to this question. The most common errors related to misjudgement of leaps in the bass line of bar 2. Several otherwise correct workings failed to perceive the octave leap between the first and second quavers of bar 2. The lower G is clearly evident in the recording.
 - 3) Many candidates answered this question accurately.
 - 4) (a) Most scripts identified *pizzicato* in answer to this question, although (given the fairly common use of this technique) a worryingly large number of scripts offered unsuitable alternative answers.
(b) Most candidates were able to locate an appropriate bar in answer to this question.
 - 5) Many answers to this question did not refer to aspects of **texture** at all. Perceptive listeners were able to refer to specific details such as the absence of a low bass line, but disappointingly few scripts mentioned features such as the parallel movement of parts or the nature of the chords used in the passage (1st inversion or 6/3 chords).
 - 6) Many candidates failed to engage with the question and avoided references to **harmony** in their answers. Most accurate answers were able to recognise the underlying perfect cadence, and many appreciated that the music had modulated to the dominant key at the point in question. Relatively few answers were sufficiently perceptive in harmonic terms to make reference to the use of appoggiaturas at the cadence point.
 - 7) Most candidates were able to place the tonic and dominant chords accurately, although many answers confused the respective placing of chords **IV** (major) and **IIb** (minor) in bar 22.
 - 8) This question was not well answered, with many candidates failing to concentrate on ways in which the melody (rather than the instrumentation) changed in **Variation 1**. Examiners were also disappointed that so many answers referred inaccurately to the music moving in "triplets" whereas the rhythmic change was from simple to compound time.
 - 9) Many answers failed to address aspects of variation in the **harmony**, and too many scripts provided irrelevant evidence of changes in instrumentation. Candidates who did address aspects of harmony were generally able to show knowledge and receive appropriate credit here, with the most common features being the recognition of a change to an e minor chord at the end of bar 27 (compared to a C major chord in the **Theme**) and the use of a chromatic passing note in the bass in the middle of bar 32.
 - 10) Almost all candidates identified the use of a trill in the piano, but relatively few candidates were aware that the ornamentation was being performed in both hands, or referred to the sustained D as an inverted pedal in the music.

- 11) Many candidates received full marks for their answers to this question, and perceptive listeners would have spotted that the required motif is later taken up by the 'cello at the end of bar 70. The most common error in working stemmed from a failure to recognise that the first three notes of bar 67 formed a minor arpeggio.
- 12) Most answers referred to the antiphonal treatment of the theme in **Variation 2**, and many candidates made reference to the elaborate 'cello countermelody at bar 79. Candidates needed to search beyond surface details to gain full marks, mentioning aspects such as the specific sequence of instrumentation or recognising that the antiphony at the opening occurred at the distance of half a bar.
- Extract 1B** JEROME MOROSS, *The Big Country* (no score available), Philharmonia Orchestra / Tony Bremmer (2000), Silva Screen Records FILMCD 724, track 2 (Julie's House), 00'05" - 00'27" & 00'40"- 01'17", track 4 (Courtin' Time), 00'00" – 00'34" [Total length of recorded extracts: 01'33"]
- 13) This question was answered accurately by most candidates. Most responses were able to outline the essential binary nature of the structure, although relatively few answers attempted to explain in specific detail changes that occurred when a thematic idea was repeated.
- 14) Candidates recognised the antiphonal exchanged in **Passage 1i**, and many were able to provide precise details of the scoring, including references to harp interjections and the use of flute and clarinet in the opening melodic idea.
- 15) This question was answered well, with many candidates gaining full marks for their answers. Many otherwise accurate answers failed to place chords **I** and **Ic** in correct context.
- 16) Most candidates were able to identify an ascending arpeggio, although examiners were concerned at the number of candidates who offered "rising scale" as an answer for this question.
- 17) This was answered well, with many candidates receiving full marks for their answers. The most common errors were misjudgement of the initial rising 3rd (bar 18) and/or inaccurate measuring of the bass leaps in bars 20 and 21.
- 18) This was answered well by almost all candidates. A few scripts misjudged the anacrusis, writing this as the last quaver of a bar rather than a full crotchet. Some answers failed to perceive the bars in which the motif did not appear.
- 19) Most candidates identified muted trumpets accurately. A number of answers assumed that the 2 marks awarded here required two *different* instruments as an answer.
- 20) Most candidates identified the use of sequence accurately.
- 21) Although some candidates perceived the cadence as Imperfect, the vast majority of scripts identified the cadence accurately as Interrupted (*i.e.* moving to an *unexpected* chord, not necessarily to chord **VI**).
- 22) This melodic dictation passage contained some awkward twists and turns, but examiners were delighted that so many candidates produced entirely accurate or near-correct answers. The most common error was the misperception of the falling e minor triad at the start of bar 59.

- 23) Most candidates were able to provide details relating to surface features, such as the use of longer notes at the end of phrases or the extension of the final phrase of the B section (at bars 57 and 58). Many answers also referred to the more *legato* nature of **Passage 1iii** and its slower pace. Very perceptive candidates noted the absence of antiphonal melodic treatment in the passage, the change of key and the absence of repeated notes in the B motif.

Teacher Tips for Section A

- **DO encourage candidates to use the five minutes' listening time at the start of the examination constructively. This time should give them a degree of familiarity with the aural nature of the extract before they begin to answer questions on the music.**
- **DO NOT restrict candidates by limiting their range of experience to either 'classical' or 'contemporary' extracts. An ability to engage with both styles of music will give candidates a wider choice of question in the actual paper.**
- **DO provide candidates with opportunities to work through previous papers prior to sitting the examination. The experience will help them to develop valuable answering techniques, and careful discussion of candidate answers against published mark schemes will help both teachers and candidates to develop a clear awareness of the qualities that characterise answers that are likely to gain high marks. A major issue that concerns examiners is the focus of candidates' answers: what is offered as an answer must be relevant to the question set – a question addressing aspects of tonality will not be addressed by a basic description of the instrumentation, for example.**

Section B

Extract 2 **WEBER, Overture to Der Freischütz, bars 9 to 36.**

- 24) The four sections of this question were answered accurately by many candidates. The most common errors were a failure to describe accurately the meaning of *Soli* as applied to the extract (in **(b)**), and confused explanation of *Muta A* in *G* (section **(d)**) as something related to the use of a mute.
- 25) Many candidates received full marks for their answers to this question, although examiners were concerned that so many candidates were unable to undertake this mechanical transcription task accurately.
- 26) Most candidates produced accurate answers to this question.
- 27) Most candidates answered this question well, although many scripts referred to details of instrumentation rather than to the use of dynamics. The most popular references were to the *pp* playing at the start of the extract, and to the use of a large *crescendo* leading to the climax of the extract (*ff*) at bar 25.
- 28) Many candidates received full marks for their answers to this question. Successful answers were able to locate a key point of instrumentation effectively, and then explain its aural significance in relation to the descriptive aspects of the music. It was clear that much good work had been done in terms of providing candidates with a clear appreciation of what the music was trying to represent.
- 29) This question was answered well by most candidates, and many responses received full marks. A number of candidates clearly had little idea of the precise musical detail that followed the printed extract. Examiners were concerned by this, given that the printed extract occurs at an important point within the overture.
- 30) Several answers betrayed a degree of confusion relating to Weber's use of Sonata Form within the extract. The best answers demonstrated clearly an understanding that the extract came from the end of the introduction and just before the start of a Sonata-Form exposition.

Extract 3 **DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS KENTUCKY CLUB ORCHESTRA, East St Louis Toodle-O (1926), from The Best of Early Ellington, GRP Records, GRP-16602, track 1, 00'58" – 01'21". [Length of recorded extract: 00'23"]**

- 31) (a) Most candidates were able to identify the trombone accurately.
- (b) This question was not well answered, with many responses referring to the pitch-bending, scooping and smears as examples of full trombone *glissandi*.
- (c) Most candidates gained 3 or 4 marks for their answer to this question. Popular features mentioned included the banjo comping and the tonic-dominant movement in the detached bass lines on the 1st and 3rd beats of each bar.
- 32) (a) Almost all candidates recognised the use of the clarinet as a solo instrument.
- (b) Many answers referred to the more continuous/smooth bass line in the 2nd Chorus, although few candidates mentioned additional details such as the doubling at the 3rd/6th or the move from major to minor tonality.
- (c) Several answers referred to the reappearance of the original bass idea as a 'sawtooth' motif, and examiners credited this reference. Many candidates were clearly aware of the use of this motif at the start of the complete recording, but only a few answers mentioned that it reappears at the end of the complete recording as well.

- 33) Most candidates knew that a solo by Bubber Miley for muted trumpet followed the recorded extract, and many answers referred to the “rasping” or “growling” nature of the sound, a trademark of Miley’s performing style for Ellington’s orchestra.

Teacher Tips for Section B

(A number of these tips repeat observations from previous reports that remain valid – but please take careful note of the underlined section in bullet point seven below.)

- DO make study of the prescribed repertoire a regular part of preparation for the Unit. It is important that candidates get to know the music thoroughly.
- DO help candidates to find their way around scores, especially in the early stages of the AS course. It is important that candidates gain confidence in handling the printed scores of prescribed orchestral repertoire.
- DO ensure that candidates listen to the prescribed works as regularly as possible; candidates need to appreciate the music as sound, not just as notes on the page.
- DO read the sleeve notes accompanying the prescribed recordings carefully; these details should be regarded as the *primary* source of authoritative information about personnel involved in the jazz recording sessions.
- DO NOT become preoccupied with the printed detail of complex modern transcriptions of jazz repertoire; study of scores is NOT required in this part of Section B.
- DO NOT leave preparation of the prescribed repertoire until the last minute; this will not help candidates to become thoroughly familiar with the music they need to study.
- DO NOT forget that the prescribed repertoire changes regularly. Consult the OCR website for the prescribed repertoire relevant to any particular session of this Unit. In the study of jazz repertoire Centres and candidates must ensure that they use the recordings prescribed by OCR: the content of published study guides should be checked with great care to ensure that it matches with the aural detail of the specific recorded version prescribed in the specification. If Centres are in any doubt about a recording they are using, clarification should be sought from OCR.
- DO NOT gamble on any particular rotation of prescribed repertoire: all SIX items (three ‘classical’ and three jazz) of prescribed repertoire should be studied for any particular session if candidates are not to be disadvantaged.

Section C

The focus in this section of the Unit is placed firmly on understanding the contexts in which the prescribed music was produced, performed and heard. The best answers demonstrate an awareness that extends beyond description of detail from the music studied and displays knowledge and understanding of background to the repertoire.

It is sad that, on some occasions, candidates who show clearly an understanding of relevant context, disadvantage themselves by failing to address details relevant to the specific question. As in previous reports, examiners would advise strongly the use of preparatory timed essays to help candidates develop the skills required in order to perform effectively in this section of the paper.

- 34 This was a popular question, and most candidates were able to describe the differences between the orchestras employed by Haydn and Weber. Examiners were disappointed, however, that some candidates still remained confused when talking about Haydn's 'organised' trumpet, referring to its use of *valves* rather than keys, but most descriptions of the instrumental ensembles employed were relatively detailed and largely accurate.

In order to achieve high marks for an answer, candidates needed to go beyond mere lists of the instruments playing and provide some effective examples of the contrasting ways in which the two composers *made use of* the instrumental resources at their disposal within the works they had studied.

- 35 The best answers to this question were able to focus on distinctive aspects of Ellington's style and sound, and contrast these effectively with relevant examples taken from the Jelly Roll Morton and Miles Davis works studied alongside the Ellington recording.

The weakest answers either provided a basic descriptive account of Ellington's *East St Louis Toodle-O* and failed to identify features of the music that were distinctive of Ellington's style, or they became generalised surveys of the technological development of music recording, which was not the focus of this particular question.

- 36 A number of candidates chose to answer this question and, in general, scripts demonstrated awareness of the contrasting approach to the position of the soloist in the two works discussed. Many candidates referred to the fact that Beethoven was writing music that he would perform personally, in contrast to Haydn's commission from Weidinger, and a number of thoughtful essays discussed the issue of the relationship between soloist and orchestra in the music, producing detailed examples of exchanges between the two groups.

Examiners were also pleased to note that many candidates were aware of the precise nature of the solo instruments employed in both works. The nature of Weidinger's keyed trumpet had been a focus of **Section C** questions in previous papers, but it was clear that many candidates had undertaken detailed investigation of the nature of the piano at the time of Beethoven in preparation for this type of question on a new prescribed work.

37 This was a popular question and many answers were able to show a clear awareness of Miles Davis' style. In general, answers to this question were able to draw upon relevant detail from *So What* and relate this to Davis' general style and to his innovative concept of jazz as 'art' music. Some answers became bogged down in detail of studio recording technology, often digressing from the relationship between the studio and editing facilities and Davis' individual style.

Again, the least successful answers contained little more than a basic description of the music. Such descriptions may reveal some knowledge and understanding of the music, but it is important that candidates learn how to *use* their knowledge and understanding to answer a specific question. Examiners are always concerned when able and knowledgeable candidates fail to achieve high marks as a result of a lack of clear and relevant focus in their writing.

38 Examiners saw many informed and detailed answers to this question, with candidates demonstrating thorough knowledge of the importance of the recording industry and emerging radio stations to early jazz performers. Many answers referred to contracts with such companies as a means of spreading fame and securing performance opportunities, although some candidates were clearly unaware of the harsh conditions imposed by recording companies on the musicians and the operation of a single-payment system which meant that the musicians received no additional benefit if recordings sold well. Although most answers concentrated on the publicity benefits brought by recording contracts, many deliberately skated around the financial side of the question: for many early jazz performers such contracts would have been a necessity in order to provide food on the table (albeit temporarily), with fame and widespread publicity as a secondary consideration.

The weakest answers avoided addressing the question and provided a historical description of the development of music recording. Although this issue has appeared in previous **Section C** questions, it was not the topic of this question, and candidates are advised strongly to read the questions carefully in order to ensure that what they write is fully relevant.

Teacher Tips for Section C

- **DO** provide candidates with opportunities to organise their ideas in practice essays before the examination itself. This is helpful preparation for this section of the Unit and will point out issues that may need to be addressed before the real examination (e.g. allocation of time, overall essay structure and a focus on the relevance of information provided).
- **PLEASE** encourage candidates to focus their writing in order to answer a specific question rather than simply regurgitate knowledge that they have acquired: many able candidates fail to gain marks in Section C because their writing is not consistently applied to the demands of the question set.

and remember:

- **LISTENING** attentively is the key to success. It is important not to let the sound simply wash over candidates. In an A-level Music course, examiners expect candidates to be able to delve beneath the obvious surface feature of music they encounter. Intelligent and attentive background listening can be of enormous help to candidates in developing a sense of context for this section of the Unit and in broadening and deepening their musical understanding.

2553 Performing - Interpretation

General Comments

It is always a pleasure to feed back to centres the many encouraging comments received from examiners during their visits and our thanks and appreciation go to the teachers and parents who encourage, direct and facilitate the performances that are heard by examiners from late February to early May. In the majority of cases, centres are organised, fulfilling the various administrative tasks prior to the examination day and making examiners feel very welcome.

Inevitably, a report of this kind will dwell on areas where challenges are faced and it is hoped that these points will be picked up by those centres to which they are directed. To this end, this year's report will highlight a few specific points which have given some cause for concern, though these will not apply to all centres.

It was noticeable that the level of candidates' achievements was often in direct relationship to the degree of organisation and preparation present at the centre itself. Where there had been efficient prior organisation, time-tabling, stage management and supervision, recitals progressed smoothly with the appropriate sense of occasion in evidence. Conversely, where adequate preparation had not taken place, this sense of occasion was often lost. Indeed, some examiners reported having to wait whilst personnel were located and ensembles rehearsed prior to performing. On one occasion, a candidate even stopped to take a mobile telephone call! Sadly, in such situations, the concept of "performance" was not understood nor transmitted.

Other general points that centres should note:

- Centre Authentication Forms (CCS160) need to be completed and enclosed for the Performance Investigation.
- Recitals should **not** be recorded by centres for their own retention.
- Centres should not divulge examiners' address details to candidates under any circumstances.

Comments on Individual Sections

Section A: Recital

A wide range of recitals was presented. As well as offerings on the standard instruments, there were also welcome performances on folk fiddle and bagpipes. Examiners noted an increase in the number of singing recitals presented this year.

There was much exciting performing in evidence with most candidates presenting material appropriate to their ability. Centres are again reminded that the full range of marks can be accessed with the presentation of music at Grade 6 standard; it is not advisable for candidates to present performances from repertoire that is too hard for them.

Whilst many of the points raised in previous reports apply again this year, it is hoped that by highlighting three in particular, centres will act on the advice given.

- 1 There are still instances where candidates are presenting "un-themed" recitals: e.g. "dance music for the violin through the ages" or "major Russian 'cello repertoire of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries". In such cases, the focus is too wide and does not allow for an in-depth study of a particular style. Whilst this does not affect the mark awarded for the recital, it does affect that given for the Performance Investigation. Examiners do appreciate the fact that for some instruments developing a focus is more challenging than for others and, indeed, candidates are no doubt also preparing for grade examinations where a variety of styles is necessary. However, a focus is a requirement of this specification that needs to be adhered to.

- 2 Whilst in many cases the score presented by electric guitar players include the required details of pitch, rhythm and expression, there are still some incomplete offerings, usually where Tablature only is included. It is certainly in the candidates' own interests for examiners to receive as full a score as possible as this ensures that the candidate can be rewarded for details of accuracy in pitch and rhythm, and for performance markings. Also, in some cases, guitarists offered "incomplete" performances, e.g. by playing the accompanying chords of a song only. This inevitably has repercussions on the mark awarded for musical and stylistic understanding.
- 3 The third point concerns the volume level of recitals presented either on a drum kit or by amplified ensembles. Whilst in the majority of cases candidates (and their teachers) were mindful of the need to balance and monitor sound levels correctly, there were instances reported by examiners this year where the sound levels were uncomfortably high. In one case, the examiner had to stop proceedings as the singer was inaudible above the accompanying band and, in another case, a drum recital proceeded at an uncomfortable volume despite a plea from the examiner for some centre intervention. It is sincerely hoped that centres accept this point as neither examiners, candidates nor an audience should be subjected to excessive volume levels.

Section B: Performance Investigation

In an effort to provide further guidance for centres on this part of the examination, past reports have included detailed explanations of the marking criteria and also examples of good practice in Performance Investigation presentation. Indeed, many of the points raised in previous reports still apply and, consequently, it is somewhat disconcerting that in some cases the same pitfalls are still apparent. There have been some excellent submissions this year, but also some Performance Investigations that bear the characteristics of being 'last minute' submissions. This is an "Investigation" and candidates do need to leave time to do just this – investigate.

Despite the fact that centres do profess their appreciation of this part of the course, examiners have noted a levelling off of achievement in P.I. submissions. Perhaps, somewhat perversely, it is the very fact that centres do feel comfortable with it now that has led to a certain lack of rigour apparent in the work being submitted. More than ever this year, Performance Investigations were written to a formula with less vibrant, individual interpretation being in evidence. Many opened with a paragraph about the composer followed by a paragraph about each performer. In many cases, much of what was included here, whilst interesting from a biographical point of view, did not constitute contextual understanding and bore little relevance to the thrust of the investigation – comparative listening.

Sadly, these sections were then followed by blow-by-blow accounts of each performance, with little attempt made to draw conclusions about different stylistic approaches or interpretations.

Furthermore, substantiation sometimes consisted of complete recordings only or very short or unrelated extracts. There was also an increase in the number of unformatted CDs submitted this year. Written examples sometimes lacked clefs.

Finally, it was often disappointing and, indeed, inexplicable to note the absence of any bibliographical detail, resulting in the loss of comparatively easy marks. Among those Performance Investigations that did include bibliographies, examiners noted a disappointing increase in the reliance on web sites such as *Wikipedia*, with little evidence sometimes of research specific to the P.I. focus having been carried out. It was also apparent that some submissions had not benefited from final checking, which would have eliminated spelling and typing errors.

It must also be stressed that there were also some very good submissions demonstrating real engagement and pleasing evidence that the candidates' own performances had been influenced in a positive way by their Performance Investigations.

Report on the Units taken in June 2008

As mentioned in last year's report, OCR's new specification for this unit will retain the Performance Investigation, but in an oral rather than written form. Candidates will therefore still have the opportunity to compare performances relating to their own recital focus as they do now, conveying their findings to the examiner during a short (five to ten minute) *viva voce* session. More details on this will be included in next year's report.

It is the intention of these reports to suggest ways in which candidates and centres can build further on their achievements. To this end, it is hoped that the issues raised above will be accepted by centres and acted upon where necessary so that their candidates are able to reach their full potential.

2554 Composing 2

General Comments

Overall, the performance of candidates was generally pleasing. There were some excellent submissions, and only a few which demonstrated little evidence of any compositional skills. Examiners were, on the whole, very impressed with the quality and standard of much of the work seen, and were very grateful to the majority of centres who submitted clearly labelled work in good time for the deadline.

By far the most popular option was the Vocal Composition, followed by Stylistic Techniques, Free Composition and Film Storyboard respectively. Some candidates chose both commissioned assignments but the majority selected one Commissioned Assignment (i.e. either the Vocal Composition or the Film Storyboard) and either Stylistic Techniques or the Free Composition.

Option 1: Commissioned Assignment (Vocal Composition to a brief)

89% of candidates chose this option. Candidates were required to submit a full score for a vocal composition based on one of two set texts, together with a commentary and a recording. The first text was, by far, the most popular with those who chose this option. A wide range of musical styles was seen, including popular, folk, jazz, serial and minimalist styles. As in previous years, the best settings demonstrated a strong understanding of, and aural familiarity with, the chosen idiom. Weaker submissions tended to suffer from restricted harmonic repertoire, lack of tonal and textural variety and weak text setting. Many examiners commented on candidates creating stresses in the wrong places, cramming syllables into too few notes, and writing pointless melismas, although difficulties such as this were not as prevalent as in previous years. The vast majority of candidates relied on tonal and mainly diatonic styles of writing, with only a few exploring other compositional techniques.

Text 1

70% of candidates who chose this option chose this text. There were some excellent settings of both texts but, in general terms, the Masefield poem produced the most imaginative and creative settings. Most candidates set the text for voice and piano and were able to demonstrate familiarity with the keyboard idiom in addition to effective vocal writing. Many commentaries were excellent, outlining in detail the compositional process, quoting from pieces of music that had acted as role models, and vividly communicating the candidate's intentions.

The weaker submissions of the Masefield text lacked flow, structure and variety. Melodic lines were often poorly constructed and unidiomatic; piano accompaniments demonstrated little understanding of the medium, and scores were poorly presented, with supporting commentaries being brief and basic.

Text 2

30% of candidates who chose this option chose this text. Settings yielded a wide variety of outcomes, but the majority of submissions were in a pop ballad style, and there were some very good ones indeed, which demonstrated excellent handling of the chosen medium, strong aural awareness and accurate and precise notation and presentation.

The weaker submissions contained little or no modulation, relied heavily on repetition, and demonstrated a lack of any harmonic direction. Some candidates did not submit a commentary, some did not submit a score, and a few candidates omitted the text completely!

General Points: Score, Commentary & Recording

Centres are reminded that, for this option, a score, commentary and recording are specification requirements, and that both the score and commentary are assessed. 20% of the marks in this section are for the candidate's ability to express their intentions clearly in a written score, accompanied by a suitable commentary. A submission which omits either the score or the commentary will forfeit 10% of the marks in this section.

The specification requires candidates to submit a score using 'standard western staff notation'. By far the vast majority of candidates did this, but it was frustrating for examiners when, in a few cases, a clearly excellent recording of the composition had been submitted, but there was no score and, consequently, marks could not be awarded in this area. As last year, weaker candidates sometimes produced approximate lead sheets with the text omitted. Others provided scores in guitar tablature without any alternative staff notation and often no indication of rhythms.

As in previous years, many computer scores were generated and then left unedited. Word compression was a common fault leading to unclear word underlay, and there were a lot of spelling and punctuation mistakes in copying the text to the score, as well as problems with syllabification.

Commentaries were, at best, outstanding, and at worst, non-existent. The best ones were well-focussed, perceptive and showing clear evidence of listening to a wide range of appropriate music. Many musical examples were included, and candidates demonstrated how their own compositions utilised compositional techniques seen in the examples. The weakest submissions gave a bar-by-bar description of the composition without any reference to models or background listening

Recording

This is a specification requirement, and its function in this option is to 'support the score and commentary'. A far greater number of candidates had gone to great lengths to produce 'real' recordings of their compositions, and this was highly commendable and in keeping with the spirit of the specification.

Many of the recordings were computer-generated, with an instrumental realisation of the vocal part. It must be stressed that either a 'real' or a computer-generated realisation are equally acceptable, but the benefits to the candidate of the former are infinitely greater, because they can experience the thrill of making their compositions come alive in the real world with real musicians.

Option 2: Film Storyboard

Less popular than the Vocal Composition but with more candidates attempting this option this year (29%). The storyboard seemed to inspire candidates who clearly preferred to write music to describe scenes within a specific time framework, rather than actually engage with the setting of words to music.

There were some excellent submissions, with glockenspiels galore in the Space Music; strong, and often brassy, title themes; good, rhythmic ritualistic dance music with an array of ethnic instrumentation; some wonderfully-combined thematic materials, and some electrifying climaxes. The regaining of momentum after the 3:27 cue through to the end, and the juxtaposition of the two ideas was masterfully handled by some candidates. In general there was a strong command of compositional techniques, excellent use of contrast and continuity and idiomatic and inventive use of the chosen instruments.

As in previous years, most candidates coped well with designing their compositions around the given timings, but some submissions seemed to bear little relationship to them. Although there were some live recordings, the majority had been produced using a computer. As always, some candidates manipulated their compositions to fit the given timings using technology; with outcomes which were less than musical (e.g. meaningless *accelerandos/rits*/general pauses etc).

Film storyboard submissions must contain a recording, together with either a full score or a full commentary on the methods of producing/mixing the master recording. Candidates can choose either the score or the recording as the principal examination document, and alternative assessment criteria are provided for these two options. It is essential that candidates make it clear whether they want the score or the recording to be assessed.

Some candidates chose to have the recording assessed this year and, in general, many of those who did gained good marks. Whilst most of these candidates submitted a commentary, as required when having the recording assessed, some of them did not focus on the methods of producing/ mixing the master recording, but instead gave a running commentary on their actual music, which was not what was required.

The majority of candidates submitted their score as the principal examination document. Centres are reminded to inform candidates that it should be made clear on the score how the timings match up with their music.

The scores were generally well-produced. As usual, the main errors were meaningless phrase marks, unnecessary rests, notes enharmonically incorrect, a lack of slurs, and as ever, some enormous scores with only two bars per page. Formatting is an important part of creating the final copy, and is essential in order to access the highest mark band.

Some excellent and highly creative submissions were seen in this option again this year and some candidates received very high marks for their endeavours.

Option 3: Stylistic Techniques

Not quite as popular as in previous years, with 40% of candidates choosing this option. The overall performance was similar to last year, and most candidates had assimilated something of their chosen style, and were capable of working convincingly within its boundaries.

Centres are reminded that each portfolio is marked as a whole, and candidates are asked to date their exercises and submit them in chronological order. Again, it was noted that some centres submitted portfolios in which the candidates' work was indistinguishable from the given material, and it was therefore difficult for examiners to assess the candidates' original work.

Two-part Counterpoint of the Late 16th Century

One candidate chose this option!

Two-part Baroque Keyboard Counterpoint

14% of candidates selected this style. It was good to see a varied choice of two-part textures submitted again this year, although truly imitative textures were conspicuous by their absence except in a handful of cases. There were many very good examples where it was clear that candidates understood the harmonic implications of the given part, used appropriate chords and handled the modulations confidently. In the weaker submissions, poor attention was given either to harmonic or melodic direction, and implied modulations were not always noticed.

Chorale treatments in the style of Bach

43% of candidates selected this style making it the most popular style by far. There were some very good portfolios showing a strong command of the musical language, good voice-leading, well-defined modulations, and good stylistic fluency over a range of different chorale textures.

Weaker submissions tended to demonstrate only a small range of basic vocabulary; with grammatical errors such as parallel 5ths & 8ths, and modulations were handled inappropriately.

Candidates are reminded to include chorales which demonstrate a range of textures and types in **both** major **and** minor keys.

Classical String Quartets

19% of candidates selected this style, but there were some very good portfolios submitted, showing understanding of classical textures and appropriate accompaniment patterns. Cadences were often idiomatic and a general strong awareness of style was in evidence.

To cover a range of types within this style it is important to include examples which give candidates the opportunity of showing that they can handle a fast movement, a slow movement and a minuet & trio movement. They could encompass triple metre, quadruple metre, compound time, imitation between instruments and chromaticism.

Early Romantic Keyboard Accompaniments

10% of candidates selected this style, and examiners commented on some very good portfolios received this year. It was good to see a number of students handling more sophisticated chromatic chords and distant modulations confidently. Weaker submissions often missed the harmonic implications inherent in the given melodic line.

Twentieth-Century Musical Theatre

An amazing 14% of candidates opted for this, and examiners were pleased to see so many more candidates than last year choosing this option. The quality of portfolios was generally good, but rarely outstanding

Option 4: Free Composition

This option proved to be extremely popular again with 40% of candidates choosing it. Most candidates choosing this option achieved a higher mark for it than they did for their other chosen option, and the standard of the work seen was, on the whole, very good indeed, with only a relatively small number of weak submissions.

As last year, it was pleasing to note that, because candidates were composing in styles with which they were entirely aurally familiar, they did generally shape their materials confidently; demonstrate strong control of compositional techniques; use their chosen medium effectively and encapsulate it all in a clearly-articulated structure.

Centres are reminded that the specification states that 'the total duration should not exceed **five** minutes'. Whilst the minimum duration is not stated, it is clearly not in the candidate's best interests to submit an unduly short composition, because they will not have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to effectively shape and develop musical materials, control compositional techniques, or show how they can use structure and medium convincingly, balancing continuity with contrast. Again this year, some compositions were unduly short, being less than three minutes in duration, and consequently not demonstrating the full extent of the candidates' compositional skills.

For this option, candidates are required to submit a realisation, a score in the form appropriate to the style, and a commentary. All three areas are assessed holistically, but candidates are reminded that, in order to achieve the highest marks, the recording and score must be clear and articulate and the commentary must be a full and detailed one.

It was splendid to see even more submissions this year where the candidate had taken the trouble to create a 'real' recording, often playing their own composition on their own instrument, together with a friend or friends accompanying.

Examiners felt that the best compositions seen were outstanding. They felt that candidates were given the opportunity to express their compositional creativity to the fullest extent using the medium of their choice. Some very high marks were awarded again this year for this option.

New Specification: Available for first assessment in June 2010

The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that this unit (2554: Composing 2) will be superseded by Unit G355: Composing 2 in the new specification, and this will be available for first assessment in June 2010. Whereas Unit 2554 is an **examined** unit, Unit G355: Composing 2 will be assessed through a centre marked portfolio (part of which is compiled under controlled conditions), and will be externally **moderated**.

As many of the composing tasks in the new specification remain the same, or similar, to the current ones, much of the information given in the above report is relevant to the new specification.

2555 Historical and Analytical Studies

General Comments

Examiners reported an overall standard of attainment which they felt was lower than in previous sessions. Candidates seemed often to be less well prepared for the exam and often less able to answer the specific question as set. This was particularly apparent in Sections A and B, when questions were directed at the Area of Study *Tonality*. However, questions which focused on the Area of Study *Words and Music* were often very well answered, with many candidates showing a real understanding of the musical processes being employed.

Overall, the marks attained in Section A were in line with previous sessions, whilst Section C showed some improvement. It was in section B that answers were often characterised by superficiality, difficulty in using knowledge and prepared answers to tackle the focus of questions as set, and answers which failed to convince that candidates had really engaged with the music under discussion.

Teachers' Tip. Candidates should practise preparing essay plans for a number of essay titles, from past papers and of the teacher's own contrivance. They should practise adapting prepared answers to questions with a different slant or emphasis, or indeed more open questions with less specific focus. They should become familiar with the pattern of questions often found within a Topic: for example, Topic 4 in this paper, which offered a question on a named genre (film), a question on a named composer from the Specification and their use of an Area of Study (Britten's use of tonality), and an open question on any vocal music from the period.

Section A

1 This was generally well answered, with most candidates scoring two or three marks. Common faults were the failure to identify the opening unison, or the later *divisi*. The imitation at bar 26 was variously described as 'call and response' and 'fugue', and the phrase beginning at bar 28 was thought by some to be contrapuntal.

Teachers' Tip. Candidates should be encouraged at this level to use correct musical terminology. The study of Words and Music should encourage the understanding of common choral textures such as unison, homophony, heterophony, counterpoint, imitation, and so on. Above all, candidates should acquire a firm understanding of what tonality means, and in particular how composers used and developed it during the period from which this extract is taken.

- 2 (a) Despite the aural evidence, the fully notated harmony, and the choral melodic restatement of the chord in bar 14, this was poorly answered by many.
- 2 (b) Many candidates correctly referred to the dissonant D_b in bar 15, and the chromatic harmony in 17/18. Several answers noted the ironic use of rising chromaticism for the word *level*. Some candidates referred only to the chromatic melody at this point.
- 2 (c) This cadence was more correctly identified by many, though a good number failed to consider the chords for *glassy* as required, and therefore missed the textbook cadential approach II⁷ – V⁷.
- 3 Most answers here scored one or two marks. The opening E_b was missed by many, though the final three notes were usually correct. Many answers gaining three marks lacked only an accidental. There were a pleasing number of wholly correct answers.

Teachers' Tip. As a simple matter of exam technique, candidates should be encouraged to use the preparation time before the exam, and time within the exam, to satisfy themselves that they understand (and do not subsequently forget, in the heat of the moment) what a question is asking and requires. Where a question is in several parts, for instance Question 2, candidates should ensure that the wording at the start of the question (in this case 'comment on the harmony and tonality') is still remembered when tackling part c). Some candidates strayed from the point this year. Likewise, this planning and preparation should prevent correct answers being given for the wrong question, for example, observations on instrumentation in answer to Question 4 instead of Question 5.

- 4 and 5 These were particularly well answered by many. In Q.4 candidates had many instances available, with the melisma for 'stirs', and the musical treatments of 'bell's huge tolling' and 'Blowing orders on their trumpets' being popular choices. Sadly, many candidates referred to instrument effects in this question, despite the requirement in the question wording, and the opportunity for these observations in Q 5. Q.5 produced perceptive answers from all but the few who gave general and superficial descriptions. Most candidates gained four or more marks here, with many achieving all seven.
- 6 It is sad to report that although there were, as usual, many good and detailed answers here, achieving three or four marks, a good number of candidates failed to score from this regular question of comparison between the extract and a work of the candidate's choosing. Some candidates still offer no answer here, despite surely having listened to other works from the period in their study for the exam. Some referred to a work well out of period, and some wrote vaguely of an unnamed work.
- 7 Curiously, parts a) and b) caused a problem for candidates who otherwise and elsewhere did very well. Conversely, those who performed less well overall gained full marks in these straightforward analysis questions. Part c) produced a disappointing crop of discussions of texture and instrumentation, rather than of tonality as required. However, although such detail was not required to achieve full marks here, it was very pleasing to find candidates able and anxious to identify the tonic as g minor, and to name the modulations to A_b and C majors, before the return to the tonic.
- 8 Common observations included the frequent change of solo instrument, the change of instrumentation for the um-cha accompaniment in the bridge, and the interjections and countermelody introduced later in the extract.
- 9 This was pleasingly well done by very many candidates, with the minor key, the *legato* articulation, generally low *tessitura*, relentless accompaniment figure, and descending melodic shape being observed, among other features.

Section B

Topic 1

As usual, only a relatively few centres prepared for this Topic, but, again as usual, answers were generally of a high quality.

Answers to Question 10 sometimes began by spending too long detailing the features of *prima prattica*, and were not always able to give many detailed references to actual music when discussing *seconda prattica*. Question 11, however, produced some answers of high quality, showing knowledge of a wide range of features and a real familiarity with the musical references. Byrd and Monteverdi were popular choices for discussion in Question 12. Answers showed good contextual knowledge, and again were able to give detailed musical references.

Topic 2

Sadly, very few centres are attracted to this Topic, but as with Topic 1, those that do so produce answers of very pleasing quality, displaying knowledge through a range of relevant illustrations.

Dido and Aeneas proved a rich source for Question 13, while Handel and Gluck were popular choices for Question 15. Not all responses to Question 14 were of this quality, however, with some prepared answers of word-setting and vocal style failing to address the required focus on Bach's use of tonality and harmony.

Topic 3

Question 16 proved something of an exception this year, being one instance where many candidates were able to include in their answer a knowledge of the use of tonality and harmony. Schumann was the most popular choice for comparison with Schubert, and candidates were generally able to illustrate convincingly the different use of voice, accompaniment, and tonality by the two composers. *Gretchen am Spinnrad* and *Erlkönig* were widely used for illustration, as well as songs from *Die Schöne Müllerin*. The opening song from *Dichterliebe* was used to great effect to make the comparison, and many candidates were able to give a convincing knowledge of these and other lieder. More superficial answers would, for instance, cite the use of the diminished seventh in number four from *Dichterliebe*, but fail to mention its combination with the *ritard.* and the suspense created by the rest, before *ich liebe dich*, or indeed, the bitter-sweet dissonance on *liebe*. Similarly, in referring to *Ich grolle nicht*, many references to the use of the dominant minor ninth, failed to explain its significant use on *Herz*, the dissonance underlining the heartache.

Question 16 provided further evidence of some candidates mis-reading the question, and making comparisons with inappropriate music. Clearly, references to 'arias' from Wagner's *Ring*, stretch the meaning of song too far.

Answers to Question 17 often underlined the weakness of knowledge and understanding of tonality. As these reports have noted before, too often candidates believe that once music begins to explore dissonance, it becomes atonal. Answers here were often simplistic and superficial, and failed to mention the music or musical language of key figures in the period, such as Wagner.

Topic 4

There were some excellent answers to Question 19, with detailed references being made to techniques the film scores of John Williams, Herrmann, and Elfman. Less successful, however, were those answers which addressed film versions of stage musicals, usually *West Side Story* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. These often failed to identify aspects of the scores relevant to the film adaptations, and sadly did little more than identify and illustrate the musical setting of story and lyrics.

Again, in Question 20, the required focus on tonality was often overlooked in otherwise quite knowledgeable accounts of word-setting and vocal techniques. Those which did answer the appropriate aspect of the question very often were able to impress with well supported descriptions of Britten's musical language. *The Turn of the Screw*, *Peter Grimes*, *Curlew River*, *St. Nicholas*, *Albert Herring*, and the *War Requiem* were all very well covered by candidates here.

Question 21 attracted many candidates anxious to tell all they knew about *West Side Story*, *Curlew River*, or other well-prepared works. It also, sadly, attracted many superficial accounts, characterised by a lack of detail or familiarity with the music, and poor essay writing and use of language.

Topic 5

This relatively new Topic is gaining in popularity. Question 22 attracted very few answers, with good accounts of the word-setting in the Lennon and McCartney songs being most frequently discussed. The comparison required by Question 23 produced some very one-sided answers, with either 'art' or 'popular' examples being much better covered than the other.

Question 24 produced some knowledgeable and detailed accounts of instruments and technology in performance and production of popular songs. Not always, however, did these accounts relate the knowledge and detail to their 'expressive use' as required.

Section C

All questions in this section proved popular this year. They tended in many cases to be quite short, and the written style and use of English and technical terminology often left much to be desired.

However, the content was usually good and to the point. Some examples, for instance for Question 27, were really thoughtful and impressive. Question 25 produced some good and detailed accounts of the fusion of different styles within the contemporary pop scene. Some candidates gave a less specific interpretation of 'crossover', and explained the significance of works such as Monteverdi's *Vespers* and the *Eroica Symphony* in spanning the changeover of musical style and expression.

Many of the candidates attempting Question 26 were able to give quite detailed accounts of influential listening, but all too often they failed to explain how and to what extent this had changed their own style or technique. Several gave accounts of the salutary influence gained from listening to recordings of their own playing.

Question 27 attracted fewer answers, but was generally well done. Most could give a convincing overview of the changing attitudes to tonality from both composers and audiences in the twentieth century, and most were able to show how tonality has reasserted its importance, albeit sometimes in modified form, and also how for some genres, it never went away.

There were very few really good answers to Question 28, most achieving marks in the 9 to 14 range. Although a general knowledge of music as background, then and now, was clear, too many failed to give specific examples of music or contexts. Some stronger answers took issue with the notion of 'complaint' in the question, and discussed the positive aspects of background music: underscore in drama, and the use of music in therapy being discussed.

Question 29 produced some particularly good and detailed answers on important advances and developments in performing styles and techniques. These covered a range of instruments, but particularly focused on guitarists and bass guitarists as well as flautists, trumpeters, and singers.

The shape of things to come

This new 'Historical and Analytical Studies in Music' unit (Unit G356), from the new Specification for GCE Music, will be examined for the first time in January 2010, although there will also be re-sit opportunities for the present Unit 2555 in both January and June of that year.

The new unit (Unit G356) has received a great deal of interest, with the changes and new content being welcomed by centres. Its content is based on the present course, and develops it further.

The major changes can be summarised:

- Section A will now have only one listening Extract, lasting a maximum of five minutes, and carrying 40 marks. It will continue to be taken from a vocal work written between 1900 and 1945, and the questions will focus on features in the music which relate to the Areas of Study *Tonality* and *Interpretation*. *Interpretation* replaces *Words and Music* as an Area of Study for all three units at A2, and in this case refers to the interpretation of the text in the music of the extract.
- Section B. In this section candidates will study a genre chosen from a list of six. For each genre there are three pieces of prescribed repertoire for study, and centres will supplement this listening and study with other related repertoire for contextual understanding. Again, *Tonality* and *Interpretation* will be the two areas of focus in this study, *Interpretation* focusing on the musical response to text or other subject matter.

Candidates will answer two questions in this section, each carrying 25 marks.

- There is no Section C synoptic essay in the new Specification.
- The paper is marked out of a total of 90 marks.

Full details of the new Specification, together with specimen assessment material, are available from the Board and from its website.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Music 3872/7872
June 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2550	Raw	100	81	71	62	53	44	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2551	Raw	100	81	73	65	58	51	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2552	Raw	100	68	61	55	49	43	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2553	Raw	100	79	71	63	56	49	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2554	Raw	100	78	71	64	57	50	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2555	Raw	100	67	61	55	50	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3872	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7872	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3872	20.2	42.6	65.1	83.5	94.8	100.0	1411
7872	22.5	47.8	68.8	89.5	97.9	100.0	1199

2610 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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