



2004 Music Performance Group: GA 3: Aural and Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the 2004 paper matched that of the 2001 to 2003 examination papers and comprised a total of 117 marks. There were nine questions, eight of which were to be answered, with students having the option of responding to either Question 7 (Part-writing) or Question 8 (Improvisation).

The overall results for this examination were the highest in the four-year term of the current Music Performance: Group Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design. As in previous years, many students were unable to achieve equal results across the four areas of focus within Section A: Aural comprehension (that is, melody, harmony, rhythm and characteristics of a pre-recorded work), although results continue to demonstrate steady improvement in most areas. Music literacy is still an issue, although this area also improved. Basic notational skills remain the most serious weakness for a significant number of students, who demonstrated little knowledge of rudimentary skills in this area. Many students used salient terminology very vaguely, possibly because of a lack of awareness or confusion about the meaning(s) of terms. Many students continue to use pen in Section A: Aural comprehension, which is not a good idea.

To effectively prepare students for the examination, teachers must be aware of the requirements of the Study Design and the structure of the examination. Some students were clearly disadvantaged in the examination because of inadequate and/or inappropriate preparation.

Examination Technique

Many students continued to demonstrate very poor examination technique, particularly apropos issues of time management. Assessors often observed that questions worth the most marks (Questions 7c, 8c, 9a and 9b) were either not attempted or were addressed last and clearly very hurriedly. In addition, some students wrote very little for the longer questions (those worth nine and 12 marks), yet they ran out of writing space for the questions worth six marks or less. This indicates that many students did not use the reading time wisely (if at all). Assessors also noticed that:

- many students did not finish question 9b (indeed, some also didn't finish 9a)
- many students had not thought through the precise nature and specific requirements of each question or the focus for individual answers, hence their responses were often highly repetitious.

This second observation was despite the questions being written in a style that provided a direction for focused responses, the aim being to prompt students to address the required number of techniques, issues and/or considerations demanded by the question. Many students did not read the question stems (or indeed the questions themselves) very thoroughly at all, which was a serious problem, especially with respect to focusing answers and avoiding responses that were obviously prepared prior to the examination. Many students wrote responses that did not answer the questions on this examination; rather they were directly relevant to questions found on papers from previous years or were 'generic'. It is strongly recommended that students do not attempt to 'second-guess' what will be on the paper and/or write responses beforehand then attempt to 'push' them into the specific requirements of the given question. Students who adopt this approach almost invariably fail to answer the question and answers of this type are totally obvious to assessors.

When constructing responses, many of the high-achieving students made notes that featured the most significant elements and/or concepts of their responses. These were intended to jog their memory while writing the answer, thus keeping them 'on task'. Many of these same students highlighted (and/or underlined) exactly what was required as well as the various key parts of each question so that once they had read and analysed the question, they only needed to re-read the highlighted/underlined components in order to present a succinct, salient, focused and well-organised response. Many of the stronger students tended to use dot points for their responses, and commonly presented clear, deliberate and cogent comments and arguments. This was seemingly a useful time management skill given that these students completed the examination thoroughly and within the time allotted.

In preparing students for the examination, teachers should consider the instruments played by students and adapt their teaching strategies to cater for differences. For example, some singers lack experience in using music notation and general musicianship/theory, but are able to write strong prose responses based on their performance experience. Drummers/percussionists and guitarists often need to spend time developing their notation skills and ability to write about their approach to performance.

The most common areas of weakness included:

- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the correct names of intervals and the qualities of chords (despite all chords prescribed for study having been listed on the paper)



- an inability to recognise notated rhythmic figures
- an inability to notate rhythms accurately
- failure to apply consistent musical grammar
- confused terminology
- confused nomenclature, particularly intervallic versus harmonic and/or the intermingling of chord names/types
- difficulty identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals within a melodic context
- a lack of understanding of each section of the paper and/or exactly what each question required.

Other concerns

- Several students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A, although the number of such students has continued to decline over the years. Students are advised to attempt every question (except one of the optional questions in Section B) and to practise under examination conditions using papers from previous years.
- Many students' prose answers were very hard to decipher, primarily due to illegibility and/or the use of extremely blunt pencils.
- Some students answered the written questions in the same way two or three times. Students should analyse questions (especially during reading time) in order to understand the nature of each question and to make decisions about how best to approach each of them.
- Confusion about, or lack of awareness about, the meanings of terms arose frequently, especially regarding 'tone colour', 'articulation', 'voicing', 'voice leading', 'motifs', 'contrast' and 'variation'. 'Rhythmic relationships' was sometimes treated as if 'rhyming' relationships (within the lyrics of a given song) was the factor. It was clear that these terms and concepts needed to be used more regularly in teaching and learning programs.
- Yet again this year, when answering questions in Section B, some students referred almost exclusively to their group/ensemble's performance examination (or their training for it) instead of to rehearsals and/or performances they had participated in during the year. This might indicate that these students were not aware of the relevant outcomes.
- Although less common than in previous years, a few value judgements, particularly about the standard or quality of musicianship, were written in the responses for some questions, especially Question 6. Students are reminded that this examination is not an appropriate forum for comments about their love of or disdain for a particular style of music, or a particular performer or ensemble.
- Some students spent a great deal of time commenting on the quality of their own performance, improvisatory and/or part-writing/arranging abilities. Students are reminded that this is not an appropriate forum for comments about the relative quality or standard of their own capabilities unless such value judgements are requested.

General comments regarding prose-based responses

Many students did not appear to know the requirements of different prose-based response formats, for example, the difference between 'identify', 'describe' and 'discuss'. Indeed, many students virtually did not differentiate between the requirements of these task words. 'Discuss' does not mean identify or simply make a list, nor does 'explain' or 'describe'. 'Describe' essentially requires the demonstration of **knowledge**, especially with respect to salient characteristics, components or elements, whereas 'discuss' requires the application of knowledge to demonstrate **understanding**, invariably demanding a higher level of insight. The relative marks available for each response type should provide an indication of the level of depth and/or breadth necessary.

As always, there was some truly atrocious handwriting, very dubious spelling, and/or noticeably poor grammar and literacy skills, which made the task quite onerous for assessors. Students are reminded that this is a formal examination that requires a degree of care regarding issues of syntax, spelling and (especially) legibility.

A few suggestions

- Students need to be aware of the requirements of various question types and should practise answering similar questions as part of their learning program.
- Students must use the 15 minutes of reading time prior to the commencement of the examination productively. A significant number of responses indicated that students had not read the given question carefully. Prose-based answers often lacked organisation, cohesion and cogency.
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. Notes should be either on a line or in a space – not both – and should not be so large that they encompass two spaces. Students should use a pencil (and an eraser) rather than a pen when notating music. Note that students are not allowed to use liquid



paper or correction tape during exams. Without it, most students who undertake Section A of the paper with a pen wind up with a fair mess as a result of crossing out, especially regarding questions featuring melodic and rhythmic transcription.

- When undertaking transcription questions, students should perhaps be advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space provided for the final answer.
- If students do their rough rhythmic transcription work using 'stick notation' (stems and flags without note heads) or slashes across lines representing rhythmic subdivisions/segments of each beat, they must strive to be very careful when they transfer their work across to the answer space. Very often, students' rough work was more accurate on the rough work page than on the stave(s) where the answer(s) was presented.
- Regarding melodic transcriptions: If a student has difficulty with precise, pitch-based, mensural notation (that is, the **exact** notes) an attempt should be made somehow to express the contour/shape of the melody, even if a line graph is used. Although this approach cannot result in full marks, marks are available for a written expression of the melody's relative contour. As such, it is possible to attain a (minimum) pass for the melodic transcription question by presenting an accurately notated rhythm (above the stave, for example) and an accurate line graph of the melodic contour.
- Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music 'sequencer', especially to program rhythms, chords and progressions for aural training (perhaps improvisation training, too) and to realise their harmonisations (part-writing option).

Section A: Aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals and melody

Question 1 – Recognition of intervals

1a

Identify the interval distance (quality and number) between the bracketed notes.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 15 | 23 | 23 | 21 | 18 | 2.1 |

- minor 3rd
- Major 2nd (tone/whole step)
- minor 2nd (semitone/half step)
- Perfect 5th

About 80% of students correctly identified the minor 3rd (interval one) and perhaps 65% identified the minor 2nd (interval three) accurately. Surprisingly, only about 40% correctly identified the Major 2nd (interval two) and an even smaller percentage of students correctly identified the Perfect 5th (interval four). Few papers had all four intervals identified correctly. Many students wrote only 'ascending' ('up'/'asc') or 'descending' ('down'/'des'), or arrows up or down. Marks were not available for simply recognising the directions (upward or downward) of the intervals. Quite a few students were able to identify number but not quality, especially with respect to the 2^{nds} and the minor 3rd. A fair number of students were confused about interval nomenclature, for example calling the Perfect 5th a Major 5th.

Nevertheless, there continued to be a noticeable improvement in this area. Most students clearly labelled intervals; that is they used Major/Maj and minor/min rather than simply 'M' and 'm'. A significant number of students, however, continued to write 'M's that appeared to be **deliberately** ambiguous. Students are strongly urged to write Major/Maj/Ma or minor/min/mi for intervals of 2^{nds}, 3^{rds}, 6^{ths} and 7^{ths}. Generally speaking, a high mark for this question tended to indicate high standards for much of the remainder of the aural comprehension section of the paper.

1b

Circle the tonality of the excerpt.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 12 | 24 | 64 | 1.5 |

Melodic minor

It was very pleasing to note that almost 65% of students correctly identified the melodic minor tonality, with nearly 25% of students indicating the harmonic minor. As such, nearly 90% of students could at least hear the minor quality of the melody. Unfortunately, nearly half of the students who were awarded no marks for Question 1b did not present any answer at all. Perhaps some of these students were not aware that the question had two parts. Students are strongly advised to attempt every question, especially ones where only a simple circle is necessary to present its answer. There are no penalties for an incorrect response.

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Question 2 – Melodic transcription

On the blank (first) stave, transcribe the pan flute part. Be certain to indicate the length of the first note.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 6.0 |

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the Pan Flute part, Horn in C, Elec. Piano, and Elec. Bass. The second system continues the same parts. Chords are indicated below the piano and bass staves: C, G, Am, Am7 in the first system; F, C, F, G, C in the second system.

The results for this melodic transcription question were the best in the history of this examination (2001–2004). Almost certainly this was due to its (C) major tonality and there having been only five intervals not ‘by step’, none of which was greater than a Perfect 5th. Nevertheless, there continued to be many students who had significant difficulty with this task. Many students ‘forced’ their transcription to end on the ‘C’ from which the excerpt started (third-space C, an octave above middle-C). Many students clearly do not understand the nature of diatonic harmonic progressions as they continued to include almost impossible notes in their transcriptions (for example, ‘D#s’ and ‘Db’s’ against A minor chords, ‘G#s’ against F Major chords, or ‘Bb’s’ against G Major chords). A significant number of students also seemed to be unable to use the notes of the horn and electric bass parts to any level of advantage (the writing of a ‘Bb’ against the ‘B-natural’ in the C Horn part – beat three of bar one – reinforced this observation). Students who scored highly for this question used information from the other instrumental parts very effectively when drafting their response on the blank manuscript page.

A large number of students had problems with intervals greater than a second (see bars one, two and three), especially descending ones. In situations where there were ‘leaps’ of a 3rd or greater, all notes in the entire melody were a member of the given underpinning chord while the melody simultaneously featured the notes of the chord as an arpeggiation. Even the descending Perfect 5th (see bar two) featured the 5th and the root note of both chords under it (the A minor and the A minor 7). It was clear that many students had no understanding at all of the essential relationships between melody, harmony and tonality.

Some students did not make certain that the durational values of the notes in each bar added up to what was required by the ‘four-four’ time signature while some students wrote all crotchets, all minims, or notes indicating ‘four-two’ as the time signature. Many students notated only the rhythm of the melody. Some went on to draw its general contour as a simple line graph across the stave, often without note heads. This was acceptable (see comment above) although high marks could not be achieved through this method.



Most of the problems observed in this question demonstrated:

- a limited understanding of the notes in chords and the direct relationships between melody, diatonic harmony and scales/tonalities
- a limited awareness of the characteristics of logical melodic structures and/or intervallic function in melodic contexts
- weak intervallic skills, especially when the melody is not moving by step
- a limited awareness of rhythmic issues and/or an inability to transcribe rhythms in common time
- a lack of a systematic approach to the question, for example, perhaps first notating the rhythm.

It is clear that students need more practice with melodic transcriptions in four-part contexts. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to note that most students attempted to answer the question and that most students obtained some marks, even if only by means of a transcription of the rhythm, or perhaps the rhythm plus a fairly accurate 'line graph'.

Part 2: Chords and harmony

Question 3 – Recognition of chord types

Identify the chords in the spaces provided, selecting your answers from the list above.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---------|
| % | 5 | 19 | 23 | 18 | 12 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 3.1 |

1. Major chord
2. Major 7 chord
3. minor 7 chord
4. Dominant 7 chord
5. Augmented chord
6. minor chord
7. Dominant 7/suspended 4 chord
8. diminished chord

This question was not handled as well as the previous ones. Indeed, only about two per cent of students successfully identified all eight of the chords. It was disappointing to note the seemingly high number of students who could not identify even the primary chords (those without 7^{ths}) as well as the high number who could not correctly identify a major and/or minor chord. The augmented and diminished chords were frequently identified in reverse and a large number of students wrote simply 'sus4' rather than 'dominant 7/sus 4' or even '7/sus4'. Despite the clarity of the arpeggios, many students seemed unable to distinguish whether or not the upper note was a 7th or an octave above the root note. An ability to recognise the various chord characters/qualities/types is essential to all aspects related to an understanding of harmony. Students should be able to identify most (if not all) of these chords fairly readily. The following is a suggested approach to teaching chord recognition skills.

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Major chord | 1 to 3 – Major 3 rd | 3 to 5 – minor 3 rd | 5 to 8 – Perfect 4 th | the top note is the octave |
| minor chord | 1 to 3 – minor 3 rd | 3 to 5 – Major 3 rd | 5 to 8 – Perfect 4 th | the top note is the 8 ^{ve} |
| Augmented chord | 1 to 3 – Major 3 rd | 3 to #5 – Major 3 rd | #5 to 8 – Major 3 rd | 8 ^{ve} on top |
| diminished chord | 1 to 3 – minor 3 rd | 3 to b5 – minor 3 rd | b5 to 8 – Tritone | 8 ^{ve} on top |
| Suspended 4 chord | 1 to 4 – Perfect 4 th | 4 to 5 – Major 2 nd (tone) | 5 to 8 – Perfect 4 th | 8 ^{ve} on top |
| Dominant 7 chord | 1 to 3 – Major 3 rd | 3 to 5 – minor 3 rd | 5 to 7 – minor 3 rd | minor 7 th on top |
| Dominant 7/suspended 4 chord | 1 to 4 – Perfect 4 th | 4 to 5 – Major 2 nd (tone) | 5 to 7 – minor 3 rd | minor 7 th on top |
| Major 7 chord | 1 to 3 – Major 3 rd | 3 to 5 – minor 3 rd | 5 to 7 – Major 3 rd | Major 7 th on top |
| minor 7 chord | 1 to 3 – minor 3 rd | 3 to 5 – Major 3 rd | 5 to 7 – minor 3 rd | minor 7 th on top |
| Half-diminished chord (min7/flat5) | 1 to 3 – minor 3 rd | 3 to b5 – minor 3 rd | b5 to 7 – Major 3 rd | minor 7 th on top |
| (Full) diminished 7 chord (dim 7) | 1 to 3 – minor 3 rd | 3 to b5 – minor 3 ^r | b5 to 7 – minor 3 rd | diminished 7 th (sounds as Major 6 th) on top |

Once students can hear (and preferably sing) the chords as arpeggios, they can then move towards recognising them when all four notes are sounded simultaneously. It is also worth noting the following regarding chords with 7^{ths}:

- only the Major 7 sonority of the chords prescribed for study includes the 7th degree of the major scale (that is, the note a semitone or half step below the octave)
- the 'diminished 7th' of the (full) diminished 7 sonority is, in fact, a Major 6th above the root note. It is called a '7th' because of harmonic rules, not because it is the 7th degree of a (common) scale



- the remaining four chords with 7ths that are prescribed for study have minor 7ths (that is, they contain the 7th degree of the natural minor scale – the note a whole tone or whole step below the octave).

Part 3: Rhythm

Question 4 – Transcription of rhythms

Write the rhythm only into the bars without notes of the C clarinet part of the four-part score.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|---|----|---|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 4 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 31 | 4.9 |

Students' results for this question continued to improve. With a mean score above 60% (the first time in the four-year history of the examination for this version of the Study Design), it was pleasing to note that fewer than five percent of students either did not attempt the question or could notate any of it correctly. Indeed, more than 30% of students attained full marks.

Nevertheless, a series of problems were consistently evident.

- Some students had other than a total of four crotchet beats in one or the other or both of the relevant two bars.
- Some students did not attempt to divide their response into two bars of four beats each.
- Some students lost track of the pulse which resulted in the quavers of beat four of bar one (bar two of the excerpt) to be displaced – commonly the second quaver of beat four being placed on the downbeat of the second bar of the transcription – thus displacing and seriously complicating the second bar to be transcribed.
- some students were unable to notate the 'tim-ka' syncopation (dotted quaver/semi-quaver) accurately (beat one of bar two of the transcription). Many appeared to have heard the syncopated figure but had no idea how to write it.
- The 'ti-tika' (quaver/two semi-quavers) on beat two of the first bar to be transcribed was often notated incorrectly, likewise the 'tika-ti' (two semi-quavers/quaver) of beat two of the second bar to be transcribed.
- Often no '3' was written under the triplet quaver figure, this despite there being triplet quavers (**with a '3'**) in the marimba part and on the same beat.
- Even when recognised, the more 'active' figures (beat three of bar one and beats one, two and three of bar two) were often positioned incorrectly.
- Many students failed to recognise that every rhythmic figure appeared elsewhere in some other part. It was strange to note the number of students who did not accurately transcribe the figures of the C Clarinet part that were in rhythmic unison with the 'cello part (beats one, two and four of bar one) and the marimba part (beat three of bar one and beat three of bar two).



- Some students augmented the rhythm (often not consistently) so that their transcription was primarily in four-two time – (mostly) minims, (sometimes dotted minims) and/or entirely crotchets.
- Although marks were not affected directly, ‘common practice’ groupings of beats with two or more sounds (every beat except the downbeat of the first bar to be transcribed) were often not used. It was clear that a significant percentage of students were not familiar with the conventions of rhythmic notation.

It was observed generally that students who aligned their answers vertically (to the rhythms of the other parts) achieved higher marks. Although certainly not imperative, this approach helps students overcome several of the problems identified above, especially pulse-related issues. It was clear that some students needed more practice with rhythms presented in four-part contexts.

Question 5 – Recognition and transcription of rhythms

Where the rhythmic differences occur

a. circle the entire bar with the altered rhythms.

b. notate clearly the rhythm (only) that was played (playings 3 to 7) by writing the altered rhythm(s) in the appropriate bar of the blank stave provided.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 8 | 13 | 15 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 1 | 3.7 |

It was somewhat surprising to note that the mean score for this question was not as good as that for the same question in the 2003 examination. This observation is particularly puzzling given that this year’s excerpt was in common time (4–4) while the 2003 excerpt was in a compound time signature (12–8). Most students were able to correctly identify the bars with the rhythmic differences. Although a number of students did very well, many others experienced considerable difficulty with the question. Once again this year, this question was the one from Section A that was mostly commonly not attempted by weaker students.

Issues common to many responses included the following:

- neglecting to circle the entire bar where the rhythms were different, as per the instructions. Even though the transcriptions usually made it clear to which parts the student was referring, this was not always the case
- noting that a rhythmic alteration occurred in the correct bar, but circling the wrong figure (this despite the instruction: ‘circle the entire bar with the altered rhythms’). This instruction was incorporated so that students could be awarded full marks for 5a, even if 5b for the given bar was notated inaccurately
- not noticing that every altered rhythmic figure to be notated appeared somewhere else within the printed notation
- a strange array of very unusual groupings, especially given that every rhythmic figure appeared elsewhere on the page. Although marks were not deducted for groupings, students should be made aware of ‘standard practice’ in this regard for all time signatures/metric orientations
- unfamiliarity with the layout and details of this question type.

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Part 4: Characteristics of a pre-recorded work

Question 6

Excerpt from: 'How to Explain?' performed by The Cat Empire on the CD *The Cat Empire*

The entries following each segment of the question are only a guide to possible responses and the various aspects/issues presented are certainly not exhaustive. These are examples of salient points and/or aspects of the question's components. A brief discussion about student responses follows each segment.

6a

Identify two of the instruments heard in the excerpt. Do not identify vocal parts in your answer.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 1 | 3 | 96 | 2.0 |

- trumpet
- trombone
- (tenor) saxophone
- (montuno) piano
- rhythm guitar
- electric bass guitar
- drum kit (syndrums, including PCM handclaps, castanets and cross-stick rim taps)
- timbales (shells)
- cymbal bell or dome (cowbell)

More than 95% of students were awarded full marks for this question. Some students identified more than two instruments, which was fine, but no extra marks were available. It was surprising to note the reasonably high number of students who identified the vocals despite being instructed not to in the question. It was also a surprise that more than twenty students identified only one instrument.

6b

Describe the role of one of the instruments identified in part a.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 1 | 9 | 31 | 36 | 23 | 2.7 |

- Trumpet: introductory statement/prelude/'fanfare'/obligato (ad libitum). Under the verse's lyrics, operating as a responding second voice or counter-melody/descant line. Section lines with remainder of horns during the chorus. Basically leading voice for the horn lines in the chorus.
- Trombone: section lines with remainder of horns during the chorus.
- (Tenor) saxophone: section lines with remainder of horns during the chorus.
- Piano: provides a 'montuno' – the repetitive, pitch-based rhythmic bridge between the melody instruments and the rhythm instruments.
- Rhythm guitar: backbeat/offbeat 'dub' or 'ska' feel.
- Electric bass guitar: doubles piano's bass line under verses. Fairly straight, tonic-based feel under choruses. Presents Latin/'ska' feel (although not particularly syncopated) for the horn-feature sections.
- Drum kit (primarily 'Syndrums', including PCM [pulse-code modulated] handclaps, castanets and cross-sticked rim-taps): principally a 'ska' feel. Rhythmic link between sections within the ensemble.
- Timbales (shells): Latin effect.
- Cymbal bell or dome (cowbell): used sparsely for effect.

A large proportion students did not truly 'describe' the role of the selected instrument – that is, no knowledge and/or awareness of the given instrument's purpose within the excerpt was presented in any way. Many students simply described and/or labelled the instrument itself, or perhaps an audio effect being used (for example, six-string electric guitar with chorus effect, four-string electric bass with parametric equaliser, or saxophone together with other horns/wind instruments). Students should be encouraged to learn about the roles of instruments and instrumental parts within musical ensembles as this issue is critical to the understanding of virtually all music in ensemble settings. A surprisingly large number of students indicated that the opening fanfare/cadenza was played on a saxophone, citing reasons such as 'trumpets don't play unaccompanied solos in this style of music while saxophones are the solo wind instruments in this style, so the opening section **must** have been played by a saxophone'. Students are strongly advised to write about what they hear, not what they think they should hear and/or what they believe particular instrument/s should be doing in a given musical style.

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6ci.

Describe the structure of the excerpt.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|---------|
| % | 5 | 62 | 33 | 1.3 |

- trumpet introduction
- verse (two phrases)
- chorus
- instrumental feature (bridge or interlude was acceptable)
- verse (one phrase)
- chorus
- instrumental feature ('outphrase' [or similar] was acceptable)

Students who answered this question well tended to use diagrams rather than prose or dot points. These diagrams commonly featured the use of words (rather than letters) to label the structure. It was pleasing to note that some of the stronger students provided dot point notes as reminders to themselves of what occurred in each section, which proved useful for answering the next two parts of the question (this was a clear indication that they had used the reading time to their advantage).

The use of appropriate terminology seemed to be a common problem, even though 'verse-chorus-verse-bridge' was included as an example. Irrespective of the terms used to label them, many students had difficulty establishing the correct number of sections for the excerpt. Many students had trouble with the **specific** structure of the excerpt, perhaps because it included an introduction and instrumental features/interludes and therefore did not 'map' directly on to 'common' binary song form. Although acceptable if placed logically within the structural analysis, some students used the terms 'verse intro' and 'verse outro' for the sections without vocals (the trumpet introduction and the instrumental features). The use of these terms was almost always confused and/or confusing, especially since the structural analysis provided by students commonly placed a chorus between the verses and the 'verse outro'. Indeed, because 'intro' is an abbreviation for 'introduction', the use of the term 'outro' is probably not sensible at all given that it would be considered an abbreviation for 'outroduction' (a non-existent word). The term 'outro' was frequently used in responses that lacked clarity. Students who wish to use the term should ensure that they use it in a clear and logical way that is consistent with the analysis they are presenting. In this particular excerpt the final instrumental interlude can be viewed as somehow balancing the introduction (even though it relates directly to the first instrumental interlude, not the introduction).

6cii.

Select two sections from the structure you described in c.i. and describe the rhythmic features of each section.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
|-------|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 6 | 10 | 20 | 24 | 22 | 14 | 5 | 3.1 |

- Trumpet introduction: fairly free. Embellishments, rhythmic sequences, essentially approached like a recitative or fanfare.
- Verse: sustained chords. The Latin feel is delivered primarily via the rhythms of the vocals ('humpty-dumpty' types of syncopation – long-short...short-long) in short phrases against straight quavers from the shells of the timbales and snare drum.
- Chorus: 'Ska'/fast reggae feel featuring 'dub' offbeats from guitar(s) and piano. 'Ti-tika' rhythm from castanets. Cowbell and handclaps added for effect, but not providing driving rhythm. Bass plays fairly straight and repetitive rhythmic figures.
- Instrumental feature/s (bridge/interlude/outphrase): montuna from piano (critical to authenticity of this basically Afro-Cuban, Latin feel). Dome of cymbal used for fairly straight cowbell-type effect (different from what a cowbell player would do in a Latin ensemble). Eight-beat pattern from the rhythm section featuring horn lines on second half of each bar (in four). The rhythms of virtually all instruments in this eight-beat phrase are the same except for the bass guitar where the first bar of the phrase presents syncopation. Castanets play semi-quavers. Section ends with triplet-like figure from the drums.

The best answers for this question made comments about the changing rhythmic features of the contrasting sections. Many students who wrote about the rhythmic features of the introduction rightly observed that many of the 'freely-delivered' motifs and phrases appeared later in the excerpt but within a strict metrical context, particularly from the horn section in the instrumental features/interludes. Some students used notation (sometimes in a score-based context) to describe rhythmic features, which was almost invariably a highly successful approach. Most students, however, did not focus appropriately (if at all) upon the rhythmic features of the various sections. For example, although there are



clear differences between the rhythmic features of the verse and chorus, few students were able to describe them (or indeed any other rhythmic features).

When students chose the trumpet introduction as one of the sections to describe, there was often no reference made to what was happening rhythmically; rather, the mood of the section was addressed but without any mention of the role (or nature) of rhythm in establishing the mood (or stylistic characteristic/s). Many students talked about instrumentation and the roles of each instrument and/or their influence or contribution to the excerpt (this would have been better suited to Question 6b or analogous questions on previous examinations). Descriptions (and sometimes fairly elaborate analyses) of harmonic occurrences were presented by a number of students. Many students talked about style without any reference at all to rhythm, as if they knew a fair bit about Latin-American music and it was here that they were going to write it down, no matter what (students are reminded to answer the question, not attempt to demonstrate what they know, especially if the context is incorrect or unsuitable). A significant number of students stated that the rhythm was slow in the introduction and faster and more upbeat in the chorus (these are issues of tempo, not rhythm), while some students focused almost all of their attention on the time signature. Many students were unable to describe the rhythmic ‘workings’, even though it seemed apparent that they knew what was happening, perhaps indicating a lack of experience in talking/writing about ways that elements of music are used in arrangements.

6d

Describe two influences on the style of the excerpt. In your response refer to examples from the music that demonstrate two ways each of the influences you have identified can be heard in the excerpt.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 7 | 4 | 10 | 21 | 24 | 21 | 13 | 3.6 |

- Mariachi-style, ‘fanfare-like’ trumpet introduction (of Mexican influence – see *The Lonely Bull* by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, for example).
- Declamatory (perhaps links could be made to ‘rap’ or ‘toasting’).
- Narrow vocal range of much pop-rock music.
- Contrast between rhythmic vocal line and fairly straight accompaniment, consistent with much ‘street music’.
- A range of Latin approaches, particularly the use of montuno from the piano/keyboards and the role(s) of the percussion.
- Considerable and significant use of ‘ska’ and/or reggae-like approaches and nuances.
- Some elements of funk/disco (especially the horn lines and some of the four-on-the-floor kick drum and hi-hat figures in certain places).

It was pleasing to see that most of students had a musical understanding of what constitutes particular styles and genres. Many students displayed impressive amounts of knowledge about popular music styles, implying wide listening experiences. Most students were able to identify two stylistic influences and some could comment appropriately about relevant characteristics as evidence for stylistic influences. Nevertheless, some students described (or sometimes merely identified) only one stylistic influence, while many students named two stylistic influences but did not describe them. Students are reminded that a list does not constitute a description; it is simply a starting point that serves to identify the components, elements or issues to be explored or examined.

Some responses were very vague in their description of the style of the excerpt. For example, some students wrote that the music was ‘reggae because of the use of reggae rhythms’ or rap because the vocalist used a ‘rap style’, but there were no examples from the music as supporting evidence (as requested in the question). If students had followed the question’s instructions, a description would have resulted virtually automatically.

Students rarely talked about the ‘rhythmic feel’ of the styles that they identified, even though this consideration is perhaps the most pervasive issue regarding stylistic characteristics, especially for this type of music (in fact, perhaps for most contemporary music). The best answers referred to the location of various syncopations and the placement of (generally offbeat) accents (therefore the subtle differences in the usage of syncopation) such that they could elucidate ska influences versus reggae, pop-rock versus disco, rap versus hip-hop influences, etc. That is, they addressed the question precisely as required. Most students, however, seemed unable to do this. In addition, often two ways that each influence could be heard in the music were not presented, despite this being requested **twice** – both within the question and before the spaces provided for writing the answers. Students are advised to spend most of their reading time ‘unpacking’ the questions with an emphasis upon establishing precisely what each question demands of them.



Section B: Part-writing or Improvisation

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|----|----|
| Question Chosen | 0 | 7 | 8 |
| % | 5 | 56 | 38 |

Questions 7a and 8a

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---------|
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Average |
| % | 11 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 4.6 |

Questions 7b and 8b

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|---------|
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Average |
| % | 12 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 11 | 9 | 5.1 |

Questions 7c and 8c

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|---------|
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Average |
| % | 14 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 5.5 |

General Comments

Generally speaking, students who chose the part-writing question (Question 7) had more to say in this section and tended to express themselves noticeably better and with a higher level of insight. There were also, however, many intelligent responses to Question 8 that indicated students' thorough preparation for improvisation (although some were a little lacking in the correct use of terminology). For the most part, all students were able to demonstrate reasonable insight into a number of the aspects that they were asked to describe or discuss. This section sought to verify school-assessed coursework from Unit 3, so it was essential that students could demonstrate that they had indeed done the work and could also provide fairly in-depth insight (via description and/or discussion) into exactly what they had done and/or how they had done it.

A disturbingly large number of students wrote responses that had clearly been prepared beforehand and which commonly did not answer the question particularly well (if at all). This is not a sensible preparatory approach. Certainly it is appropriate to practise using questions from previous examinations, but it is not prudent to 'force' an answer from a previous examination question (or range of topics) into a current question, or to simply write as much as one can about the 'buzzwords' or perceived topics within the current question without actually answering it. The most important thing to do is analyse the components of the question, establish precisely what is required and address the components directly with respect to the demands of the task(s). Also, students with (usually very lengthy) prepared responses frequently appeared to have run out of time to complete the whole exam.

A large percentage of students did not understand the musical terms, even though they were all taken directly from the Study Design and have featured in the examination for three years. Most students who wrote about 'tone colour' confused it with 'tone'. Students who dealt with 'dynamics' consistently confused the term with 'pitch', 'tone colour' and/or 'rhythmic relationships'. A frequent type of response on 'dynamics' was, 'I made the melody louder than the other parts'. Students who dealt with the 'harmony' or harmonic basis of their harmonisation/arrangement frequently did not go much further than mentioning that all of the chords used were in root position, often without identifying what they were. Few students seemed to know the meanings of 'voicing' and 'voice leading', even though a very large number tried to write about them (see Question 7c). Few improvisation students appeared to know the meaning of 'motifs', 'articulation', or sometimes even 'tonality'. 'Source material' was a problem for some, even though examples were included within Question 8a.

Question 7 – Part-writing

During Unit 3 you harmonised a melodic excerpt to create an arrangement.

7a

Describe three characteristics of the melody or melodic excerpt you harmonised to create an arrangement.

Responses to this question were highly context specific. The three characteristics that students selected were expected to be clearly relevant to their harmonisation, for example, where at least two components of the particular characteristic were discussed in detail. Assessors were looking for thoughtful and relevant answers – not prepared responses.

Many students answered this question noticeably well, using appropriate musical (and analytical) terminology to describe the melody or melodic excerpt that they were given to harmonise in parts, thus creating an arrangement. The best students made it clear that they were writing about a melody that they knew intimately and that they had spent a fair amount of time analysing and working with. Characteristics most commonly described included issues of contour, leaps and general angularity, rhythm, implied harmonies, accented and unaccented passing notes, symmetry, motifs and



antecedent/consequent phrases, and various internal relationships. Some students actually notated their melody, identified three of its characteristics and described them, which was a highly successful approach.

Many students seemed confused by the question and described three characteristics of their harmonisation rather than three characteristics of the melody that they used for the harmonisation. This was unfortunate as many solid responses were presented that demonstrated considerable knowledge of issues related to harmonisation. It was pleasing to note that characteristics (melodic or otherwise) were usually described and/or explained in some detail rather than simply identified (as has commonly been the case in previous years). However, too many simplistic descriptions were written, for example, 'my melody was very simple so I used simple rhythms and basic chords'. Indeed, frequently issues regarding 'characteristics of the melody or melodic excerpt' were virtually not addressed at all. This was despite the answer space on the paper being segmented into 'Characteristic 1', 'Characteristic 2' and 'Characteristic 3', making it very clear that each of the three sections of blank lines were there for students to present a description of 'three characteristics of the melody or melodic excerpt' as per the question.

7b

Describe issues relating to three of the points from the list below which you considered when planning your harmonisation and/or arrangement.

- **tone colour**
- **harmony**
- **rhythmic relationships**
- **dynamics**
- **articulation**

It was expected that students would demonstrate how the three elements were clearly relevant to **their own** arrangement. Once again, prepared responses were generally not viewed at all favourably. The best descriptions referred to at least two issues for each of the selected elements in some degree of detail. It was expected that students would exhibit a fair understanding of issues related to the selected elements with respect to their impact upon and relevance to their own arrangement.

This question was an opportunity for students to describe the manner(s) in which they approached their part-writing task from the outset, from a planning perspective. Although the question was generally well-handled by many students, most assessors commented that the planning issue might have been 'teased out' with more depth and discernment. Many students reiterated what they had said in Question 7a, albeit in greater detail, especially where issues of harmony formed the (incorrect) basis for their previous response. Students often dealt with their finished harmonisation/arrangement rather than addressing its planning. Better responses were focused upon decisions that the students were able to describe as relevant to the planning of the arrangement. At times, however, responses presented what students thought assessors might want to read rather than how they went about planning their harmonisation and/or arrangement. Less successful responses commonly included a general description of one of the dot points, for example, 'rhythmic relationships', with virtually no reference at all to the student's own material. Indeed, it was often not possible to establish that the SAC had actually been done. This may indicate that some students were perhaps not expected to analyse and understand the excerpts they had been given, or to plan their treatment and then proceed to harmonise/arrange them with respect to the range of broader musical contexts and harmonisation/arranging procedures and issues represented by the dot points.

It appears that some teachers had provided their students with a series of formalised rules for harmonisation/arranging. This can certainly be a useful approach, but it is clear that issues of musicality and the domains of tone colour, (extended) harmony, rhythmic relationships, dynamics and articulation were often not well understood with respect to arranging procedures because they had not been explored or else they were treated more or less as an afterthought rather than being incorporated within the planning and development of the harmonisation/arrangement. This kind of approach tends to make harmonisation/arranging a kind of 'paint-by-numbers' exercise rather than a creative experience.

There were a large number of responses for this question that were obviously prepared beforehand. Most of these prepared responses lacked detail and/or failed to describe the planning of the student's own work clearly. Many students seemed not to understand that when a question asks them to describe their own work, they must describe what they did, not what they might have done, think they should have done, or what somebody else once did.

Many students seemed to be unsure of the meanings of the terms of the dot points.

'Tone Colour': students generally referred to the use of tone colour as an instrumental technique or as a chord selection issue and their answers were lacking in depth or discernment.



'Harmony': the most common statements about harmony were along the lines of 'I harmonised on the first and third beats' and 'I did not use consecutive fifths'. These statements are fine as starting points but do not constitute even an average-level description. Students sometimes referred appropriately to issues of voice leading and chord selection, although often not from a planning perspective.

'Rhythmic relationships': when dealt with appropriately, students often identified rhythms between parts, although harmonic rhythm was mentioned only occasionally. Students often wrote something like, 'I used rhythmic imitation for interest', but no description was presented of issues relating to the dot point (for example, apropos rhythmic patterns, note values, overlap, imitation, fragmentation, diminution and/or augmentation). Issues of tempo and time/signature were often presented here and usually comprised everything written about the point.

'Dynamics': students who selected dynamics as an issue usually commented that the dynamics 'took care of themselves' as a result of the register selected within which the given instrument would play. Few students mentioned issues of terracing or dynamic layering, the notion of creating tension via dynamics, or using dynamics to create climaxes. The term 'dynamics' was sometimes confused with timbre; for example, 'the dynamic of the piece is the whistle/bell instrument used to enhance a church feel'. Once again, this is more a 'tone colour' issue than a 'dynamics' one. Another response written under the banner of 'dynamics' was, 'I chose a SATB arrangement because the voices all have similar timbres'.

'Articulations': often students referred to articulation as a 'non-issue' – as something that tended to take care of itself – or they had decided that in line with the style of the piece it would either be all legato or all staccato. It is strongly suggested that if a student views a particular issue as being not particularly well-suited to their experience, they should avoid choosing to write about it. Assessors cannot award marks to students who essentially write, 'I didn't think about that', or 'I didn't need to worry about that'.

7c

Discuss three techniques you used in realising your harmonisation. In your answer you must refer to at least one of the following.

- **chord selection**
- **voicing**
- **voice leading**
- **use of digital technology (simply mentioning basic computer commands and/or operations is insufficient)**

Generally students selected only two techniques rather than three, almost certainly indicating that many students did not read the question fully. Students generally selected all three of their techniques from the list of four provided, rather than identifying other techniques for discussion. This approach proved beneficial for many as they were able to 'hit the targets' more solidly. Some students, however, wrote about listed techniques they clearly didn't understand and/or perhaps didn't even use in their harmonisations/arrangements – especially 'voicing' and 'voice leading'. The question was framed specifically to allow students an opportunity to discuss techniques that they had used in order that they could indeed demonstrate the scope of their learning and understanding of harmonisation/arranging techniques. It often appeared that many were not aware of harmonisation techniques or processes in a broad or overarching sense. In other words, even if they had used a particular technique, they didn't really know what it was and couldn't put a term or category to it. Many students re-presented the characteristics and/or points that they had dealt with in Question 7a and/or 7b

Chord selection: selection of the given harmony via placement of the note as a member of the triad (as the root, 3rd or 5th) or as an extension of the harmony (as the 7th, 9th or 11th, for example). Issues related to implied harmonies.

Most students chose to write about this technique. Most discussed the placement of notes of the melody given in order to create consonant harmonies; for example, 'the melody notes were either the root, 3rd or 5th of the chords I selected'. Few students discussed note placement within chords with much detail. It was common for students to write little more than, 'my chords were chosen according to the main melody', or 'my chords included the root, third and fifth'.

Voicing: a description based upon the logic behind placement of pitches in relation to one another. Such considerations should take note of issues of register, range and tessitura.

Some students were able to identify clearly which voices they had labelled for each part and some referred to chord voicings, but few mentioned why they had selected notes in a particular manner, usually only explaining that they had the bass note of the chord in the bass part and usually the 3rd of the chord in the melody. Students who presented the best responses for this technique were almost certainly either chamber ensemble players or choristers. Most other



students who chose to write about the technique didn't really know what it was. Clearly, students should not select an element about which they know very little (or nothing), especially when the question does not compel them to do so.

Voice leading: discussion about linear or conjunct motion, relative motion, contrary motion, ways that they had voiced particular parts/lines to make them prominent, tension/release issues (especially regarding suspensions), etc., particularly with instrumental or vocal arrangements where voice leading is an issue. Successful responses often highlighted at some level the use of 'non-traditional' consecutive intervals (particularly 5^{ths} and octaves). This does not mean, however, that the use of such consecutives was deemed as being somehow 'incorrect'. The notion of voice leading within the accompaniment could also have been presented – for example, similar considerations regarding the parts of chording instruments, especially piano/keyboards and guitars.

This technique was generally not answered well. Most students who chose to write about it confused it with chord selection and/or the voicing of parts.

Use of digital technology: transpositions; ability to listen and then edit and adjust; harmonisation drafts; melodic experimentation with playback capabilities; alterations to registers, assignment of parts, etc.; printing of parts and score; etc.

It appeared that most students used digital technology to assist with their harmonisation/arrangement (as required by the Study Design). Students were able to identify that they selected notes and assigned instruments via input into a computer program (most commonly Sibelius or Music Master), and usually referred to the fact that it was good to hear one's harmonisation played back in order to alter any 'off-sounding' notes. Students who answered well included comments about the ability to select and alter parts, print individual parts, complete transpositions more easily, add and/or explore dynamics and articulations, and hear individual parts on their own. Nevertheless, responses regarding the use of digital technology were far too commonly limited to statements such as, 'we used Sibelius/Micrologic to find our mistakes and print out the parts' (although this was perhaps not as common as in previous years).

Question 8 – Improvisation

During Unit 3 you prepared and performed an improvisation.

8a

Describe three characteristics of the source material (for example: melody/head, chord progression, backing track) you used that influenced the way you created your improvisation.

Students were expected to exhibit a reasonable degree of understanding of issues relevant to the three musical characteristics selected, particularly with respect to their impact upon and relevance to preparation for and/or performance of **their** improvisation. Students were expected to exhibit a fair understanding of issues relevant to the selected characteristics, likewise with respect to their impact upon and relevance to their own improvisation. Assessors were looking for thoughtful and relevant answers – not responses that were clearly prepared in advance.

There were some outstanding responses to this question. Strong students were obviously highly musically literate in their improvisatory genre, and presented descriptions that almost invariably included the nature of the chord progression (12 bar blues, diatonic ii-V-I progressions, 32-bar song form, binary song form). Importantly, these were genuine descriptions, not simply identifications. Generally speaking, however, there was little description of how the source material influenced the way the improvisation was created. Few students described learning a 'head' or 'standard' in order to plan what they would do in an improvisation, whether from a melodic or a rhythmic perspective. The trend was for students to describe characteristics of what they had done for their improvisation rather than describing the source material. Some students rambled on about what they did in their improvisations in a fairly haphazard or 'stream-of-consciousness' manner, but rarely answered the question.

Many students dealt with only one or two of the dot points. Others added their own points (which was fine) but failed to deal with three of the dot points as instructed. Many students presented responses that failed to describe characteristics of their source material with respect to influences upon their improvisation. Often students failed to mention the name of the piece upon which they had improvised. Some students wrote far too much about the high quality of their preparation and the high standard of their performance in the GA2 examination at the expense of answering the question.

Generally speaking:

- most students were able to identify source material
- few students were able to explain **exactly** how the source material influenced their performances
- some students had difficulty describing 'characteristics of the source material'



- most students referred exclusively to the three examples provided as ‘source material’
- some students spoke about other musicians they had listened to and attempted to imitate when creating their improvisation
- stronger students spoke about what happened in the backing track or the chord progressions, indicating how, or the degree to which, there was an influence upon note and/or scale selection considerations
- time signature was far too frequently confused with rhythm (for example, ‘the rythym was four-four’).
- some students did not really understand the question so they described absolutely everything they could think of about their backing track; for example, what instruments constituted the drum kit, whether or not there was a guitar in the recording, etc.

8b

Describe issues relating to three of the points from the list below which you considered when planning your improvisation.

- **scale/modal forms and/or tonality**
- **harmonic progression(s)**
- **developing and/or using melodic motifs**
- **developing and/or using rhythmic motifs**
- **contrast**

Most students selected three appropriate points and generally explained how they were considered when planning. Frequently, however, responses to this section were similar to the answer for Question 8a and often did not contain any new information. Students should be aware that if it feels like they are writing the same thing as they did for another question, they probably **are** and should re-read both questions to clarify exactly what they are meant to do and how. There were no questions on the exam paper that warranted the same answers. Some students presented prepared responses that contained virtually no reference to the planning of their improvisation.

Of the points listed, contrast and scales/modes were most often discussed, but rarely with reference to their impact on the planning of the performance of the improvisation. When scales were mentioned, many students stated how important it was to know their scales so as not to play wrong notes. Only the more outstanding students discussed tonality and harmonic progressions, linking these to the musicality of their potential performance, and in these instances they displayed real familiarity with their improvisations/source material. Very few students identified the scales they used or gave examples of the kinds of rhythmic or melodic motives they developed.

Scale/modal forms and/or tonality: many students referred to using a blues scale or a pentatonic scale when planning their improvisation. Few mentioned the notion of ‘playing the changes’ from a diatonic sense. Often it was not clear whether or not the student knew **why** particular scale(s) or mode(s) might be used. The use of modes seemed to be understood by only a handful of students, almost all of whom appeared to be wind players. There wasn’t much indication of scales and modes being learnt in more than one key, however, which would indicate that students had learnt what they needed for the task rather than a holistic approach to learning techniques for improvisation.

Harmonic Progressions: many students re-presented the harmonic progression of the source material (see previous question) but failed to address the notion of its bearing upon their planning of the improvisation.

Developing and/or using melodic motifs: motif-based answers (melodic and rhythmic) were often vague and showed that the student did not really have a grasp on what a motif was and its role or use in an improvisation. Nevertheless, the stronger students commented that they planned ways of using motifs or fragments from the ‘head’ of the piece from which to build their improvisation and commonly went on to describe several ways that they might consider doing so ‘when the time came’.

Developing and/or using rhythmic motifs: few students chose to write on this issue, frequently because it had been incorporated in their description of ‘developing and/or using melodic motifs’. Those students who did write about this point presented very strong descriptions that almost always included notation of the rhythm/s to be developed and description (and/or notation) of the various possibilities.

Contrast: most students who chose to write about this consideration tended to have difficulty dealing with it appropriately, often simply stating that louds and softs were the only issues of contrast that were available to them. They seemed to be unaware of matters regarding contrasts of timbre and timbral effects (growling, etc), register, pitch bending, velocity or intensity.



Several students simply stated something like, ‘an improvisation is not meant to be planned so I just made it up on the spot’. Such comments are neither appropriate nor do they demonstrate much learning or understanding of improvisatory issues in music. It seemed that some students believe that planning an improvisation means ‘writing it out’, which is not correct. In addition, even ‘making it up on the spot’ almost always demands that a range of decisions be made prior to delivering each segment (or even each note), otherwise the improvisation will be almost certainly lacking in coherency and musical logic. Students are strongly cautioned against this type of approach, especially because it can indicate that students have not learned the key knowledge and key skills of Outcome 2 of Unit 3 (see page 28 of the Study Design).

Although not a requirement of the question, almost all of the outstanding responses included the name and key of the song and the instrument used.

8c

Discuss three performance techniques you used in realising your improvisation. Your answer must refer to at least one of the following.

- **different registers of the instrument or voice**
- **articulation**
- **creating dynamic contrasts**
- **non-standard/creative ways of playing the instrument or voice**

Responses for this question were highly context specific. It was expected that students would exhibit a reasonable degree of understanding of issues relevant to the selected techniques with respect to their impact on and relevance to their own improvisation.

Other acceptable performance techniques might include:

- call/response
- scale-based approaches (pentatonics, blues scales, be-bop scales, modes, directly diatonic, non-western, hybrid, etc.)
- imitation/variation
- long tones
- chromaticism
- rhythmic variation
- contour imitation
- thematic transformation
- dynamics
- instrument-specific techniques (‘growls’, ‘pull-offs’, ‘tapping’, vocalised ‘interjection’, slides and bends, etc.)
- textural issues (cymbal rolls, playing drums with hands, using the instrument out of standard context; for example, buzzing mouthpiece without trumpet, etc.)
- augmentation
- diminution.

There were many outstanding and imaginative responses to this question that often featured very sophisticated and highly appropriate terminology and demonstrated considerable understanding and experience in the use and development of various improvisational techniques. Overall, students displayed good knowledge of their chosen musical style and many were able to refer enthusiastically to musicians who had influenced them and whose techniques they had adopted and/or adapted. ‘Non-standard/creative ways of playing the instrument or voice’ and ‘different registers of the instrument or voice’ were the dot points most commonly discussed, usually very well indeed. The largest proportion of students wrote about techniques not from the list provided (a good thing), all of which were usually very relevant and, for the most part, well presented. In particular, the question seems to have been enjoyed by guitarists.

There were, however, a fair number of papers with very short responses that lacked detail. Most of these students seemed to be unaware of what is required when they ‘discuss’ something formally. ‘Articulation’ was not done well by most of the students who chose to write about it. These students did not appear to know that articulation would help them to realise their improvisation. As mentioned above, if a student does not feel confident writing about a particular topic, they should not choose to write about it (unless they have to). It was unfortunate to note that far too many students did not observe the second sentence of the question - ‘your answer **must** refer to **at least one** of the following’ – hence none of the performance techniques that they discussed were from the list of four dot points. Some of these students wrote three outstanding responses but could not be awarded full marks for the question. It is most important that students read the questions thoroughly and follow the instructions.



Section C: Aspects of performance

General comments

As part of their response, students were asked to provide information about two works they had prepared for performance and/or performed; the line-up of their group or ensemble, the style of the group or ensemble; and to identify one venue at which their group had presented a performance. A number of students did not provide this information. A significant number of students named the members of their group (often providing full names and instruments played) as well as the school's hall (by name) or the name and location of the performance venue. The instructions on page 23 asked students to 'list the instrumentation (including voice(s))' – not the names of members – and instructions regarding the venue stated specifically 'do not name the school, suburb, city or town where the venue was located'.

Although there were some terrific answers for the two parts of Question 9, rarely did one student present excellent responses to both of them. Generally speaking, responses to Question 9 lacked detail. Most assessors commented that there were some interesting songs dealt with, including original compositions, and that students frequently wrote about two songs that were probably too similar so that their responses to Question 9b tended to be repetitive. Regarding questions of this type, students are advised to select songs about which they can write optimal responses, not simply ones that they like.

Question 9

9a

Identify and describe two technical considerations relating to sound production and/or sound reinforcement that influenced the way your group planned to perform and/or performed the works you identified at the venue you identified on page 23.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 9 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 6.2 |

A short list of technical considerations might include:

- issues of acoustics
- placement of the instruments/players relative to each other (issues of being able to hear one another)
- structural materials
- seating capacity
- 'fly-space' above a proscenium stage
- placement of monitors ('foldback')
- use of graphic (or parametric) equalisation
- seating arrangements
- balance
- use and/or selection of microphones
- intonation and tuning
- instrument maintenance
- placement of the mixing desk
- use of acoustic baffles
- use of sound enhancement/alteration devices (for example, digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion and overdrive)
- placement of amplifiers.

Answers to this question ranged from extremely good responses that showed excellent understanding of the technical considerations relevant to a successful performance in a certain type of venue, to somewhat vague and insignificant comments of a dubiously 'technical' nature. The most common technical considerations relating to sound production that were identified and described were:

- acoustics of the performance venue
- positioning of members, instruments and/or equipment in the ensemble and/or the size, position, etc. of the audience
- use of public address (PA)/sound reinforcement systems, microphones and/or amplifiers.

The best responses included diagrams and commonly demonstrated an understanding of relevant acoustic issues, including the properties of materials used in the construction of the given performance venue. Some students were able to demonstrate knowledge of the acoustic properties of instruments within their ensemble as well. Some students skilfully described their experimentation with the positioning of instruments within their ensembles and how their sound



had been affected by moving instrumentalists into various positions. Most importantly, all of the excellent responses were focused directly upon contributions made by two technical considerations relating to sound production with respect to the performance of the work by **their** ensemble.

Unfortunately, a number of answers focused upon an array of issues related to only one technical consideration, (generally ‘acoustics’) and therefore their response only dealt in depth with one issue rather than two (even though it was usually presented as two different considerations). Many students were not able to provide enough detail for this question. They were able to identify technical considerations but not describe them with sufficient breadth, depth and/or relevance. A lot of responses were very short with virtually no explanation, for example, ‘we had to use a PA and foldback wedges so that we could hear ourselves’.

Many students described sound production/sound reinforcement as a stand-alone issue, failing to focus upon two technical considerations and/or overlooking the need to place the description within the context of their own group or ensemble. Such answers were usually clear indicators of responses prepared beforehand, as they read like textbook definitions/explanations. Many students identified and described the acoustic aspects of the space within which they had performed but failed to link this to how their chosen considerations influenced their planning and/or performance. Some answers indicated that the students were not at all familiar with technical considerations relating to sound production and/or sound reinforcement. Some students appeared to believe that technical considerations relate exclusively to technological devices.

9b

On page 23 you listed two works which were contrasting in style. Discuss two strategies your group used to ensure the stylistic characteristics of each work were realised in preparation and/or performance. You may refer to strategies involving

- **planning the arrangement**
- **rehearsal**
- **stage presentation**
- **performance techniques**
- **use of specific equipment**

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | Average |
|-------|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------|
| % | 11 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6.3 |

‘Connectedness’ to the (contrasting) styles was the most important issue here. Responses needed to establish a link between each of the selected styles and the strategies used to make them authentic or consistent with each of the styles identified.

Discussions may have incorporated some of the following considerations:

- rhythmic interpretation
- articulations, ornaments and embellishments
- pitch and intonation issues
- phrasing
- dynamics and contrast
- bends, multi-phonics
- use of improvisation (if appropriate)
- use of effects (sound enhancement/alteration devices such digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion and overdrive)
- interaction with the audience (‘working’ the crowd)
- historical and/or conventional and personal interpretation of works within the context of the performance style(s)
- extra-musical elements (for example, choreography or acrobatics)
- analytical considerations
- comparative role/prominence of instruments/voice(s) at given times
- experimentation with different interpretative emphases
- formalising the arrangement, especially labelling sections and the nature of musical elements (for example, density, variation and dynamics)
- assigning of leadership roles
- isolation of technical challenges and potential problems with a view to reducing, eliminating or at least dealing with them in performance
- listening to different recordings of the work and/or discussing various ways of presenting original composition

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- positioning of instruments and/or performers, particularly regarding visual contact and ease of interaction
- use of mutes and other sound reduction/modification devices (especially if appropriate balance cannot be attained)
- use of risers or similar devices
- alterations to the sonic focus of acoustic (especially wind) instruments
- placement of sound reinforcement equipment (for example, a PA or foldback monitors)
- availability of suitable lighting (especially to read the music, if particularly pertinent to the work identified).

There were some very excellent responses to this question where it was clear the student had spent time working through relevant issues and considerations from a strategic perspective. Students who answered this question well mentioned (for example) rehearsal strategies that included listening to other performances of the same works and playing other music in the same style in order to realise certain nuances of the style. They generally mentioned individual practice as compared to group practice and described how each aided good rehearsal techniques and strategies.

Most students successfully identified two strategies, but neglected to relate them to the songs they performed. For example, 'rehearsal' and the 'use of specific equipment' were often selected for discussion but students rarely discussed the strategies that enabled the realisation of styles. Rather, they simply stated when they rehearsed and how hard it was to get the whole group together or mentioned that they used a particular PA system because it was better than some other one. These observations do not address the styles of the works and strategies used to ensure the realisation of the stylistic characteristics of the works prepared and/or performed. Many students chose to discuss two strategies for one work; for example, how a particular piece was rehearsed and what equipment was used and then how the other piece was presented on stage. This approach was fine but often students got 'bogged down' and found that they couldn't present much depth with respect to any of the strategies because they had tried to deal with too many – despite the question making it clear that they only had to deal with only two strategies .

The most successful approach was to select two strategies (for example, 'planning the arrangement' and 'rehearsal') and explore them with respect to each of the pieces identified on page 23 of the exam booklet, always linking them to the notion of ensuring the realisation of the stylistic characteristics of the works identified. Not many students, however, were able to identify the stylistic characteristics of their pieces so their answers tended to lack focus and not fulfil the requirements of the question. This would appear to indicate that the depth of understanding about the music that is being prepared for performance is often fairly superficial. Students should be encouraged to research and identify the stylistic characteristics of all pieces in their performance programs. The maintenance of rehearsal journals, where this information can be kept and referred to, would help students understand how they can realise stylistic correctness in their preparation and performance.

Clearly many students ran out of time. Once again, it is recommended that students identify the questions that are worth the most marks during the 15 minutes of reading time prior to the commencement of the examination and that they seek to complete those questions fully, for example, by attempting such questions straight after the compact disc recording of Section A has finished.

All Students

| Marks | Average Section A | Average Section B | Average Section C | Average Whole Exam |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| % | 55.1 | 50.3 | 47.7 | 52.2 |

Part-writing Students

| Marks | Average Section B | Average Section C | Average Sections B & C | Average Whole Exam |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| % | 54 | 52.6 | 53.4 | 54.3 |

Improvisation Students

| Marks | Average Section B | Average Section C | Average Sections B & C | Average Whole Exam |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| % | 52.6 | 44.2 | 48.7 | 52 |