

2000 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre Music

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Music

2/3 Unit (Common)

Musicology Essays

General Comments

The use of appendices requires careful consideration in terms of cross-referencing within the body of the essay, and to the relevance of the appendices to the essay. Some essays could not support the stated hypothesis due to the limited length.

Strengths

- Original ideas with a clever hypothesis or topic.
- Sophisticated understanding of the concepts of music.
- Demonstrating a personal response to the topic.
- Supported and sustained argument, with appropriate musical examples.
- Clear and perceptive musical observations.
- Extensive bibliography and discography.

Weaknesses

- Reliance on secondary sources, lacking reference to musical examples.
- Poor written expression – disjointed, incomplete with weak conclusions.
- Shallow analysis, with frequent inaccurate statements.
- Little or no bibliography / discography.

Musicology 1 and Aural Skills

General Comments

Generally candidates were able to respond to all sections of the paper. The responses varied in the degree of accuracy and the quality of the observations. Candidates were able to demonstrate understanding of the scores and to relate musicological and aural skills.

Questions 1 – 3

Strengths

- Recognition of details from the score and recording.
- Correct use of relevant musical terms.
- Quality observations and elaborations.

Weaknesses

- Confused terminology.
- General observations lacking details.
- The inability to address the question.

Question 2 (a) – Aural Dictation

There was a pleasing improvement in the overall standard.

Strengths

- Accurate shape and intervals with secure sense of tonality.

Weaknesses

- Lack of preparation / practice.
- Some recognition of general shape.

Question 4

Candidates need to study a range of works and genres from both the mandatory and additional topics. Many candidates wrote pre-formulated style answers, which did not directly nor consistently address the statement or question. Although the statement gave opportunities to defend / oppose the proposition from varying perspectives, only a minority supported a sustained line of reasoning.

Performance – Core and Elective

Strengths

- Sophisticated understanding of the stylistic features of the chosen repertoire.
- Repertoire chosen which suited both the technical capabilities of the candidate and reflected syllabus requirements.
- Impressive expressive control of the chosen performing media, particularly with regard to articulation, tone colour, phrasing, nuances of dynamics and expressive techniques.
- A technically accomplished and refined performance.
- Highly developed ensemble skills.
- Authoritative and professional presentation.

Weaknesses

- Inappropriate choice of repertoire with regard to technical capabilities.
- Limited understanding of the syllabus requirements in relation to timing and topic representation.
- Selection of repertoire, which was either abbreviated or did not allow them to explore musical contrasts.
- Limited understanding of the stylistic features of the work.
- Poor technical control with regard to intonation, articulation, tonal control, rhythmic and pitch accuracy.
- Little consideration given to the expressive possibilities of the chosen repertoire.
- Lack of awareness of ensemble techniques such as balance and communication.

Sight Singing

Strengths

- Familiarity with the sight singing process.
- Confidence in negotiating intervallic relationships.

Weaknesses

- Lack of confidence and experience with the sight singing process.
- An inability to maintain the tonality or melodic contour of the example.
- Rhythmic inaccuracies.
- Poor sense of tonality eg not establishing the correct starting note.

Composition – Core and Elective

General Comments

There was an overall improvement in standard this year.

- Some pieces were significantly overtime.
- Elaborate blurbs are not necessary.
- Recordings should be in accordance with subject rules – no midi files should be presented, tapes should be new (not pre-recorded).
- Separate tapes / CDs are required for each work or for each movement in 3 Unit elective options.
- The recording level and clarity was dubious on some recordings.
- A diverse number of styles and genres was presented.

Strengths

- Successful development and evolution of ideas.
- Consistency of style throughout the work.
- Imaginative combinations of performing media.
- Intimate understanding of the individual instruments and combinations.
- Seamless movement into contrasting sections.
- Intelligent exploration of harmony.
- Musical interplay of parts and textural interest.
- High level of musicality.
- Obvious exposure to and immersion of chosen style.
- Clearly notated parts eg drum parts, solo lines.
- Scores were highly detailed and expressive markings were integral and evocative features of work.
- Computerised scores showed a better representation of intentions and adhered to score conventions.
- Candidates were able to integrate concepts to a high level.
- An improvement in the understanding and employment of technology.

Weaknesses

- Little familiarity with chosen media. Too often the instruments worked within generic limits rather than exploring both conventional and non-conventional possibilities.
- Tried to introduce too many varied ideas.
- Others were too simplistic eg a single ostinato idea.
- Links between sections were poor.
- Contrasting sections were too different.
- Too ambitious in choice of performing media, and not familiar with these instruments.
- Gratuitous twentieth century techniques, devices etc. in Core compositions.
- Editing / notation problems with computer scores.
- Weak harmonic vocabulary.
- Candidates tend to repeat (copy/paste) rather than develop material.
- Effects are at times used without consideration of context.

2 Unit Course 1

Aural Skills

General Comments

The examination gave candidates the scope to respond, both in general and specific terms. The questions highlighted the need for candidates to be aware of the inter-relationship of musical concepts.

Strengths

- The best answers showed an overall awareness of the music, supported by quality observations.
- Showed understanding of the concepts in question and how manipulation of musical material validated the concept.
- Showed logical sequencing and clear layout.
- Observations were clearly stated and then supported with specifics of the music.

Weaknesses

- Confusion and lack of understanding of the nature of the question.
- Limited explanation of the concept eg structure – candidates were not aware of the fact that this is the result of the application of the concepts.
- Programmatic descriptions rather than objective comments.
- Repetition of basic observations.
- The use of inappropriate diagrams.
- Poor handwriting / small print.

Musicology Vivas

General Comments

The viva-voce is not a prepared speech, but a discussion with the examiners. Candidates need to be provided with opportunities to practice and develop viva skills within the ten-minute time limit. Candidates may need to be reminded that the viva voce is comparable to the other elective options, and requires an equivalent degree of preparation.

It is important to focus on primary source material, demonstrating a depth of understanding and knowledge when responding to questions on primary material. It is also important that candidates become thoroughly familiar with the equipment to be used during the examination. Topics should be chosen based on enjoyment and genuine interest.

Strengths

- Musically relevant material showing evidence of wider listening.
- A willingness to draw stylistic comparisons and conclusions.
- Clearly articulated explanations.
- A thorough knowledge of the use of concepts in the chosen examples.
- The ability to discuss points and validate opinions through aural skills and/or practical demonstrations.
- Outline sheets that clearly explain the links between musical examples and concepts.
- A high level of organisation of tapes, examples etc.

Weaknesses

- A focus which was either too limited or too broad.
- The inability to elaborate and develop points on the viva outline.
- The inability to respond musically to questions.
- Textbook knowledge without evidence of personal involvement and understanding.
- A prepared speech.

Composition Elective

General Comments

Recordings should be in accordance with the subject rules. Tapes should be new and labelled clearly. There was an overall improvement in standard this year.

Strengths

- Improved standard of technology.
- Clear use and understanding of musical concepts.
- Computer scores were generally well laid out and accurately quantised.

Weaknesses

- Topic representation was confused.
- Lack of understanding of chosen performing media.
- Poor word scansion – the need to look at conventional notation.
- Inadequate chord symbols and performance directions.
- Many over extended beyond capability.
- Poor quantising in some computer scores, regardless of the nominated topic.
- The score needs to be able to be reproduced musically.

Performance

General Comments

Candidates should:

- have their forms completed and accurate prior to the examination;
- be familiar with examination rules and procedures including no recording (video or audio) of examination;
- be aware of time limits and accurately time each piece;
- demonstrate appropriate performance presentation eg face examiners;
- note that movement and drama may interfere with the candidate's performance;
- choose repertoire that is commensurate with their ability;
- note that the entire musical outcome is assessed when presenting more than one performing media;
- check sound levels and balance prior to the commencement of the examination.

Strengths

- Thorough preparation, professional presentation and technical mastery.
- Sophisticated stylistic understanding.
- Excellent communication and interpretive skills, and a genuine enthusiasm shown for performance.
- Well-rehearsed, balanced and tight ensembles with appropriate interaction within the ensemble.
- Secure intonation and rhythmic accuracy.
- Evidence of successful risk taking and a high degree of technical proficiency.
- Choice of pieces which maximised their musical potential, and allowed scope for contrasts and subtleties in interpretation.
- Effective use of backing tapes.

Weaknesses

- Choice of repertoire which limited musical outcomes eg very short or over extended.
- Inability to sustain technique throughout performance.
- Inability to cope with more than one performing media eg singing and playing the guitar.
- Insufficient preparation.
- Use of accompanists or ensemble members who lacked sensitivity to candidate's role in the performance.
- Inadequate tuning of instruments and poor intonation.

- Choice of repertoire which failed to realise stylistic features of the chosen topic eg rock drumming patterns for the jazz genre.
- Unsuccessful use of backing tapes.

3 Unit (Additional)

Musicology Essays

General Comments

The use of footnotes / appendices etc. and quotes requires acknowledgement. Extensive appendices are not necessary and do not necessarily contribute to the essay. Outstanding essays in 3 Unit tended to be of a higher standard than in 2 Unit.

Strengths

- Original ideas with a clear hypothesis.
- Outstanding presentation.
- Coherent writing with evidence of wide listening.
- Sustained argument throughout the essay, supported by appropriate musical examples.
- A strong personal and passionate response to the topic shown.
- Clear and perceptive musical analysis.
- Sophisticated musical observations.

Weaknesses

- Reliance on secondary sources.
- Poor essay writing skills.
- No hypothesis.
- Limited evidence of wider listening.
- Lacking in-depth understanding of musical examples, and the concepts of music.
- Limited bibliography / discography.

Performance

General Comments

Repertoire should be chosen carefully to demonstrate candidates' strengths and musical abilities. The candidate's role should be clearly on display in ensemble pieces. Candidates should choose accompanists and/or musicians carefully and rehearse frequently. A realistic program should be chosen, considering stamina.

Strengths

- Outstanding stylistic interpretation.
- A sophisticated and mature understanding of their role as a soloist and in an ensemble.
- A depth of knowledge and refinement in the choice of appropriate repertoire.
- Refined technical skills and a sophisticated understanding of style.

Weaknesses

- Repertoire which did not demonstrate a depth of musical understanding.
- A lack of understanding of the interaction necessary between soloist and accompaniment within an ensemble.
- A lack of adequate rehearsal of the ensemble piece.
- Choice of program beyond their technical and interpretive ability.
- Immaturity in interpreting the chosen repertoire.