



# **General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**MUSIC 42701**

**Listening to and Appraising Music**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## 42701: Listening to and Appraising Music

About 450 candidates took the new examination in its first year. The main differences between this examination and its predecessor are, of course, the five new Areas of Study based on the elements of music, the three Strands of Learning and the emphasis on shorter musical excerpts with fewer questions on each. The examination contained musical excerpts taken from across the three Strands of Learning and the questions on each tended to focus on more than one Area of Study.

The paper started with three short excerpts, each with two or three questions devoted to it. The first question required the ability to read standard music notation and thus differentiate between four rhythms. The rhythms indicated that there were three quavers in a bar and this was intended to help candidates to work out the answer to question 1(a) as well as 1(b). The correct answer for the rhythm (C) was identified by about half the entry. The voice was a tenor (and any recognisable spelling was accepted). Many imaginative answers were given in response to question 1(f) and a wide range of valid points could be made about the use of the voices in the excerpt.

Problems arose in question 2(b) where candidates ignored the instruction to confine their description to the use of rhythm and timbre; however, virtually all identified the time signature (2(c)) correctly.

Adding phrasing was difficult for many. The fact that there were three marks available for question 3(a) should have alerted candidates to the likelihood that they would really have to add three phrase marks. Unfortunately, many added a lot more than three and quite a few did not attempt this question. The cadence at X, question 3(b), proved difficult for the majority, with the full range of cadences being offered plus many answers which were unconnected with cadences. Question 3(d) was the first of several occasions in this paper where candidates seemed to struggle with 'texture' and, although this was answered more successfully than the other questions on texture, many answers bore no relation to it.

Most candidates gained some marks for describing the instrumental introduction in question 4(a), though 4(b)(i) was less well done, with answers ranging from two to eight chords. Question 4(b)(ii) fared better with the majority achieving at least two of the available four marks for identifying bars where the chords change. Answers to question 4(c) were rather disappointing, with a much lower success rate and several answers offering bars not presented as possibilities (bars 2, 7 and 8).

Question 5(a), along with 8(a) and 9(a), revealed the problems many candidates have in recognising instrumental timbres. Answers for 5(a) ranged across three orchestral families, with flute, clarinet and violin being as popular as the trumpet – which was, of course, the correct answer on this occasion. For the notation in question 5(b), candidates must make sure that they write clearly enough for the examiner to tell whether the note is in a space or on a line: notes which cover line and space, thus offering different possible answers, cannot be given credit. Question 5(c) proved to be problematic for some candidates as either they did not know the meaning of 'consecutive' or they had not taken on board its significance within this question. Several answers to question 5(d) referred to bars which were not part of the question; this mostly meant that the focus was misplaced.

Like the time signature in question 2(c), 6(a) was generally very well answered, although there were some surprising suggestions, including 6/7 and 4/16. Many candidates successfully

identified the drum-fill which was the answer to 6(c), while responses to 6(d) quite often failed to gain credit because candidates did not write about the changes to the melodic pattern, commenting instead on unrelated issues.

The first excerpt in question 7 featured the shortest piece of music to be heard in this examination. The opening of the first movement of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* will have been well known to many candidates, but this did not seem to make answering the questions any easier. Again, the area of 'texture' proved problematic. Giving the number of phrases was also a challenge for many, and the range within the answers was from one to eighteen, the latter number being equal to the number of actual notes in the excerpt. Excerpt B, from the soundtrack to *Lord of the Rings*, would also be familiar to many. The percussion instruments which had to be identified to gain marks in question 7(d) were well spotted and this was generally a well-answered question.

Question 8(a) allowed most candidates to score two or more marks, although many did not identify the oboe. Perhaps it was the complexity of the texture that pointed about half the candidates towards the correct response in 8(b), although there were some strange and irrelevant answers. Unsurprisingly, the guitar accompanying the song in excerpt B was identified by most candidates but, again, the question on texture was less successfully answered.

Many candidates correctly identified the instrument in question 9(a), although some wrote 'flute' instead of 'clarinet'. Most identified the string family correctly and then went on to give *pizzicato* (plucked) and (*con*) *arco* (with a bow) as the two ways these instruments were used. The dynamics (an increase and then subsequent decrease in volume) were well-spotted in 9(d).

The recognition of 12-bar blues proved to be an easy question (10(a)) and most gained one or two marks on 10(b). Texture was again problematic for many in 10(c) and a lot seemed to assume that a blues song must be in a minor key (question 10 (d)), though this was not the case here.

In question 11 candidates were asked to point out one difference between the first and second occurrences of the opening phrase in *La fille au cheveux de lin*: while quite a few commented correctly that the opening phrase was unaccompanied first time through and then accompanied, many simply referred to the fact that there was no music printed in the score in bars 8 – 9. The form was spotted by most for question 11(b). In the Beethoven excerpt, some seemed to think that the music speeded up before each repetition, rather than slowing down to a pause. The main choice for many in question 11(d) was whether the music was an octave or two octaves higher, the majority going for the second (and correct) response. The time signature was well answered, though a range was credited in addition to Beethoven's.

Question 12 gave candidates the opportunity to comment on a slightly longer excerpt under four specific headings. Candidates often wrote about elements of the music which were not required by the question and could not therefore attract marks. However, virtually all candidates gained some credit here and several made many more than the required seven points, thus earning full marks well before the end of their comments.

## Conclusion

In many ways, it was evident that this was a Year 10 cohort of candidates. Attention needs to be paid to ensuring that a full understanding of the elements of music which form the five Areas of Study is gained. This will avoid many of the misunderstandings which typified responses this year, especially in areas such as texture, timbre and tonality.

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Better examination technique will also alert candidates to the correlation between a question and its marks: if a question carries four marks, four points or correct answers will be needed to gain them all. Also, where a question requires just a single answer, candidates must not offer the examiner a choice: this will result in the insertion of the letters 'SONC', a mnemonic for 'Split Option, No Credit.'

A minority of candidates need to be reminded that their answers must be legible, as an examiner can only give credit where the answer can be determined.

Overall, this was a very encouraging start to the new style of examination within this specification and augurs well for the results from Year 11 candidates next year.

## **Mark Range and Award of Grades**

Grade Boundaries and Cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA website.