



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Music

42701

(Specification 4270)

Unit 1: Listening to and Appraising Music

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Listening to and Appraising Music

This year's paper marked the first full entry for the new specification and for the new style of Question Paper. The fundamental changes are that there are shorter excerpts of music and fewer questions based on each excerpt. The examination is also shorter at just one hour, plus the three minutes allowed for reading through the questions.

Questions are based on the five Areas of Study, each of which comprises two Elements of Music. Thus, individual questions focus on particular musical elements, for example rhythm, melody, timbre, form. The Areas of Study (AoS) covered within each question are identified at the start of the question, though it is worth bearing in mind that the question will not necessarily draw on both elements from any particular AoS.

Some of the question types will have been quite familiar to teachers and candidates from their practice with the Specimen Paper, the paper set for 2010 and use of selected questions from past papers from the legacy specification.

Examples include such questions as:

"Name the instrument"

"Name the final cadence"

"What is the time signature of this excerpt?"

The completion of a melody to a given rhythm will also have been familiar, as will the selection of the correct melodic shape or rhythm from a given choice. Newer styles of questions include a grid layout such as that used this year in Question 7(e).

Candidates' responses produced a very wide range of marks across the range available. One of the obvious results of the combination of shorter excerpts and fewer questions was that the overwhelming majority of candidates seemed to be fully engaged with the paper until the end: there were many very good answers to the last question, 12(d), gaining 3, 4 or the full 5 marks.

Question 1

Although it is not intended that the sequence of question styles becomes formulaic, the paper opened, as in 2010, with three short excerpts, each with just two or three questions. Question 1(a) proved a very easy 'starter', with virtually all candidates identifying the guitar. It is worth reminding candidates that, where a single answer is required, giving more than one answer will result in no mark being awarded: it is not for the examiner to try to determine which of the given responses is the candidate's final intention unless this is abundantly clear. The majority of candidates correctly selected 'antiphonal' for 1(b). Identifying the interval in 1(c) proved a little more of a discriminator though most correctly chose 'octave', while 'SSA' was the clear winner amongst options for 1(d). 1(e) asked candidates to name **two** instruments: where more than two were given, examiners were instructed to mark the **first two responses**. The correct answers here were 'flute' and 'harp', with over 80% of candidates gaining both marks. The question ended with the first of several which required identification of a cadence: here, candidates need first to decide whether the cadence sounds 'finished' or not and then to decide which cadence it is. The instruction was to *name* the cadence and in this case the correct response was 'perfect.'

Question 2

The opening question asked for the time signature of the excerpt and was well answered, with over 80% gaining the mark. However, the focus of 2(d) was to identify points of **contrast** between the opening repeated section and the new second section but too many candidates described how they were similar.

Question 3

Question 3(a), like Question 2(a), had a range of possible answers and over 85% of the candidates gained the mark. Identification of instruments remains problematic: the answer for 3(c) was 'clarinet' and half of the candidates correctly identified this; however, there was also a wide range of other answers offered, with string instruments being very common. Just under half of the entry chose the correct option for the pitch and rhythm question, 3(d).

Question 4

Question 4 was the first on this paper to contain part of a score. Most candidates gained one or two marks for the description of the first chord in 4(a): marks were available for commenting that it was a minor chord, the tonic chord, in second inversion, played by woodwind instruments, (an octave / two octaves) higher than the following melody, it was accented / **fp**, it got quieter, and so on. In 4(c) many candidates failed to spot the sharps in bars 7 and 13, which would have led them to the middle two notes (F# and G#), and they therefore scored only two marks out of a possible four by writing merely F and G.

Question 5

This question featured a big band arrangement of the last movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in G minor. For the third time on this paper, the music was in 4/4, with 2/2, 2/4, C, Common Time or Split Common Time also being accepted. Fewer candidates (68%) correctly identified this here. The tonality – 5(b) – was again minor. The instruments to be identified in 5(c) were the saxophone for Woodwind and either the trumpet or trombone for Brass. As the music opened with the rising tonic minor arpeggio, the correct response to 5(d) was 'triadic.' This and 5(b) were not successfully answered by many candidates. For 5(d), the most popular response was 'scalic.'

Question 6

Many candidates may have enjoyed the first excerpt in question 6 (*The Boulevard of Broken Dreams* by Greenday). 6(a) was generally well answered, with many correctly identifying 'distortion'; however, many forfeited a second mark by giving examiners an 'either / or' response, rather than making their second choice clear. 6(b) proved somewhat more problematic, though simple answers such as 'six' notes', 'three pairs of two notes', 'an outline of the vocal melody' or even 'pairs of notes which rise, fall, then rise again' were accepted. The most common answer – 'riff' – was incorrect. The Byrds' *Mr. Tambourine Man* (Excerpt B) started with a bass guitar 'glissando' or 'slide' (6(c)) and was in a major key (6(d)). Many candidates (wrongly) wrote 'pitch bend' for 6(c) and a surprising number could not correctly identify the tonality.

Question 7

Question 7 juxtaposed two contrasting pieces for female voices, opening with Ella Fitzgerald. 7(a) required the identification of an interval within the vocal melody, the correct choice being 'second.' Candidates had greater success in spotting the sequence for 7(b). Question 7(c) elicited a wide range of responses with only about a quarter of candidates correctly naming

both (double) bass and ‘pizzicato.’ Candidates should note that the term ‘picking’ is not appropriate when referring to the techniques of orchestral string instruments. The lively strains of *Da-doo-ron-ron* were linked to two questions. Depending on how candidates counted the beat, there were two possible answers to 7(d), with nearly 90 per cent of candidates giving correct answers – slightly higher even than 1(a), 1(e), 2(a) and 3(a). Identifying the sequence of chords, as expected, proved more demanding, although the correct answers were the very logical (I) IV, V, I or (Tonic) Subdominant, Dominant, Tonic. It appeared that some candidates did not understand the use of Roman numerals, or were confused by the format of the question.

Question 8

Question 8 featured the piano introductions to two Schubert songs – *The Trout* and *The Erl King*. Candidates were asked to comment on these piano introductions with reference to specific elements of music. There were seven different elements with three marks available for 8(a) (the shorter excerpt) and five for 8(b). The best-organised answers simply made a point about each element in turn, thus ensuring that they had made more than enough points and that each was relevant. However, many lost marks by referring to the vocal parts or writing about Elements of Music which were not listed (most often ‘Dynamics’) – in other words by giving answers which were not relevant to the question.

Question 9

Question 9 centred round ‘World Music’. Excerpt A had an introduction by percussion instruments followed by ‘homophonic’ singing while Excerpt B featured the sitar, recognised by three quarters of the entry. For 9(d), candidates were asked to select three features from the list given: for those few who circled more than three, examiners marked **the first three** reading from left to right along the top line and then along the bottom line.

Question 10

The two excerpts in Question 10 featured orchestral music by Wagner and Tchaikovsky respectively. 10(a) was evenly split between correct and incorrect answers, though, disappointingly, one in every ten candidates did not attempt this; perhaps this points to a lack of understanding of the term ‘ornament’. Answers to 10(b) were also fairly evenly split between those who identified the correct rhythm and those who did not. Many opted for ‘pentatonic’ as their response to 10(c) rather than the correct ‘triadic.’ The second phrase was in a major key and this, therefore, should have narrowed the choice to the final two options within 10(d). Virtually half correctly identified ‘relative major’, not an easy question at GCSE. 10(e) was directed at Dynamics with ‘*fp*’ as the correct response. Candidates had difficulty identifying the oboe for 10(f), with a very wide range of instruments being offered. In 10(g) a minority of candidates inserted a phrase of their own as the answer, rather than one of the four options given. Some also combined two of the given responses to insert in the space provided, another case which emphasises the need for careful reading of the question. The choice really was between ‘based on one chord’ and ‘the same’: and as the harmony changed near the end of the melody, the former response could be discounted. For 10(h), a question about ‘playing techniques’ and ‘string instruments’ should immediately have candidates listening for ‘(con) arco’ and ‘pizzicato’, which were present, though this excerpt also included ‘glissando’ and ‘tremolo.’

Question 11

Question 11 was based on a style of music which, it was hoped, would bring a smile to the faces of candidates at this late stage in the examination. The majority of candidates gained two marks for instrument identification within 11(a) and for recognition of the structure of the

opening instrumental passage (11(b)). 11(c) was there to provide a little ‘food for thought’ but many candidates lost marks by ignoring the instruction to give ways ‘in which this link **contrasts** with what has gone before.’ The most popular comment was the change of texture but many thought the instrument was a new one when, in fact, it had played throughout the introduction.

Question 12

The final question was based on two contrasting styles of music: the slow piano solo by Peter Maxwell Davies and the lively jazz arrangement by Shostakovich. 12(a) surprisingly caught out many candidates: the bass was played five times, not six. The cadences in 12(b) were Imperfect and Plagal respectively: many combinations were given, including terms which had nothing at all to do with cadences. Many correctly recognised the first cadence but then put Perfect for the second. The mark for 12(c) was often forfeited either through ignoring the stipulation for an *Italian* term for the tempo or by giving a term unrelated to tempo. However, it was pleasing to see how many candidates were still fully engaged by the time the final question was reached, as many wrote at great length in answer to 12(d). A few failed to note the list of elements on which comment was required, preferring to write about dynamics or simply giving a list of instruments. Answers focussed most frequently on

- the time signature
- the texture (melody & accompaniment or homophonic were both acceptable in this context)
- the fact that the melody was passed across instruments / families,
- trombone slides / glissando
- pizzicato and
- arco

Less frequent but equally valid comments referred to the use of dotted rhythms, staccato, syncopation and the presence of a drum roll near the end.

Perhaps the problem with the extended answer-type questions is that many candidates still seem to write down **all they can hear** rather than actually addressing the focus of the question. Candidates need to **listen carefully to what is played** and relate this to the specific question.

Conclusions

As this was the first full year for the new-style examination within this new specification, the signs are extremely encouraging. The main areas of confusion seem again to be texture, timbre, tonality and cadences. Candidates also need additional practice at the more extended type of answer, in particular learning to restrict their responses to the elements of music which are the subject of the question.

In writing about texture, merely referring to passages which are ‘thin’ then ‘thick’ then ‘thin again’ shows no real insight or understanding. Instrumental recognition tends to be fine for the more obvious instruments, though, even there, it is important to be aware of the context of the music. For example, this would help in deciding whether an answer is more likely to be ‘harp’ than ‘guitar.’ The sound of the flute and clarinet is often confused and that of the oboe seems virtually unknown to many. Answers for tonality focus mostly on major and minor, though some offer terms such as ‘pentatonic’, ‘chromatic’ or even emotive words such as ‘happy’ or ‘sad’ instead of a musical term. Recognition of cadences needs more attention for many candidates and the American-style ‘final’ or ‘non-final’ are not acceptable for GCSE.

Clarity of handwriting was problematic in a very small number of cases and marks can only be awarded where the examiner can read the answer with certainty.

In preparing their candidates for this examination, teachers should ensure that they understand the vocabulary specific to each Element of Music as set out in the current specification under 'The organisation of sound.' Additional help and guidance can be obtained by looking at past papers and their mark schemes and by reading the reports on the examination.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

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

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respectively.

The 2011 question paper and mark scheme are in Secure Key Materials, via e-AQA.