



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Music

42701

(Specification 4270)

Unit 1: Listening to and Appraising Music

Report on the Examination

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42701 Listening to and Appraising Music

Evidence from candidates' responses to this year's paper suggests greater confidence in responding to the new style of Listening to and Appraising Music examination. Shorter excerpts and fewer questions on each have certainly seemed to enable more candidates to gain marks across the paper and maintain their concentration to the end. As in the previous two years, candidates' responses produced a very wide range of marks out of the 80 which are available, with some very high scores achieved.

The format of the examination is now established, with three minutes allowed for reading through the questions before the start of the CD in order to give candidates a chance to familiarise themselves with the overall layout. Questions are based on the five Areas of Study, with individual questions focussing on particular musical elements (rhythm, melody, timbre, form and so on). As in previous years, the paper contains a mixture of question types including multiple choice, single-word answers, short descriptive answers, "grid" outlines of the music and questions requiring more extended writing. The completion of a melody to a given rhythm will also have been familiar. The order in which the different types of question appear on the paper is intentionally different from year to year.

General comments

Candidates often made mistakes because they had not read the question carefully, and it is important to warn them of the following:

- where a single answer is required, for example in questions 1(a), 1(b) and 1(f), the examiner cannot award a mark if **two** answers are offered because it is not clear which was intended. (On the script, the mnemonic 'SONC' ('Split Option, No Credit') will be inserted if this happens).
- Similarly if the question requires the candidate to tick or circle one option, as in 1(c), 1(d), 1(e) and 4(c) among others, ticking or circling more than one will mean no mark can be awarded.
- If a question asks for two responses, for example 3(a), 4(d) and 6(b), marks will of course be forfeited if only one answer is ticked or circled, but selecting more than two will also reduce the chance of gaining marks.
- Often the number of marks available is a helpful clue. For example in question 2(b), there were three marks available for adding phrase marks.
- Where a question requiring extended writing asks for comment on specific elements - such as question 7 which referred only to rhythm, metre and dynamics - there will not be credit for answers which do not relate to those elements.

Question 1

The paper opened this year with a well-known song, *When I'm 64*, and many candidates found the first three questions to be quite straightforward. The modulation questions were more discriminating, in particular the first - a passing modulation to the subdominant; the second was an example of the new section starting in the relative minor, a device common in popular music. The final question on this excerpt required identification of the clarinet, which proved problematic for some candidates: a range of suggestions was made, including instruments outside the woodwind family.

Question 2

Over 90% correctly identified the male voice choir. In 2(b), the first phrase mark was given and although the remaining three phrase marks were very often correctly inserted, it was also quite common for bars 3 and 4 to be phrased correctly but then only a single phrase mark to be placed over bars 5 to 8. Sometimes phrase marks stopped short in bar 4 or 6 or simply didn't reach bar 8. The homophonic texture was reasonably well recognised, though there were many other answers - some of which had nothing to do with texture. The majority heard the reduction in the dynamic level after eight bars.

Question 3

This question provided a grid to guide candidates through the excerpt and the questions. Nearly all heard one or both of 'glissando' and 'riff' for 3(a) and most recognised the major tonality for 3(c); however, in answering 3(b) there was a tendency only to name the instruments playing the melody rather than to describe the melody itself.

Question 4

Generally this question was answered well. The 3/4 time signature and the number of bars before the vocal entry (unusually 5) were both well spotted. The correct texture (melody with accompaniment) was selected by many and the majority got at least one of the marks in 4(d).

Question 5

Most candidates found this question difficult. The excerpt opened with two examples of an acciaccatura, the ornament which was the answer to 5(a). Many candidates seemed unfamiliar with ornaments, giving unrelated answers. Question 5(b) – identifying the harmonic device as a pedal – was very challenging (drone was also accepted) and although many did recognise the perfect cadence for 5(d) it was often wrongly named as plagal or imperfect. Perhaps the fact that it was not at the end of the excerpt led candidates to think it could not be a perfect cadence.

Encouragingly, a significant proportion of the candidates achieved 4 or all 5 marks for the melodic dictation. The most common error was to miss the step up from the first note, and often candidates did not write enough notes. There were still candidates who wrote note-heads which were so large as to cover both space and line: a mark cannot be awarded if intentions are not clear.

Question 6

Two 'World Music' excerpts followed, the first African and the second African fusion. The important point to recognise in 6(a) was that the voices were male but a range of possible answers was allowed, from simply 'male choir' to the more specific 'barbershop'. The time signature of Excerpt B (4/4) was recognised by almost all candidates and both parts of 6(d) (identifying the tonality and rhythm of the chords played during the vocal section) were correctly answered by many. Most candidates gained the mark for naming the melody instrument, and again a range of answers was allowed.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to compare two contrasting pieces referring only to their use of **rhythm**, **metre** and **dynamics**. A single correct statement on each piece about each of these elements could well have gained all six marks. For example, candidates might have commented that Excerpt A was mostly quiet while Excerpt B had *crescendos* and ended loud. Unfortunately, some candidates lost marks by concentrating on other elements which

were not the subject of the question, especially timbre. As last year, the main problem with the extended answer-type question seemed to be that candidates tried to write down **all they could hear** rather than concentrating as they listened on the specific question. Nevertheless, there were many candidates who gained full marks and very few who failed to score at all.

Question 8

The excerpts were two further examples of World Music, this time featuring music from India and the Caribbean. For Excerpt A, the melody instrument was a bansuri, but ‘flute’ or ‘Indian flute’ were accepted answers also. Quite a lot of candidates recognised the fact that the music was Indian, but wrote an unlikely instrument here, including ‘tabla.’ Excerpt B featured steel drums (or steel pans), which were recognised by the majority. Identification of the correct rhythm was challenging to many but most correctly described the tonality of this bright and cheerful piece as major.

Question 9

This question was based on the duet *Au fond du temple saint* by Bizet. The tenor and baritone voices were widely identified (though bass was allowed as an alternative for baritone) and most chose the correct pattern of the excerpt. The Italian term for the tempo was more problematic for many candidates who either used words which were nothing to do with tempo or did not use Italian. The piece ended with a perfect cadence and this was more easily recognised than the cadence in question 5(d). The time signature question was well answered.

Question 10

The excerpt was from ELO’s *Don’t Bring Me Down*. The drum kit, which opened the excerpt, was correctly identified by most, while recognising that the melodic device was a ‘riff’ proved slightly more problematic for some. It is worth bearing in mind that the answer ‘drums’ was too vague and some sort of qualification was necessary. (This was also the case with 11(b).) The 4 notes of the riff were correctly identified by many candidates. Question 10(d) used another grid: candidates did not always observe that the question was asking for the *first* appearance of each named feature and some missed the fact that the features were listed in the order in which they occurred.

Question 11

The first excerpt was taken from Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* and its two main rhythms were amongst the five options given. All five opened with the same rhythmic figure so it was necessary to concentrate on what followed. It is important, as mentioned earlier in this report, that candidates do only tick two options and that, if they change their mind, it is obvious which answers constitute their final choices.

The second excerpt was from the soundtrack to *Gladiator* by Hans Zimmer. When a question asks how the dynamics change, as in 11(e), there are only two possible answers: they get quieter or they get louder. If a question asks what happens to the dynamics, then there are of course other possibilities. Both questions on dynamics were correctly answered by most candidates. Question 11(g) concerned the overall tonality and many candidates correctly gave the answer as major.

Question 12

The final question was divided between three different excerpts. A majority of candidates identified the sequence at the start of the Woody Herman excerpt, gave a suitable dynamic

marking and recognised the saxophones, although some gave trumpets, trombones and clarinets. Sometimes candidates lost marks because they named **two** instruments or crossed out their initial correct answer in favour of something else. The Glenn Miller extract asked for the identification of syncopation and walking bass, with candidates finding the latter easier than the former. Questions on the final extract, music by the Bee Gees, discriminated well. (The excerpt turned out to be a somewhat poignant choice, given the news of the death of Robin Gibb just days after the examination.) A majority identified the metronome marking which best matched the tempo but some surprising answers were given instead of 'Falsetto' for the final part of the question.

Conclusions

Overall, the paper discriminated well. Responses were encouraging, with candidates showing a greater level of confidence across the paper. There were noticeably fewer instances of answers left blank: the vast majority of candidates at least 'had a go' at responding to the questions.

As last year, the main areas of uncertainty seemed to be texture, timbre and cadences. For the more extended type of answer, candidates need to be reminded to restrict their responses to the elements of music highlighted within the question, as no credit will be given for irrelevant points. The better answers kept their comments brief but relevant.

Under texture, appropriate terminology given in the specification includes harmonic/homophonic, polyphonic/contrapuntal, imitative, canonic, layered, unison, octaves, single melody line, melody with accompaniment and antiphonal. As indicated in the notes in the mark scheme, other valid answers are considered on their merits during the examiner standardisation process and during marking. Instrumental recognition tends to be good for the more obvious instruments, although even the sound of the flute, oboe and clarinet are often confused. Since the inclusion of the oboe in last year's paper, many candidates seem to hear the instrument everywhere! Recognition of cadences needs more attention for many candidates and 'final' or 'non-final' are not accepted in place of the correct names.

Occasionally clarity of handwriting was problematic: marks can be awarded only where the examiner can read the answer with certainty.

In preparation for this examination, candidates need to understand appropriate vocabulary related to each element of music. Much of this is set out in the current specification under 'The organisation of sound.' Additional help and guidance can be obtained by looking at past papers, mark schemes and reports, which are available on the AQA website.

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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