

Examiner Report June 2007

GCSE

GCSE Music 1426

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1426/1A: Performing

This year's examination series has shown that there continues to be an extremely wide range of instruments played by students and some of these to a very high standard indeed. As with last year, a survey of instruments performed in the moderated samples was undertaken and, (in a sample of over 15,000 performances) piano, voice, keyboard, drums and guitar have made up 72% of the performances heard - an increase of 8% on last year. It should be noted that at the other end of the scale, there was a consequent reduction in performances on orchestral instruments, which made up only 26% (with Brass instruments making up a mere 4.5%) and with ethnic instruments, which made up 0.5% of the sample.

While diversity continues to be paramount at GCSE, there was another small change in the standards of playing this year. While there were some very mature performances, it was felt that, as with last year, there were fewer outstanding performances overall. Most candidates who achieved full marks for a performance did so because of the difficulty grid and not on the performance alone.

The performances on the whole, however, were very well presented, with the vast majority of performers presenting well prepared pieces. There has been a significant improvement in the standards of rock musicians, and in particular the drum kit. Far more performers had prepared examination pieces from the Rock School syllabus and consequently the music was far more polished overall. This, along with a similar trend with guitarists, is to be welcomed.

Many accomplished singers performed using backing tracks which enhanced their solo performances. It was pleasing to hear a good range of both Classical and popular songs, but there were still too many poor performances from singers. There were a number of very simple things that could have been done to improve the outcome for many singers, particularly the karaoke style performances, which were felt to be under-prepared.

The saxophone was the most popular instrument of the woodwind family and we heard some good performances. Brass instruments were the rarest of orchestral instruments heard, but, proportionally, they also were the least well prepared. Strings, in general fared well. There were some excellent performances on all instruments, but there is a need to play particular care with intonation both in preparation and when marking these instruments.

Overall, candidates could have aimed for more polished performances and one or two centres still presented music that was beyond a candidate's abilities and consequently marks were lost. It was reported by moderators that there were a significant number of performances that were felt to be under-prepared and had been recorded at the very last minute. It is important to remember that these performances can be recorded at any time during the course and not just before the coursework deadlines.

The majority of performances are deemed to be More Difficult and only a few were deemed to be Easy: indeed it was felt that there were fewer performances at the Easier level this year and of those, the majority of performances were good.

The Ensembles have continued to improve too, there was an increase in candidates presenting proper ensembles (as opposed to a solo plus accompaniment) and a good range too. The best included a string quartet and a performance of Bach's "Jesu, Joy

of Man's Desiring" with violin obligato. Unfortunately, the pop group ensemble does not fare as well: while there were some superb performances, all too often the ensemble broke down, or it was difficult to hear the performers properly within the group. Whatever the outcome, please ensure that it is made clear on the Musc100 form exactly what role the candidate has within the ensemble and to mark the score appropriately.

Please note that from next year, an ensemble cannot constitute a solo with accompaniment, unless the candidate is playing the accompaniment. Improvisation and Directing an ensemble were very rarely undertaken. Only three centres submitted candidates for directing an ensemble.

The standard of marking continues to improve. Most centres provided good comments to justify the marks awarded by the teacher-examiner, though a significant number still continue to ignore advice and enter irrelevant comments e.g. "The candidate is a valued member of the school band" or "This student belongs to several music groups within the school." Of greater concern were the numbers of schools which do not make comments at all to justify the marks awarded. Linked with this, many teachers are failing to justify the Levels of Difficulty properly: ABRSM grades do not indicate the level of difficulty.

Scores are necessary to judge accuracy, and moderators note that centres have still sent material off without the scores. (A lyric sheet is not a score). It is perfectly acceptable to send a commercial recording in lieu of a score, where one is not available.

While the standard of marking and the performing levels continue to improve overall, unfortunately the standard of administration of the submissions from a significant number of centres has fallen. Most of the errors could have been solved at the centre by checking the submission before despatch. An unexpected amount of time was spent by moderators telephoning for information not written on forms, chasing missing signatures, missing scores, recordings and track lists. In one or two cases, centres were very slow in responding. It is stated quite clearly that the work cannot be moderated without these things being in place. The paper has been complicated in terms of administration which has also resulted in marks being calculated by the centres incorrectly. An important part of the moderation process is to check teacher-examiner marks. Many of these were found to be incorrect (both too high and too low) and was due also, perhaps to the fact that the Mus100 forms had often been incorrectly or poorly photocopied, thus making the checking process more difficult. The changes to the specification for next year should make the administration of this paper far easier. It is important to note that the majority of centres, when they had been contacted, reacted swiftly to sort any problems promptly.

This year the vast majority of the recordings have been produced excellently. The usual problems have occurred; (missing tracks, inaudible recordings, etc.) yet this could have been avoided with careful checking. There were still a number of poor recordings presented. Fewer centres submitted work on mini disks and tapes this year, but more centres sent work on individual CD's. This is unnecessary work for centres as all the candidates can be recorded onto one disk, and a track list provided. This has been found to be the quickest and most efficient method of presentation. Where text has been added for the CD screen, this is not sufficient for the moderator, a full printed track list is essential.

Overall, this year has seen an increase in voice and keyboard performances to the detriment of orchestral instruments. There has been a slight increase in the average standard of performance, mainly due to there being fewer very poor performances. However, there was another slight drop in the standard of the outstanding and very good performance. There was a significant decrease in the standard of presentation by centres, with many more problems that could have been overcome with more careful checking. Nevertheless, the standard of marking has improved overall and that bodes well for next year as there are significant changes to the coursework requirements for this paper.

1426/1B: Performing Using Technology

It is still surprising that the overall percentage of candidates who opt for this paper is so low. The opportunity to perform using music technology offers many candidates the chance to demonstrate their musicality without worrying about the restrictions of their traditional instrumental skills. Certainly, some of the submissions received bear this out, with many candidates submitting high quality work for both sequencing and multi-track recording. However, it does remain the option which many take because they are deemed to be insufficiently skilled to present a traditional performance, thus skewing the percentages achieving the higher grades from year to year. It does present an obvious grounding for Music Technology at AS and A2 level, but a much smaller number than expected seem to take the opportunity to follow this route for performance.

Candidates are able to present their sequenced compositions as a performance using music technology (and will be able to do so in 2008 as well), and this remains the most popular choice of submission. Solo sequences, either the candidates' own compositions or arrangements by other people, make up approximately 80% of the work received. Multi-track recordings still appear to cause teachers some concern, either in their application of the mark scheme or in the availability of appropriate equipment, so these remain very much in the minority.

The programs most commonly used to submit sequences are Sibelius and Cubase (in any of its various forms). Any MIDI sequencing package is acceptable, but loop-based software such as eJay, Fruityloops and Garageband should be avoided. Pre-recorded loops must not form a part of a sequence submitted as a solo performance - the work must be entirely the candidate's own. Some candidates were significantly disadvantaged this year because they used pre-recorded loops. This does have some impact on the choice of which composition is to be submitted as composition 1 (as a club dance remix may need to include some pre-recorded drum loops for example), but some careful vetting of which composition is to be put forward as the performance during the course should eliminate this problem. In 2008 this will no longer be an issue as candidates will not need to perform their own composition.

A sophisticated package is not required for GCSE level; candidates must be able to input their music (either using a keyboard or step input using a mouse), edit the results to ensure accuracy of pitch and rhythm, be able to adjust the dynamic levels, choice of timbre, pan (stereo) positioning of each sound, and edit the music to improve the phrasing and articulation. If the program allows them to do this then they can access the full range of marks.

Many submissions failed to access the full range of marks because candidates often miss out one of the interpretation areas, most often panning. To pan the tracks is the work of a moment, simply dragging a slider from left to right as appropriate, thinking about where the instruments might be on a stage or where they might be in the soundstage of a professional recording. This year, examples of all the tracks being left as piano sounds were far less common, with candidates normally paying due attention to their timbral choice. Dynamics are often lacking from sequences, again to the detriment of the candidate. Sometimes dynamics are very overdone in an attempt to fulfil this requirement. Candidates are advised not to use extremes and to apply their ears to any choices they make.

Please note that sequences are considered to be SOLO performances. Under no circumstances will a sequence be accepted as an ensemble performance. Multi-track recordings are considered to be ensemble performances i.e. submissions which contain recorded audio instead of or in addition to MIDI tracks.

It is very useful for moderators when the name of the software package used is recorded on the MUS100 forms, especially if the package is less common. If there are any doubts about the suitability of a software package, advice should be sought from Edexcel before entering the work.

It is absolutely essential that scores are provided in order to assess the accuracy of a performance. This is true whether the performance is of the candidate's own composition or otherwise. Again, this may have some impact on which composition is used as the performing during the course piece, but the impact will be lessened in 2008. It is insufficient to provide a screenshot from the sequencing package as this contains little detail of use to the moderator. As a rule of thumb, a score (or detailed commentary) is acceptable if it contains detail of pitch and rhythm and the structure of the piece. A screenshot may be useful in addition to a traditional score or detailed commentary, but not in lieu of it.

Multi-track recordings presented less issues than sequences, with some very good examples (often from candidates who had chosen to perform all the parts themselves). In general, the recording quality continues to improve year on year, perhaps due to the availability of cheaper quality equipment. The most common mistake candidates at this level make is to try and record too many tracks, making it very difficult for them to present a successful final mix. The most successful recordings this year were those which have 3 or 4 tracks, well recorded, with a good amount of time spent mixing them appropriately, placing the sounds in the stereo field (panning them) and applying a few judicious effects (reverb would be sufficient at this level). Novelty effects and dizzying panning from side to side should be avoided.

In general, moderators felt that the standards have risen slightly this year, with fewer examples of very poor work. Far less submissions were on cassette, as might be expected for this paper, and the quality of recordings as a whole continues to improve. There are clear examples of good teaching going on in some centres, with the whole cohort achieving high marks, but also examples of candidates attempting this paper as a last resort to achieve a few marks. It is hoped that more candidates will be encouraged to take this option in future years in order to realise potential which might otherwise remain dormant.

1426/02: Composing

General Comments on the individual topics within the four Areas of Study

The range of compositions presented in 2007 was about the same as in previous years. All four of the topics from Area of Study 1 (Ground Bass, Variations, Ternary and Rondo) were well represented, although by far the popular choices were Variations and Ternary pieces. There seemed to be fewer Ground Bass pieces than in previous years. In Area of Study 2, Minimalism and Serialism were the popular choices and few candidates offered Electronic and Experimental pieces, however those that were heard were imaginative and creative, often from centres specialising in these genres.

In Area of Study 3, the most popular topics again were the 12 Bar Blues and Songs from Musicals. Again, this year there was only a handful of Reggae compositions and fewer Club Dance Remix compositions. In Area of Study 4, where there was a significant reduction in the number of Indian Raga pieces but an increase in Gamelan pieces. Fusion pieces were few and far between, but where they occurred they were often of a high calibre and effective. By far, the most popular topic was African Drumming compositions, frequently generated through software programmes like Sibelius.

It is pleasing to report again this year, that only in a few instances were candidates penalised for submitting two pieces taken from the same Area of Study. The message from last year for teachers to check that each composition *clearly* comes from a different topic and a different Area of Study seems to be working. The other persistent problem is that often teachers ignored the topics altogether and give loose briefs such as, 'compose a piece in a popular style,' 'write a programmatic piece' etc. The pieces resulting from these briefs tended to be bland and mediocre compositions which lacked focus and as a result scored relatively low marks. There is also much evidence again of the continued practice of 'composing by numbers' or 'template compositions' where the teacher has dictated how each part of the composition is to be organised. This practice stifles creativity and potential and results in a series of unimaginative 'cloned' compositions. The most common example of this is the overuse of the Pachelbel Canon. At the very least, candidates should write their own eight bass notes and not to use the original. If they do, the result often sounds like third rate Pachelbel!

There were a large range of marks in this component which is typical of previous years, although there appeared to be more pieces achieving high marks than in previous years, which is pleasing. Few candidates however seem capable of original and inspired work that achieves top marks, however, some were well off the top of the scale and were of A level standard, which is impressive. Most of the candidature seems to fall in the middle and upper middle of the mark range (36-44). On a positive note, there were generally fewer weak compositions again this year than in the past and far less candidates only submitting one composition. The impression overall was that the general standard had improved again on last year.

Area of Study 1: Repetition and Contrast in Western Classical Music 1600-1899.

The four topics of Ground Bass, Variations, Ternary Form and Rondo were all popular across the entire ability range.

Ground Bases were written for a wide range of instruments and/ or voices. The most successful of these pieces exploited different compositional techniques including augmentation, diminution, canonic treatment and inversion as well as taking care to vary the textures and provide meaningful dynamic contrasts. However, these were rare! The majority were mediocre and often lacked a real sense of development or shape. Typically, parts were added in to the musical texture then parts were removed rather in an arch shape form. They were predictable and dull. The worst examples in this genre again this year were the now infamous Pachelbel pastiches. One or two candidates showed more imagination by writing ground basses in the context of a song, electronic composition or as part of a dance track. One clever use of the form was to write a serial ground bass composition.

Variations proved to be another popular option and there were many successful pieces again this year. There were solo pieces without accompaniment, keyboard variations, as well as pieces for small ensembles, and even orchestral variations! This form is well suited to candidates who like to work on small sections of a work at a time rather than to try to build up one large scale composition. This patch work approach also fits in with timetabled composition slots.

Sadly, there were again no attempts at Romantic style variations in the style of Beethoven or Brahms, in which variation is achieved through motivic development. This was commented upon in the last two reports and it would be good to see candidates attempting this type of variation procedure which can be interesting a stimulating for the candidates to try to develop motifs from an existing melody to create new melodies etc. However, it is demanding!

Ternary Form pieces continue to be the favourite choice of form of all the topics studied at GCSE level. The most successful of these pieces were those that could provide a well-contrasted middle 'B' section to the outer 'A' sections. In addition, the repeat of section A is an opportunity to write a varied reprise to avoid that 'cut and paste' of the Sibelius generated A section repeat. However, this topic is not easy and candidates struggle to produce effective and interesting compositions.

Those that are pastiches of the baroque, classical or romantic styles have to contend with well proportioned melodies, clear phrase structure, chords, keys and cadences, modulation as well as a contrasted middle section. All of this is not easy, despite the apparent simplicity of the actual formal structure of the music.

Rondo pieces were less in abundance again this year, although those that were written tended to be exciting and lively works displaying real character and spirit. There were also carefully written for the chosen instrument and obviously were intended to be performed as composition 1.

It is worth restating the points made in reports from the last three years that in all these four forms, the best work came from candidates who had a good grounding in melody writing and the development of melodies in regular four bar phrases. A working knowledge of simple diatonic harmony, modulation, keys and cadences is also a great aid to effective composition. Candidates should study these key musical elements of the four traditional topics if they are going to be equipped to compose convincing musical pieces. This theoretical ground work is best done *prior* to embarking on composition of these traditional topics.

Area of Study 2: New directions in Western Classical Music-1900 to the present day.

All four set compositional topics of Serialism, Minimalism, Experimental and Electronic Music were seen by the moderators although, as was the case as in the previous two years, the most popular two topics by far, were Minimalist and Serialist compositions. There were only a relatively few Experimental and Electronic works this year, which seems to be the fashion.

Minimalism. We still have this year a real mix of the effective and stylish pieces as well as the dull, tediously repetitive pieces which contain little or no musical development. The best works displayed the essential idea of the gradual evolution of a motif through a process of very gradual change and displayed the use of phasing, note addition/subtraction techniques over a very simple, often static harmonic foundation. This year again, the moderators reported the practice in weak pieces of the constant repetition of a motif with little or no development of its elements, be it rhythmic or melodic. There was much evidence again of the 'copy -paste' method on Sibelius to 'string out' compositions. The form of these pieces was equally predictable, ie. building up layers to a central 'tutti' then gradually removing layers one by one.

Serialism. The number of serialist pieces has increased dramatically this year and generally the standard has been very good again. This topic seems to be well taught and appeals to the whole ability range. This is clearly one of the most popular of all the sixteen compositional topics. The best pieces were excellent pastiches of Schoenberg, Berg or Webern. Some of the very best works were programmatic, such as a piano work entitled 'Elements - Earth, Air, Fire, Water' This gave the candidate the opportunity to explore a variety of keyboard textures to great effect. There were only a few poor examples in this style. The weaker candidates were still able to score quite well by demonstrating at least their understanding and application of the four basic manipulations of the prime order, retrograde, inversion and retrograde inversion. The general points about this style mentioned in last year's report are worth reiterating ie. *'more attention though needs to be given (even at this modest level) to writing idiomatic angular melodic lines and using fragmentary rhythms to achieve the desired atonal framework of the serialist piece'*. Some of the most effective pieces were composed within a traditional structure. There were examples of ternary, rondo, ground bass and variations

Experimental pieces were few and far between again this year. However, there were some imaginative and creative works that had clearly been influenced from listening to examples by Cage, Cardew, Monk, Berberian and others. The commentary is vital for this type of work and will assist the moderator in understanding the intentions of the music. Therefore, this writing needs to be as detailed as possible. There were some weak pieces in this category too and these really lacked focus and bore no resemblance to a submitted score or commentary. These pieces were rambling and unorganised.

Electronic. The comments on electronic pieces apply equally this year. The only notable difference (as with Experimental works) being the decline in actual submissions. Centres that had the music technology in place and a teacher to teach this option managed to produce work that was convincing and impressive. These pieces also were accompanied by excellent commentaries too which explained in

great detail the entire compositional process from beginning to end. It was pleasing to receive track diagrams clearly annotated to show how sounds had been manipulated and how effects had been created. This greatly assisted the music moderator in his/her assessment of the work. The main criticism mentioned last year was that pieces are still far too long, with the technology taking over from the musical content at times!

Area of Study 3: Popular Song in Context.

'12 bar blues' and 'Songs from Musicals' were two of the most popular of the sixteen compositional topics as in previous years. 'Club Dance Remix' submissions were reasonably popular, although again 'Reggae' submissions were few and far between.

The 12 bar blues was very popular across the ability range, both as instrumental and vocal examples. The best pieces displayed idiomatic syncopated melodic lines, replete with 'blue' notes as well as improvised sections and stop choruses etc. There were less vocal blues songs as opposed to thousands of instrumental pieces. At the lower ability range, these 12 bar blues pieces are little more than basic workings, often lacking in elements of the blues style at all. Some of the worst, as last year, used grids of chord patterns in which the candidates simply had to write in letter names of notes to the given chord. These lacked any sense of the blues idiom whatsoever.

Songs from Musicals featured strongly again this year and is one of the most popular of all topics. Keen songwriters with a gift for melody were able to score high marks quite easily in this option. It is worth restating here that moderators do not need a long description of the plot of the musical itself, just a basic outline will suffice. They are more interested in the compositional process and musical detail. Some of the offerings in this category were 'instrumental numbers' as opposed to songs. Weak submissions comprised preset keyboard chords and a simple vocal line. Problems were noted that were to do with poor word setting and non sequiturs between the melody and harmony. Aimless and dull melodies too, often with excessive repetition, weakened the overall effect.

Club Dance pieces were reasonably popular this year. There is still evidence of the persistent use of programs such as 'Ejay' and 'Acid' (and a new one this year on Mac called 'Garageband') to create these compositions. These pieces lacked any real evidence of composition having taken place and were simply preloaded samples and loops picked out by the candidate from drop down menus. It needs to be stressed yet again this year that the moderator can only credit work done by the candidate. In this respect, the moderator is looking for evidence of the manipulation of samples, loops etc. Some of the best pieces in this genre clearly had been done using music technology effectively and where this was the case, they often scored high marks. Moderators were pleased to receive clearly labelled track diagrams and /or commentaries to display how much work the candidate had done to create the various layers of tracks and how the samples had been manipulated to create different aural effects etc.

Reggae pieces were thin on the ground again this year. However, as was mentioned in last year's report, where they did appear, they tended to be quite stylish and idiomatic and characterful. Often these were undertaken by a whole candidature where there was specialist interest and knowledge of the repertoire.

Area of Study 4: 'Rhythms, scales and modes in music from around the world.'

By far, the most popular topic here was African Drumming followed by Gamelan pieces. There were only a relatively few Indian Raga pieces and even less Fusion examples.

Indian Raga pieces exhibited a good understanding of the use of raga and candidates displayed a good knowledge of the musical characteristics of the contrasting sections (alap, jhor, jhalla and gat). The most popular combination was an opening alap followed by a gat. It was shame that no one submitted a complete bandish. This option served weaker candidates well as the music is linear in concept and candidates need not worry about chords and cadences! This is worth bearing in mind in planning appropriate choices for candidates of differing musical abilities.

Gamelan pieces were of a higher standard this year than previously and were quite idiomatic and well thought out, often based on compositional models. The best had contrasting sections at differing tempi and melodic variation above the trunk melody. The textures were also varied and the music had a sense of organic growth. The use of real percussion instruments is to be encouraged as these sounded quite authentic. Of course, there were weak offerings that suffered through undue constant repetition with little or no variation in terms of the musical tempi, textures and so on.

African drumming pieces were very common this year and possibly accounted for the largest option of all sixteen prescribed topics. The best works displayed all the characteristic polyrhythms, cross rhythms, call and response, virtuoso solo writing etc. that are familiar hallmarks of this style of music. By contrast, and predictably too, the converse was true of the weak pieces, i.e. they were monotonous and dull and relied too heavily on the 'cut and paste' of large sections of music, with little or no textural contrasts. Solo sections were often omitted and the music lacked any dynamism, sounding static and inorganic instead

Fusion pieces were few in number, but those that were offered were imaginative and successfully brought together two (or more) different musical styles to create a new sound world. Most of these works were framed in a traditional form, such as ternary, yet were inventive and interesting.

The Brief Proforma

The writing on the brief continues to improve in quality. The best examples are replete with musical vocabulary and include personal judgements about the music. The candidates seem to be more effective at being critical about their own pieces, which is encouraging. Writing in the first person and using expressions such as 'I felt that..' and 'I decided' etc. helped to produce evaluative judgements and thus to qualify for the top 4-5 mark band. There were thankfully few 'see attached commentary' opt outs this year. It is worth restating as in last year's report that the coursework requirement is that the commentary and brief should *both* be submitted. This is made quite clear in the specification as described in the box diagram on page 15. The precise aim of this piece of writing is also clearly stated on this page of the specification, i.e. *'to appraise the brief and evaluate their composition, its performance (where appropriate) and the Area of Study.'*

Teacher set briefs

The best examples were tailored to the abilities and interests of the individual candidate and the weakest briefs were again of the open ended type, such as 'write a piece from Area of Study 1' or even the common example was 'write a ternary form piece' Many failed to include a brief at all. A simple title of 'Comp 1' and 'Comp 2' even appeared. For guidance about the brief and its purpose teachers are referred to the specification which gives the following overall aim of the brief i.e. to *'describe the stimulus for the composition and provide a clear indication of the candidate's intentions. It should include reference to some or all of the following: purpose, resources, effect, time and place.'* Specimen briefs can be found on pages 18-22 of the specification and this could at least provide a useful starting point.

Teacher-examiner Assessments

The moderators reported that in general they found the teacher examiner assessments to be reasonably accurate this year. Again, the use and application of the words from the descriptors from the specification to justify marks awarded was seen to be a useful method to aid and support the overall accuracy of the assessment. Where the assessment proved to be wayward it was to the generous side, although to be fair this was less noticeable this year.

In terms of the individual criteria, the following general comments can be made:

A Use and Development of Ideas.

Most candidates managed to achieve at least 'adequate use of standard conventions' or 'good use' of ideas. Few however, demonstrated real imagination in the process of developing ideas as this requires a real understanding of form and structure and a maturity of musical thought. Others finding it difficult to develop their musical ideas (or often because they had *too many* ideas) fell into the lower two bands showing an 'attempt to develop ideas' and only a few to have shown 'a minimal attempt'.

B Exploitation of the Medium

There was an increase in those achieving a mark of 4 (and 5) this year. As was mentioned last year, some pieces were not effective either in terms of meeting the brief or in realising the potential of the selected resources, and as a result of this, quite a few were deemed to be only 'functional' in their exploitation of the medium.

C Structure

The majority seemed to fall into the 'clear and simple' criterion for a mark of 3 out of 5 or if they exhibited a sense of 'proportion and development' through variations of standard conventions, or by the addition of introductions, linking passages, cadenzas etc. they were awarded 4 out of 5. Others however had confused and vague structures and were deemed to have only 'attempted to control' structural devices and again a mere handful were awarded the lowest mark of a 'limited attempt' to control structural devices where the music appeared meandering and aimless.

D Understanding the Brief

There was a significant improvement in the quality of the writing again this year. More candidates produced responses which included justifications as well as an extensive use of apposite musical vocabulary. Teachers now have a clearer idea of what is required in this part of the assessment. Of course, some weak briefs were clearly done at the last minute and lacked any musical vocabulary or detail about the compositional process. Pupils should be encouraged to keep a log of the composition as it evolves from conception to the final product. This will greatly assist their subsequent writing.

Optional Criteria

The most popular were as last year, E 'Melody', G 'Texture' and H 'Rhythm'. F 'Harmony' was the next most used. Again, only where there appeared little credit in other areas did teachers select I 'Dynamics' and J 'Technology'. Technology was wisely and effectively used in some of the topics such as electronic music, club dance remix etc. It should be pointed out that the use of Sibelius alone is not a good reason for choosing this option.

Teacher examiner assessments in the optional criteria tended to be a little on the generous side in the main and were less accurately marked than for the compulsory criteria.

Teacher-examiner Comments on MUS Forms

There was an improvement in the general quality of the comments this year, though many still are still brief statements lacking detail rather than supportive descriptors using criteria wording to substantiate initial assessments. Many teacher-examiners still fail to clearly identify which Area of Study is being represented by each composition which causes extra work for the moderator.

Arrangements.

These were very rare this year and tended to be either very good or quite poor. As was stated last year, the best candidates created new pieces from their original source material. The music was often rescored for new instrumentation with different harmonies and often included some original melodic parts, counter melodies etc.

The weak candidates simply transcribed the original for another group of instruments preserving the melody, rhythm and harmony parts from the original version. These were only awarded low marks.

Administrative Matters

There were again cases of missing or incomplete submissions. The list of common problems remains virtually the same as it did last year, but still needs to be highlighted. The main causes for concern were:

- Late work - sometimes up to a month after the closing date
- Incomplete submissions - missing recordings, commentaries, scores etc.
- Arithmetical errors on Mus Forms and transfer errors to OPTEMS
- Highest and lowest candidates missing from the selected sample
- Still many using C90 tapes with one candidate on each side
- Lack of track order on CD or MD.
- Multiple MDs where one would suffice for the entire centre
- Missing signatures -teacher-examiner and candidate
- Missing teacher-examiner comments on Mus Forms
- Performance work sent to composition moderator
- Poor quality (sometimes inaudible) recordings

As always, many Edexcel centres managed to present the coursework and recordings in a clear and concise format year on year. By far, the most popular format now seems to be CD, due mainly to the ease of producing recordings in this way and the availability of portable CD recorders now on the market. Those that presented all of the centre's work on a single CD or Minidisk with a clear track order are to be particularly commended. This is often the most efficient way to present candidate's work to the best advantage. Edexcel realises that all this requires a considerable amount of work at a busy time in the school year. However, the care taken by many centres is greatly appreciated by the hardworking team of composition moderators.

1426 03 - Listening

General Observations

There appears to be a slight improvement in the marks this year with the candidates becoming more aware of the correct meaning of the words such as tempo, dynamics, cadences etc. Although quite a few of the responses were inaccurate, they, at least, referred to the correct area of knowledge.

Area of Study 1: Repetition and Contrast in Western Classical Music 1600-1899

Question 1

As in previous years, it was hoped that this question would give the candidates a confident start to the examination and therefore consisted of many one word responses and some multiple choice options as well a detailed part requiring a justification for the period. Many candidates correctly identified the violin for part (a) and also heard the minor tonality for the opening section. The 4/4 time signature was mostly correct; however there were quite a few 3/4's. Considering what information appeared on the paper for (e), this was all the more surprising. The French horn which played the counter melody was often identified as either a trumpet or trombone. Over the years it has become more apparent that candidates are having difficulty in identifying orchestral instruments. Some attention needs to be given to this in normal classroom lessons. The tempo indicated was allegro but a surprising number opted for largo or presto. Virtually all the candidates heard the music slow down at the end. The structure AABBCCA was often correct but some opted for ABABACA. The period of 1878 was often confused with 1778 and the musical reasons were often very vague. Amongst the many correct options in the mark scheme were such reasons as:

- lyrical melody
- richer harmony/more complex harmony/ more chromatic chords
- quite a lot of dynamics/expressive contrasts
- points relating to very expressive or emotional
- large orchestra.

Many of the open ended response questions have many choices within the mark scheme and there are more points in the mark scheme not listed above.

Question 2

Most candidates managed to identify the piano for (a) and also heard the two parts in the texture of the opening section. Unfortunately the many turns featured in this extract were frequently called trills. The ternary form for (d) was occasionally correct but a surprising number wrote binary or rondo for this. The articulation of Variation 1 was a mixture of legato and staccato which was frequently correct. Some chose to say that it was all staccato. The rhythmic feature of the melody as triplets but many candidates failed to notice this and had a variety of responses which were nothing to do with rhythmic aspects at all. In Variation 2 the musical device was imitation which could be clearly heard at the beginning. Again there were a variety of inaccurate responses here. It is important to remember that the words 'musical device' should make the candidates focus on the key words which relate to this term - namely imitation, sequence, ostinato and pedal. The tonality in this extract was minor and a large number of the candidates managed to answer this correctly. The type of scale featured in the middle section was chromatic but this was less well answered.

Question 3

Quite a few candidates managed to score maximum marks on the notation this year. The main problem lay with the final two notes which were up a third and this interval was misjudged. The majority of stepwise movement proved to be helpful. It is important to stress to the candidates to try to write this neatly on the staff and make certain that the intended note is clearly placed within the line or space desired. Very large notes hoping to be considered as options are often not helpful at all. The markers take a lot of trouble and effort to attempt to work out the candidate's intentions. This extract was a Rondo or Rondeau and the form was AABACA or ABACA or some adequate description that mentioned the differences within the overall structure. Many candidates did hear the Rondo but then wrote the format as ABACADA but this extract did not have the additional episode. Part (c)(i) was very well answered with many Baroque responses. Those who chose to use dates often used a single date and the question asked for the period. The correct dates for the period 1600-1750 were also acceptable. The most common successful reason was the harpsichord and the mark scheme also has other alternatives.

Area of Study 2: New Directions in Western Classical Music - 1900 to the present day

Question 4

As mentioned last year this AOS mostly contains music that requires quite intense listening. The extracts taken are carefully chosen to try to make the points on the paper very clear in the hearing situation without any possibility of explanation which would occur in the classroom situation. Even so this is always a challenging AOS in the listening context.

The musical device for (a)(i) was a pedal and here again it was hoped that the candidates would relate to these words of 'musical device' to try to focus in this direction as mentioned in question 2 of this report. The interval in the bass part was an octave and quite a few wrote a third instead. The instrumental family was percussion and many candidates managed to answer this correctly. The dynamic at the opening was deemed to have quite a few possibilities depending on the size of the room or hall and the recording equipment used by the centre for the examination. The mark scheme clearly states the parameters for this decision. This was a Minimalist piece for (d)(i) but a surprising number wrote *Serialist* at this point. There were many reasons given to support the minimalist response within the mark scheme.

Some of these were:

- ostinati/repetition/looping/cyclic patterns
- gradual changes so patterns evolve
- layering
- interlocking patterns
- influence of world music
- addition of new patterns

The two cultures or traditions which influenced this extract were Gamelan or African and Western pop or rock. Most candidates managed at least a mark in this part. Quite a few also identified the composer as Glass which was pleasing. The other inaccurate option most chosen was Webern

Question 5

The instrument which began the extract was the horn and a surprising number wrote violin at this point. The brass family was often correct if the first part was accurate. It was hoped that the explanation within part (b) would lead the candidates to be able to write the words tone row/note row/prime row/prime order or series. Unfortunately quite a few simply wrote the word chromatic. The pitched percussion instrument in (c) was a xylophone or timpani but many wrote the name of a non-pitched percussion instrument instead. Quite a lot of the candidates heard the music crescendo at the end of the extract and expressed this successfully with assorted descriptions or terms. It had been hoped that the wording of part (b) might have pointed the way for the candidates to realise that this was an example of Serialism but many did not manage this answer. The five ways were those within the Specification and the mark scheme encompassed ten possible correct options that were correct. The most common correct responses of the candidates were inversion, retrograde inversion and retrograde.

Question 6

The style of the music in this extract was experimental but a surprising number opted for minimalist. The reasons were not well answered by most of the candidates. Amongst the acceptable answers were extreme dynamics, extreme dissonance, experimental vocal sounds or techniques and tempo/pulse not clearly identified. The responses in part (b) however were amongst the most successful in the entire paper. Across the entire ability range many candidates half marks and over with a large number obtaining all the 6 available marks for this part.

Area of Study 3: Popular Song in Context

Question 7

Many candidates managed to hear that there were 2 beats in the bar and quite a few also noted that there were 4 bars in the introduction. The musical device here was mainly the ostinato but there were other correct options which were a riff, vamp, repetition or offbeat. The latter responses were managed by quite a few of the candidates. The rhythmic device used in the vocal melody was syncopation and this is another word to be noted when the question in the examination paper asks for 'rhythmic device'. Quite a large number of the candidates did manage to answer this correctly. The interval between the first two notes of the opening vocal melody was a fourth and many wrote a third at this point or a second. The woodwind instrument was a saxophone and clarinet was also allowed. Quite a few wrote instruments that were not even members of the woodwind family. This is the concern mentioned at the beginning of this report. The instrumental links could have a variety of correct responses namely:

- fills
- answer/response
- echo
- imitation

Many managed to answer this successfully. The chart for (f) proved more problematic as the candidates wrote more than one option in each box thus losing all the credits. Always where a single response is required it is important they consider that fact and reply with only one option. The opening section was minor and it was the verse and the second section was major and was the chorus. Some candidates

did manage to score full marks on this. Quite a few correctly handled the tonality part but not the structure. The cadence at the end was very clearly Perfect and quite a few managed to write this. The trombone glissando was also frequently correct which was pleasing. Occasionally broken chords were chosen.

Question 8

Most candidates managed to correctly identify the blues and manage some of the five characteristics of this style. Again the mark scheme encompassed a large number of options of which the following were the most commonly answered by the candidates:

- riffs
- swing rhythm
- blue notes/blue scales
- use of chords I, IV and V
- syncopation or off-beat
- call and response

The two playing techniques were also quite well answered and once again there was a large number of options within the mark scheme. The most popular correct responses here were:

- sliding/glissando/note bending
- plucking
- strumming
- hammer ons
- pull offs

The feature of the lyrics proved to be more problematic with a variety of learnt responses such as being sad which did not apply to the lyrics of this extract being the most common inaccurate response. Others mentioned the structure (AAB) or used the word repetitive or stated that it told a story all of which were acceptable responses.

Question 9

At the very beginning there was a variety of correct responses to describe what the drummer played - namely:

- fill
- roll
- triplet
- rim shot

The style of the music was reggae and most candidates managed to answer this correctly. The time signature was 4/4 and quite a few wrote either 3/4 or 6/8 for this which was surprising. For part (c)(i) the accents were on beats 2 and 4 and the name given to this for part (ii) was backbeat. Many managed the correct response for part (i) and then answered incorrectly for the second part. The musical device in this bass part was a riff or ostinato and again this was not well answered. One feature of the lyrics had some very good accurate responses the most common being political. The mark scheme lists some eight options altogether all of which were correct. The technological effect was disappointing with many answering sampling. Amongst the correct responses for this were:

- panning
- reverb
- compression
- wah wah
- EQ/equalisation

Area of Study 4: Rhythms, scales and modes from around the world

Question 10

It was hoped that the candidates would recognise the extract as an example of African Drumming therefore being able to know the leader was called the master drummer. This response was not as commonly correct as it was thought it might be. There were a variety of playing techniques to choose from:

- roll
- hitting with hands
- muting/damping
- slap

Playing techniques have been asked previously and some candidates appeared to know what to respond with in this part. The choice of instruments did require some specialist knowledge but this also has been asked in the past.

The choices of instruments in this extract were:

- cabassa
- dundun
- djembe
- cowbell/agogo
- talking drum/donno

Most candidates identified the djembe but the others were less frequently correct. The musical features heard in the extract again rely on teaching knowledge within this topic area. Some of the choices here were:

- call and response
- repetition/rhythmic cycle/ostinato
- cross rhythms
- polyrhythms
- syncopation

Many candidates managed to name two of these and this have full marks, but quite a few managed only and yet others had none of these correct. The role of this music in society really features across three main areas:

- communication
- used for dancing
- celebrations/ceremonies/cultural

Most managed at least one of these, with quite a few managing to name two roles correctly. The question as a whole had quite an overall reasonable response by the candidates.

Question 11

This is the final time that this particular topic will appear on the listening paper and once again, it was hoped to ask some fairly straight forward questions relating to the knowledge base established in studying the topic throughout the course. Part (a) was mostly correctly answered with Bali, Java or Indonesia. Most candidates did know the type of ensemble was called Gamelan, yet quite a few wrote percussion at this point. The texture is always heterophonic and this has been asked on many occasions trying to emphasise this texture which is really exclusive to this topic of study. As in the past, candidates are still not responding with this which is unfortunate. The type of scale (tuning system) was Pelog and this required the 7 notes for part (ii). The mark scheme allowed for an inaccurate response of Slendro obtaining no credit in part (i) but then the 5 notes obtaining credit in part (ii) as it was felt that this question was asking knowledge about the tuning system named in the first part. The

dynamics at the beginning were some degree of softness which could be written as pp/p/mp or a description. Part (f) did require some specialist knowledge and the instruments heard were a saron, gender or gangsas. The largest gong heard in this type of ensemble was the gong ageng and quite a few candidates managed to get this correct. The context for (h) was often correct with reference to shadow puppet plays, ceremonials, celebrations etc. There was a quite a large choice of accurate responses within the mark scheme. As a whole this question was quite well answered across some of the parts.

Question 12

This fusion question was unfortunately not answered very well. The two cultures were Indian and Western. Whenever there is a fusion question one of the options is always Western and it is important to make the candidates remember this. Quite a few recognised the Bhangra style even when they did not put the correct culture in part (a). The instruments were quite well answered. The most commonly correct ones were the dhol, synthesizer, drum kit and voice. There are others listed in the mark scheme. The five musical features proved to be more problematic. The mark scheme provided over 25 options across headings of tonality, rhythm/pulse, instrumental/vocal use and general. These headings were created to help focus all the candidate responses from the point of view of locating a correct area within the mark scheme which was very lengthy at this point. Amongst the common correct responses were the pitch bending, mention of the rag, chaal rhythm, syncopation, vocal effects and repetition.

General

As was mentioned in this report last year, it was hoped with a greater focus on the sixteen bullet point topics within the four areas, the candidates could improve their responses for this year. Knowing the key listening words within both the specification and the AOS is very important. This is the last listening paper of this specification and the revised one with the topics reduced to 12 areas comes into force next year. These have new knowledge to be taught and the topics that remain still have all their key information as well as the standard listening words within the examining paper trying to help the candidates focus in the correct direction. The questions try to relate to this detailed information and the importance of noting the emphasis of the question and the clarity of the answer is highly significant.

It is important also to teach tactics to handle this paper. Have the candidates plan the order of the parts within the question to respond to in some order. Questions about form/structure require a playing all to themselves. Make use of the bottom of the question paper to make notes and do not answer on the main body of the script until a desired response becomes clear in their mind. To help candidates understand the nature of the questions and points expected, it is very worthwhile going over previous papers with the relevant mark scheme to help to show them how to seek out a correct response. Most of the mark schemes are in bullet points and it is perfectly acceptable to respond in this manner rather than in sentences. However many points are required, please ask them to only write that number down on the examination paper and not additional ones. If a single response is required please make them understand that to write two options negates their mark. Always have them check the number of marks for each question part and that will definitely tell them the number of responses that are required. Lastly remind them that the listening paper works through the four Areas of Study and they should be aware of the specialist knowledge/vocabulary that belongs in each of these areas. When the Area appears, they must train themselves to seek out the relevant information belonging to those topic sections.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Lower Limit	100	85	75	65	55	46	38	30	22	0

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