

Report on the Component

June 2010

1919/R/10

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Music (1919)

REPORT ON THE COMPONENT

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Chief Examiner's Report

This is the final year of the current GCSE specification, which has been examined since 2003. A new specification is now in place and centres are advised to ensure that they are fully familiar with its requirements. OCR would like to thank teachers for their hard work in implementing and delivering the specification and their role in maintaining and developing high standards in assessment.

It is pleasing to report an increasing diversity in the instruments, styles and repertoire offered, demonstrating that the course is embracing a widening range of musical interests. Particularly noticeable has been the steady increase in the number of submissions from guitar and drum kit players. Though the number of vocalists remains high, the repertoire presented has moved away from Examination Board syllabi to a broader range of titles including contemporary pop and musical theatre repertoires.

It is pleasing to note that over the years, more candidates have accessed marks in the higher ranges in the listening paper, and this year the trend has continued. It is always disappointing to find that, in a number of centres, candidates are clearly not familiar with the styles prescribed by the specification and this is significantly to their disadvantage.

OCR has provided training and support to teachers throughout the life of the specification. These sessions have been received positively, enabling teachers to focus more sharply on the specification requirements and what the examiners and moderators are looking for. This support will continue to be available through OCR's ongoing training programme.

Principal Moderator's Report

Administration

A large number of centres are now providing easily accessible portfolios. Most of the work submitted was well documented as well as neatly and clearly presented. CDs were of a high quality and cassettes have all but disappeared. There were still one or two centres sending large, unnecessary, overweight folders that contained only a few sheets of paper. This made the process of moderation more difficult and involved an excess of postage and packing.

Arithmetical errors were reduced this year by the increasing number of centres who use the interactive assessment form, available on the OCR website. However, a small number of assessors demonstrated that it is possible to create arithmetical errors even using this form. Where assessors had completed their own additions it was rare to find a set of forms without at least one arithmetical error somewhere. Differences of up to 25 marks were reported in some cases.

Each year there are a significant minority of centres who do not send the candidate assessment forms with the MS1 forms and this delays the moderation process.

Teacher comments are not compulsory, but where they are submitted the entire process is given a sharper focus. This enables a virtual dialogue to exist between centre and moderator and facilitates a more efficient and clear view of each candidate's work. A few centres were very haphazard in their completion of the assessment forms and omitted to provide vital information that was needed to ensure that the moderation could be reliably carried out.

Moderators sometimes had problems identifying the part that the candidate was performing in an ensemble piece. Where a candidate's part is not clearly identifiable on the recording, a score should be included. In particular, vocal and piano duets presented a problem. Where it is not possible to send a score, OCR should be consulted for advice prior to the coursework submission date.

Moderators frequently experienced difficulty communicating with centres. Some teachers helpfully provided an email address or a mobile telephone number and this enabled the moderator to deal with issues that arose effectively and promptly. In other cases moderators found themselves leaving messages on answering machines that did not always generate a response.

Performances

As always, moderators enjoyed some excellent performances that were well above GCSE standard. There continues to be a wide range of styles and instruments offered. Some centres provided excellent pianists and/or live ensembles to accompany the soloist, although on a few occasions the accompanists played too loudly for the candidate.

There were a small number of candidates whose performances were invalid because they did not meet the specification requirements. These included performances where the parts were consistently doubled, or where the candidate was performing to a part that was already being performed on a backing track. Also there were a few candidates who failed to present a piece with another live performer for their ensemble.

Assessment of Performances

The majority of assessors marked the musicality of performances accurately; however the most common issue to arise was the inappropriate use of the 9 - 10 mark band. This band was often applied to good accurate performances that lacked the style and musicality needed for the top band. There is still a small minority of assessors who optimistically offer full marks to all candidates irrespective of the shortcomings of the performance.

The application of difficulty marks was sometimes too generous. Some assessors still seem unwilling to use the zero difficulty mark for very simple music. This was particularly the case with keyboard, glockenspiel and xylophone pieces.

An increased presence of abridged versions of 'standard classics' was noted, whereby candidates performed a well-known piece, such as *Fur Elise*, but stopped at the end of the main theme. Though this is acceptable it would not be appropriate to award a very high difficulty mark. It would appear that many assessors awarded these marks on the reputation of the music rather than on the content of the performance.

Compositions

The recent trend of higher quality integrated coursework compositions continues. Candidates clearly benefit from composing for a resource with which they are familiar and the composition that ensues becomes much more purposeful.

On a few occasions however, Composition 1 saw candidates straying away from their agreed brief to produce music that was of high quality but totally out of line with the Integrated Coursework requirements. In such cases, the main instrument used for Performance 1 played a minor role in compositions and in some it did not feature at all. This is a fundamental and basic requirement of the specification; ignoring its importance can only result in a limited number of marks being awarded.

Moderators continue to be concerned about the number of Composition 2 submissions where pieces were produced to a formula. In such cases, candidates had not engaged sufficiently with the style to produce music that was meaningful and coherent. This applied most frequently to Waltz compositions and, to an extent, to minimalist pieces whereby basic musical ideas had been cut and pasted to create layered effects, without conveying many other minimalist qualities. There were a number of Disco pieces where the only stylistic features noted were those generated by the preset rhythms of the keyboard.

There were a significant number of compositions that were submitted only in written form. Some of these would have been difficult to perform because the scores did not make musical sense. In a very few cases, compositions were submitted in non-standard notation and, because they did not meet the requirements set out on page 31 of the specification, could not be awarded marks.

There were a number of compositions that clearly had not been created entirely by the candidate. Assessors are reminded that any additional support provided by the teacher, by technology or by other means, must be declared. It is not acceptable, for example, to present as the candidate's own a piece where the accompanying figurations are provided by the pianist and the candidate has simply agreed that that is what they want. Some assessors used a phrase such as "under the direction of the candidate" when logging this support. This does not provide sufficient evidence for an examination submission. The composition submitted by the candidate represents their personal standard of attainment so that, given the resources, they could produce something of similar quality entirely alone on some future occasion.

Assessment of Compositions

The assessment of compositions varied significantly from centre to centre. Most assessors were generous in their marking.

In particular, a lot of assessors awarded high Area of Study marks for pieces that displayed few salient features of the genre. For example, there is more detail to be found in a Waltz than 'um cha cha' in the accompaniment and, similarly, Pavanés have more breadth than a minim-crotchet-crotchet rhythm pattern. Too often, high marks were awarded for Minimalist compositions that were simply sequences of layered sounds.

Compositions which were created entirely by selecting a succession of loops from a software package such as *Garageband*, were usually very generously assessed.

Appraising

There was a sharp division between candidates who understood and addressed the Appraisal requirements, and those who seemed to have no knowledge of what is required, with few examples in between. Unfortunately the former category appeared to be in the minority this year.

Some candidates did not present their appraisals in three clearly titled sections. Most commonly the appraisal of the performance was separated from the study of the three pieces and moderators had to search through the papers to find the necessary evidence. Some candidates did not make a clear distinction between the Composition Brief and the Composition Appraisal. These should be separate, since the Composition Brief should be constructed before the piece is composed and the Composition Appraisal should be written afterwards. In such cases, moderators had to spend time sifting out the relevant information needed to access the two different sets of marking criteria.

Often moderators were faced with a raft of detailed information about the history of the instrument, or the background to the pieces, which is irrelevant to the assessment criteria. Many candidates failed to refer in any way to the instrumental techniques required to perform the pieces, but rather focused on general stylistic and structural features. In a small number of cases, every candidate in the centre presented very similar information, suggesting that what they had put together represented a very limited amount of individual thinking. A few candidates had cut and pasted information from the internet and this should be discouraged. In such cases the generic information that they gleaned was not relevant to the assessment requirements, and therefore no action was taken.

There was often an imbalance of the three elements of the performance appraisal section, which should cover:

- techniques used in the piece performed
- a comparison with the techniques used in two other pieces
- an evaluation of the performance.

In many appraisals, teachers had annotated the work, which was useful in the moderation process to see where marks had been gained.

Assessment of appraising

The assessment varied and this appeared to depend on the extent to which candidates were focussing on the appraisal requirements. When these were clearly understood, the assessment, across the range was accurate. Assessment was generally very generous where candidates had submitted work which was not focused on the requirements. In common with previous years,

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there were some able candidates given full marks for very brief appraisals amounting to no more than a few sentences in the performance appraisal, a couple of lines in the composition brief, and a short paragraph in the composition appraisal.

A few candidates at the lower end of the range were awarded marks that were too low. Some candidates who had written something, albeit very little, were awarded zero marks whereas a positive mark in the 1-2 band would have been appropriate.

Terminal Task

The Terminal Task has always provided an excellent indicator of a candidate's musical understanding and forms an important element of the specification even though it is completed in a short space of time. In many centres, it was clear that candidates had been taught how to approach the task and, in general, those who chose to perform their response did so more successfully than those who chose to submit it in written format.

Some very pleasing melodic responses were submitted and it is encouraging to see candidates showing good understanding of how to construct a melody. A small number of candidates misguidedly created melodies in the style of Schoenberg. Page 19 of the specification states that the response should be related to the knowledge defined within the core of Area of Study 2.

It is clear that when a centre offers candidates a 'template' within which to operate and focus upon during their preparation in the run-up to the examination, the outcome is less effective. This approach may result in a moderate number of marks being gained but it most certainly stifles any creativity and personal expression that may be offered.

If a score is submitted then it must be accurate. However, the confetti-like sprinkling of performance indicators and details in no way enhances the mark awarded for communication. Such additions must be meaningful, reasonable, and most importantly appropriate to the instrument or voice for which the music is written.

Although the Terminal Task requires a melodic response, there were a small number of candidates who did not do this, and this meant that they earned very few marks.

Assessment of the Terminal Task

Most centres were a little generous in their assessment of the tasks.

To achieve marks in the top band for responding, the melody needs to have a good sense of style and show imagination. There were a lot of responses that did this and were rightly awarded full marks, but equally there were some where the response was craftsman-like but not particularly stylish or imaginative and therefore warranted a lower mark.

Assessors were also generally generous in the awarding of marks for communication in relation to written tasks. Some submissions were awarded full marks where they did not even name the instrument for which the music was intended. There were also a lot of tasks, communicated using music software, which had four bar phrases over the notes, but gave no indication of how the individual notes should be articulated and these were mistakenly awarded full marks also, whereas 3 or 4 marks would have been appropriate.

Principal Examiner's Report

Listening Examination

This is the last paper in this specification and it was encouraging to see that a good number of centres had clearly taught the content thoroughly. Once again the paper saw a complete range of marks, with a significant number of candidates gaining over 60 marks.

- 1 (a)** This question was generally well answered, although weaker candidates struggled to identify features of the music because they had already had to identify the number of beats in a bar and 'hook'.
- 1 (a) (i)** The vast majority of candidates were able to recognise that there were 4 beats in a bar.
- 1 (a) (ii)** Most candidates were able to identify *hook* as the correct answer.
- 1 (a) (iii)** Many middle and high ability candidates scored full marks here, with the most popular correct answers being *fast/upbeat, 120 bpm, synthesised instruments* and information about the use of the *drum kit* or *drum machine*. Some candidates opted for more general language like 'catchy beat' which is not specific enough to gain credit.
- 1 (b)** Many candidates were able to recognise the style of this extract from Area of Study 2 and then went on to give some good answers. However some did not notice that this was an Area of Study 2 question, and presumed this was a piece of Bhangra.
- 1 (b) (i)** Most candidates correctly underlined *Indian Classical Music*. The most popular incorrect answer was Bhangra.
- 1 (b) (ii)** A good number of candidates were able to hear that the drum was the tabla, although some thought that it might be the Dhol drum that is linked with Bhangra.
- 1 (b) (iii)** Most candidates recognised one of the melody instruments correctly as the *Sitar*.
- 1 (b) (iv)** Although many candidates knew what the style was they did not always have the correct background knowledge to recognise that the melody pattern would be *Raga*. The most popular incorrect answer was Call and Response, which is not a melody pattern but a melodic device.
- 1 (b) (v)** Few candidates gained the full 4 marks here but most candidates were able to score at least 1 or 2 recognising the use of *unison, alternating, imitation/repeat, or higher*.
- 1 (c)** as a starting point for Area of Study 4, African Drumming did not appear to be very well understood and answers were often too vague to be worthy of credit.
- 1 (c) (i)** Most candidates were able to recognise this extract as *African Drumming*.
- 1 (c) (ii)** There were a large number of vague answers to this question resulting in rather low marks. Correct answers were seen, however, the most popular being *repetition/ostinato, syncopated* and *cross rhythms*.

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- 1 (c) (iii) This question was often answered with a list of technology options which was not required here. Candidates were required to listen for the 'effects' within this extract and focus on them. Answers such as multi-tracking and looping were not appropriate. Some candidates did recognise the use of *sampling* and the *echo/reverb/delay on the voices or trumpets*.
- 2 This question had very mixed responses, but some very good answers were given by high ability candidates. Lower ability candidates struggled to gain significant marks here.
- 2 (a) Candidates who knew the names of the types of voices gained a mark for *soprano* but there were obviously many candidates who did not know these names and made reference to female voices or opera which was not specific enough.
- 2 (b) Many candidates gained a mark for 2/4 or 4/4 but there were those candidates who heard three beats in a bar and those who wrote only one number, not a time signature and so were not able to gain credit.
- 2 (c) A good number of candidates correctly identified *sequence* but *repetition* and *ostinato* in particular were also seen.
- 2 (d) Descriptions of the accompaniment were generally poor and a number of candidates clearly muddled up the oboe and the strings.
- (i) credit was given most often for *chords/harmony*.
- (ii) There were a great many candidates who wrote 'call and response' which is not suitable here, but a number gained credit for the oboe *playing at the ends of phrases*.
- 2 (e) (i) Most candidates gained a mark for *major*, although many other tonalities were seen including modal, pentatonic and minor.
- 2 (e) (ii) There were very mixed responses to this question, with the majority of candidates ticking an incorrect box.
- 2 (f) (i) A good number of candidates opted for a Classical composer, the most popular being *Mozart*.
- 2 (f) (ii) This answer was, as in previous years, not well answered. This year candidates did not give musical answers but commented vaguely on the fact that Mozart wrote operas. Centres where this had been well taught did gain full marks for reasons such as *simple harmony, crescendo/diminuendo* and *balanced phrases*.
- 3 The notation part of this question was answered very well indeed, which was encouraging, although other parts of the question fared less well.
- 3 (a) Very few candidates failed to score marks here. Many candidates of all abilities scored 9 out of 10. Few however spotted the F# and so were not able to gain full marks. Candidates appeared to hear the use of sequences and so were able to use this aural and written information to help them write in the correct notation.

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- 3 (b)** There were mixed answers to this question with those understanding the word *anacrusis* gaining the mark.
- 3 (c)** More mixed responses were seen here. Knowledge of key signatures and the aural recognition of major and minor were necessary here and those candidates who had both, gained the correct answer of *G minor*.
- 3 (d)** Candidates often failed to read or listen to the question carefully and wrote answers that occurred after the first eight bars. Those that did place them in the first eight bars were in many cases able to find the 4th in *bar 2* and the trill in *bar 7* although some were not always quite accurate enough to gain the marks.
- 3 (f)** All cadences were named here with the correct *imperfect* being seen quite often.
- 3 (g)** Generally this was not answered well. Lower ability candidates often failed to score any marks and did not even recognise that voices entered. Higher ability candidates fared a little better, recognising the *use of voices at the end* and the way that they *imitated with the violins*.
- 4** This question was generally well answered, the waltz being a style with which most candidates appear comfortable. The comparison grid, however, was less well answered, showing a lack of understanding of musical terminology rather than of the waltz itself.
- 4 (a)** The majority of candidates correctly answered *waltz* with the galliard sometimes being given instead.
- 4 (b)** Most candidates were able to gain marks here with many gaining full marks for recognising *um cha cha*, *fast* and *triple time*. Other correct answers such as *strong first beat of the bar* and *slow harmonic rhythm* were seen but less often. There were, however, those weaker candidates who did not give specific information but instead just wrote 'the rhythm' or 'the use of strings' which is far too vague to gain credit.
- 4 (c)** Many candidates were able to correctly identify a *trill* or a *turn*, although some went for ornaments that were not present in the music like mordent, whilst others wrote the name of the instrument playing it.
- 4 (d)** Most candidates had learnt the names of waltz composers and the majority correctly wrote *Strauss*.
- 4 (e)** Nearly all candidates gained a mark here for recognising a correct percussion instrument.
- 4 (f)** This was answered less well than other parts of this question. As soon as candidates were directed to the accompaniment they appeared to struggle and many just went on to name instruments. Those that gained marks usually wrote *um cha cha* but few gave any more detail and so were limited to 1 mark out of 2.
- 4 (g)** The majority of candidates recognised this as the *coda*.
- 4 (h)** A good number of candidates understood the nature of the dance steps, recognising that it needed to be danced in *partners* with *groups of three steps*, although there were a number of candidates who wrote vaguely about moving in time with the music.

- 4 (i)** **Tempo** – few marks were gained here because many candidates seemed to assume that the tempo of each extract would be different, rather than listening carefully and hearing that the two extracts were in fact *the same* or *a very similar tempo*. Most candidates incorrectly thought that Extract B was faster than Extract A. Some did gain a mark for recognising the change of tempo at the end of Extract B.

Instruments used for the melody – many candidates gained marks here for recognising that both extracts *used strings*, and/or that Extract B *used brass*. However the finer points of Extract A having *a solo violin* and Extract B having *lots of violins* was not often commented on.

Dynamics – those candidates who understood the word dynamics were able to hear that Extract B *was louder* than Extract A. Candidates who did not understand this term often incorrectly wrote about pitch or articulation.

Texture – once again those who understood the term texture were able to recognise that Extract B *was thicker* than Extract A, but those who wrote incorrect answers often wrote about dynamics here. Some candidates did write about homophonic or polyphonic texture which was not appropriate on this occasion.

- 5** This question, in the main, required candidates to give specific musical detail, not general information or vague statements. Answers like ‘calm’, ‘doesn’t change’ or ‘it was eerie’ did not describe anything in the music and so could not gain marks. Also a significant number of candidates wrote correct information but put it in the wrong places. It is not possible for marks to be transferred, so some candidates’ marks were depressed here.

- 5 (a)** Most candidates recognised that the style was *minimalism*, although there were those who incorrectly identified it as *serialism*.

- 5 (b)** Middle ability candidates were able to recognise and write three features of the style including *repetition/ostinato*, *additive melody* and *layering*, with high ability candidates understanding the use of *metamorphosis* and *phase shifting*. Lower ability candidates often wrote too vaguely to gain credit.

- 5 (c)** Many candidates were able to gain a mark for a suitable composer.

- 5 (d)** There were few good answers for this question with many vague and general comments being made about the ‘atmosphere’ rather than about the music. However, marks were gained for answers like *short notes*, *use of vibrato and tremolando*, *clashing notes* and *high pitched notes*.

- 5 (e)** Many candidates were able to gain marks here with lists of possible technology, including *synthesiser*, *looping*, *multitracking*, *sampling* and *use of computer*. Some candidates described the effects of technology rather than the devices or processes used, giving vague answers such as ‘used to make the music louder’.

- 6** This question was well answered in the main with the exception of (c) which was often too vague.

- 6 (a)** (i) Most candidates recognised the *trumpet*, with several correctly opting instead for *trombone*. There were those who incorrectly thought they could hear a saxophone.

6 (a) **(ii)** The correct term of *comping* (found in the language for learning) did not appear to be familiar to many candidates who instead opted for walking bass or counterpoint.

6 (b) **The brass in the introduction** – there were some vague answers here with ‘introduces the piece’ and ‘set the mood’ being seen many times. These were implicit in the question and so did not gain marks. However, a pleasing number recognised a variety of features including - *they played the melody, used syncopation and were high pitched.*

The voices – *call and response* and *solo and chorus* or their Spanish equivalent *pregon and choro* or *Sonero and choro* were credited most often, but few candidates actually gave four points and so reduced their potential for marks considerably. Other popular correct answers were *shouting, high pitched and in Spanish.*

The percussion instruments – *repetition* or *ostinato* was the most popular correct answer but *Clave rhythm* was also seen as well as *they played throughout and maintain the pulse.*

6 (c) Candidates gained marks here mostly for *loud* and/or *fast*. However some did not write about the music but gave rather more general answers such as ‘lots of room to dance’ or ‘like a celebration’.

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