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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

MUSIC

GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 6020/01

Listening

General comments

The level of achievement varied widely. It was a taxing Paper - nine extracts to be listened to several times, with many part questions - which required a high level of concentration throughout. Successful answers to **Questions 1 to 5** depended upon an ability to discriminate aurally and this needed to be developed through focused practice over a sustained period of time. Merely being an experienced, competent performer did not guarantee that the candidate could hear and recognise aurally what was significant and worthy of comment in an extract. The best candidates demonstrated their ability to apply what they had learned about a wide range of repertoire by writing in an informed way about the music presented to them. Less able candidates looked for clues in the questions to trigger a rehearsal of knowledge that was sometimes irrelevant to the particular extract.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Both the music and the questions about it were straightforward. Competent candidates coped comfortably but the weaker candidates were immediately exposed by a lack of security in handling scales, keys, chords, cadences and, sometimes, notation itself.

Question 2

Strong candidates did not allow themselves to become bogged down in the dense detail of the score. They concentrated on what they could hear and used the score as a reference tool (to enable them to refer precisely to bar numbers in their answers). Weaker candidates were unable to hear and describe the variations of pitch or texture and concentrated, instead, on listing what they could see individual instruments were playing.

Question 3

Familiarity with repertoire and stylistic categories/periods was generally adequate. When giving reasons for their multiple choice answers candidates need to take care to ensure that what they describe as a feature of a period (or a composer's style) is actually discernible in the music. Many candidates, having correctly identified the first extract as belonging to the Baroque era, went on to talk about 'terraced dynamics'. While the association of the one with the other is understandable and demonstrated 'knowledge', it was not justified by the aural evidence of the extract.

Question 4

The Syllabus lists the names of the instruments and essential traditional techniques that candidates are required to be able to identify. While credit may frequently be given for approximations that demonstrate a keen ear in other questions on the Paper, this is not sufficient in answering questions on the three extracts from 'Round the World': candidates must make the effort to learn the appropriate technical terms. There are two further cautions, firstly about giving reasons to support multiple choice answers: simply to state 'because they are traditional Japanese instruments' (having already earned two marks for identifying the instruments correctly) is not an adequate reason - something more in the music itself must be discussed; secondly reasons given should be of a positive nature, not arrived at by a process of negative elimination: 'it's not this, or that, or the other, so it must be.....'.

Question 5

Most candidates had prepared the Beethoven movement, though the standard and range of answers on both Prescribed Works was roughly similar. Those who knew their chosen work well found the questions very manageable. Those who relied too much on memorised background and hoped their aural skills would be sufficient to get by, struggled. There were many good answers about Beethoven's use of dynamics and detailed descriptions of the fugal writing that followed the extract.

Question 6

The chief difficulty which candidates encounter in these questions is how to refer convincingly to specific moments in the work, without a score. To be able to do this, a secure grasp of standard terms for describing structure is necessary. Candidates who had been prepared well wrote confident, often expansive, essays. Some familiarity with a representative cross-section of the composer's music besides the Prescribed Work is essential. Although candidates were usually able to give the titles of one or two pieces, many could not offer any further information to demonstrate that they heard them.

Conclusion

Emphasis has already been laid on the primary importance of listening, informed by relevant knowledge. It was evident that there were some candidates who were listening attentively and sometimes hearing significant features quite acutely but lacked the understanding and skills to express what they could hear in words. Writing about the music, describing what is going on, commenting on effects and how the composer has achieved them, relating observations to examples and locating these in the extracts also needs practice.

<p>Paper 6020/02 Harmony</p>
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General comments

The standard of performance in the component as a whole was pleasing, although Examiners again noted the relatively small number of candidates who scored very high marks in all three sections of the Paper. The weakest section in this session was the melody writing, with few candidates displaying convincing evidence that they had been able to appreciate the *sound* of what had been written down.

Aspects of musical literacy revealed a pleasing degree of improvement this year, but a significant number of scripts produced a time-signature at the start of every line of music. Many answers omitted double-bar lines at the end of melodies, and several contained an incorrect number of beats in one or more bars. Examiners continue to stress the need for careful checking before work is handed in.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) *Melody writing*

RAVEL, *Piano concerto in G*, 1st movement, bars 75-76 (Piano)

This question produced a wide range of marks, but only a few candidates managed to achieve maximum or near-maximum marks by producing stylish and musically convincing lines that were well-suited to the chosen instrument.

Many melodies lacked any sense of appropriate underpinning harmony, and in some cases (woodwind instruments especially) the tessitura of the melody was too low to be effective.

Candidates are reminded again this year that the given pitch sequence *must* be used as the opening of the melody (although the note sequence may be transposed, if necessary). A surprising number of scripts produced answers that were totally unrelated to the given stimulus.

The most successful answers were those that produced answers in E major or B major. Candidates who chose to set melodies in e minor and b minor repeatedly fell foul of the awkward aural effect created by the untreated augmented 2nd between the sixth and seventh degrees of the scale.

Once again Examiners express concern that too many candidates appear to give little thought to the relationship between dynamic indications and melodic contours. It was evident that many answers added dynamic markings as a last-minute afterthought, frequently producing awkward and unmusical effects. The normal pattern consists of a *crescendo* placed in the first half of a phrase followed by a *diminuendo* in the second half of each phrase. This produces a mechanical and unconvincing effect.

(b) *Word setting*

OGDEN NASH, *Adventures of Isabel*, lines 11-14

A small number of candidates chose this option, and answers were generally disappointing, with few candidates displaying a secure feel for the clear stresses of the poem.

Some candidates produced answers consisting of rhythmic notation only and needed to be reminded that this task requires a melodic setting of the given text. Many answers produced acceptable but rather formulaic melodies that did not attempt to reflect the imagery of the poem to any appreciable extent, and Examiners were disappointed to note that in this examination session there were no very good answers to this section of the Paper.

Once again many scripts revealed errors in the basic task of splitting words into individual syllables for musical setting. Candidates must be able to do this effectively before they can begin to consider the rhythmic stress patterns implied by the printed text.

Question 2

Harmonisation

MENDELSSOHN, *Song without words, op.102 no.6*, bars 1-4 and 15-18 (adapted)

Most candidates were able to display evidence of relevant harmony skills in this question and a pleasing number of scripts received high marks. However, relatively few answers produced equally strong performances in the three areas of assessment: manufacture of an appropriate bass line, construction of an appropriate harmonic progression and the addition of a melodic line above three given parts.

In **(a)** most candidates were able to add an appropriate bass line, although too many scripts revealed errors relating to parallel movement in 5ths and/or octaves. Some lines also contained awkward angular intervals and did not balance the given melodic line effectively. Relatively few lines made use of passing notes to create a feeling of linear direction.

In general the construction of an appropriate harmonic sequence was less successful, and many candidates appeared to be unaware of the aural effectiveness of the progressions they had written down. A surprisingly large number of scripts contained incorrect uses of second-inversion chords (a point mentioned in last year's Examiners' Report). Many also indicated chords that failed to fit effectively with the printed melodic line and the candidate's added bass line. These elements need to be checked carefully so that melody, bass line and chord indications all agree.

Only a few candidates produced melody lines that were uniformly convincing, and many produced awkward leaps at the final cadence in order to avoid an obvious (and acceptable) of both "soprano" and "alto" lines concluding on the same note (middle C).

Many scripts contained glaring parallel octaves and/or 5^{ths}, together with the absence of 3^{rds} in some chords. Candidates are reminded of the need to check their workings with care for basic slips of this nature. Again this year only a handful of answers made use of appropriate passing notes in the construction of a melody line.

Question 3

Analysis

DANIEL STEIBELT, *Adagio*, from *Sonata in C*

Again this year many candidates performed well in this question and a significant number of scripts were awarded maximum or near-maximum marks.

Examiners noted a pleasing degree of accuracy in candidates' identification of the selected chords in **(a)**. Many candidates gained full marks for this task, but a significant number failed to recognise the added 7th in the dominant chord at bar 15². In contrast, a large number of candidates were able to identify the chord at the start of bar 15 correctly as the second inversion of a tonic chord (producing a conventional Ic-V⁷ progression).

In **(b)** many candidates circled both the appoggiatura and its resolution, indicating a degree of confusion in relation to this term. A worrying number of scripts displayed complete ignorance of the appoggiatura ornament and circled details such as dynamic markings.

Cadences were well recognised by most candidates **((c))**, although identification of key was often less accurate. Most candidates were also able to identify the location of a chromatic passing note accurately **((d))**.

Examiners were disappointed with the lack of perception revealed in answers to **(e)**. Both examples chosen from bar 18 were clear reflections of harmonic melody writing: an accented passing note (E) at the start of the bar and a lower auxiliary/neighbour note (C sharp).

Paper 6020/03

Performing

General comments

There was again a wide variation in standards, from candidates who performed two substantial contrasting and challenging pieces with confidence and musicality, to tentative performances of only one short, simple piece, repeated to meet the duration requirement. It needs to be stressed that the requirement for two pieces of a contrasting nature and of significant length is designed to give candidates the best opportunities to demonstrate a *range* of musical and technical skills. If Centres do not set out at the start of their preparation for the examination to meet these requirements then their candidates will be considerably disadvantaged.

It is also clear that the availability of resources varies widely from region to region and Centre to Centre. This need not, however, disadvantage candidates. It is entirely possible, for instance, for candidates who sing unaccompanied to achieve marks equally as high as those who perform solo on an orchestral instrument with piano accompaniment. Some fine performances in this manner were noted: particularly effective were programmes in which candidates sang first a song from the Western musical tradition and followed it with one reflecting their own African tradition.

This is the first year in which Centres were required to undertake the assessment of their candidates themselves. On the whole, the arrangements worked satisfactorily, with only one Centre not submitting marks for Moderation. It was evident from the video and aural tapes, as well as the accompanying documentation, that Teacher Assessors had approached the task very responsibly. Most Centres had submitted agreed marks from two assessors. In some cases marks had been awarded for each of the two pieces performed. This is not necessary as it sometimes leads to an unfavourable averaging out and a final arithmetical result that does not adequately reflect the overall impression that the assessors have of the candidate's performance. One piece may be weightier than the other, technically or musically, and treating them equally may not do justice to the best aspects of the performance. The recommended practice is, therefore, to consider both pieces together as a 'programme'. And, if several candidates perform essentially the same programme of pieces, it follows that the mark for the first marking criterion (technical and musical skills or 'difficulty') should almost always be the same. An exception might be made only if the programme proved to be well beyond the reach of a particular candidate, in which case a lower mark would reflect the fact that the intended 'range of skills' was overambitious and unrealistic.

Videotapes were very adequate and often proved to offer better sound quality than aural tapes. Both are required to be submitted, in the interests of the candidates (a glitch in one may render the performance unassessable in which case the other then provides essential backup). All Centres had been careful in identifying their candidates orally, and many provided very useful visual cues as well. This was much appreciated. Not all Centres supplied copies of the music performed. It is important that this requirement be fulfilled in order not only that 'accuracy' can be assessed but that the composer's markings for *tempo*, phrasing, dynamics etc can be noted.

It is well known how stressful the task of making and carrying out the arrangements for recording a succession of candidates' performances can be for those in charge. In most cases these logistical challenges were handled very smoothly and effectively. It is difficult, at the same time, to provide a relaxed, reassuring environment in which candidates can give of their best. It is to the credit of Centres that, on the whole, performers managed to communicate a sense of enjoyment of what they were doing, in spite of natural nervousness. This was generally true whether the performance took place under 'examination conditions' in a classroom, or offered more 'sense of occasion' by being in the grander surroundings of a hall in front of an appreciative audience.