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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 overall performance of candidates was very satisfactory with a pleasing number of high marks achieved, some very high indeed. Fewer candidates than in previous years scored poorly and the spread of marks across the ability ranges indicated that the paper had differentiated well. Most candidates had clearly benefited from thorough preparation both in a wide variety of musical repertoires and in the Prescribed Works.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The Examiners were surprised that many candidates had difficulty, not only in identifying the period and a likely composer for this extract (from Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte*), but with the cadence, chords and melodic dictation questions as well. There were many surprisingly weak scores from otherwise high-performing candidates.

Question 2

However, the apparently daunting extract from Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* attracted generally good answers, some of them very detailed and perceptive indeed. Candidates coped well with a dense, fast-moving score, using it correctly as an aid to locating what they could hear rather than seeking the answers to the questions from it. Those that were at a loss, though, using it as their prime source of clues, were often misled by the composer's instruction to the percussionist to use a side-drum stick to strike the cymbal into identifying the actual presence of a side-drum. The principle of inversion was well understood and recognised.

Question 3

A high number of candidates scored full or nearly-full marks on these short-answer questions. The response represented an impressive recognition of very different types of repertoire and a well-developed ability to identify and describe characteristic features. There remains a tendency for some candidates, having identified the period of the music as e.g. 'Baroque', then to list *all* the features often thought to be typical whether present in the specific extract or not i.e. in this case 'terraced dynamics' was an inappropriate answer which could have been avoided by more careful listening.

Question 4

There was a good level of familiarity with the defining characteristics of the musical traditions represented by these three extracts, although most candidates had difficulty identifying the interval used in the Latin American extract (a perfect 5th) and many ranged much too widely in their search for African instruments in the last extract.

Question 5

Prokofiev: candidates had been well prepared in their study of this work and many were able to use their close familiarity with the score to good effect in answering some searching questions. There was, however, difficulty in identifying the two notes played by the timpani in this extract (D and A, not A and E as many assumed) and there were some misconceptions about unusual keys – references to the Mixolydian mode completely missed the point about Prokofiev's 'unclassical' handling of tonality.

Bach: commentaries on the final bars of the extract were generally perceptive and full, some even impressive. Misconceptions about keys and modulations permeated answers, however, from the initial comparison with the opening of the movement, through the belief that bars 1 to 7 were modulating and on to a very hazy understanding of what was happening in the circle of 5ths passage.

Question 6

The 'context' questions about the Bach were, on the whole, answered more convincingly than the ones about the Prokofiev. It was disappointing that candidates appeared not to have considered any of the ways in which Prokofiev's orchestra might have sounded different from that of Mozart or Haydn: few could explain any aspect of the development of key systems for woodwind instruments or valves for brass instruments. Some realised that timpani could now change pitch more quickly but had no idea what technological change had made this possible. On the other hand, many of the Bach 'essays' contained a great deal of irrelevant information about his sacred choral music. Both essay questions required candidates to be selective in focus and detail, not simply to transcribe all that they knew about each composer's background. The longest answers were not necessarily the best – it is possible to score full marks with a more tightly-focused, compressed series of statements designed to answer the specific question posed.

Paper 6020/02

Melody, Harmony and Analysis

General comments

Examiners noted a pleasing overall improvement in the standard of achievement across the papers as a whole, and in general only a small group of candidates produced scripts in which the working of one question was significantly weaker than the standard exhibited in the remaining two answers. As in previous years the weakest section was melody writing, where candidates need to be able to "hear" mentally what they are writing and also display an awareness of appropriate melodic construction and development. Examiners' comments below highlight the main areas of weakness that characterised melodic writing in this session.

Examiners noted an increase in the number of errors relating to musical literacy this year. Often these were of a very basic nature, such as time signatures written at the start of *every* line of music and/or omitted clefs. Examiners expect candidates to check their work carefully, and even the most cursory glance through what has been written should spot such errors. Once again Examiners wish to remind teachers and candidates that the need to check work carefully, before papers are handed in, is as important as ever.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

(a) *Melody writing*

BERNSTEIN, *West Side Story*, 13D: *Somewhere*, bars 1-2¹ (Voice)

Many candidates produced answers that were melodically convincing and appropriate to the instrument chosen. Examiners noted that a surprisingly large number of candidates chose to set the melody in compound duple time. Most answers adopted the key of F major, although some candidates chose to set the melody in B-flat or E-flat. Many answers displayed evidence of confidence in effective modulation to closely-related key centres, although in some answers modulation sounded awkward or forced.

A few candidates transposed the given pitches but did not preserve the initial ascent of a 7th (by setting the first note an octave higher than intended). This altered the nature of the stimulus, and candidates are reminded that while the given pitches may be transposed, the relative intervals between the notes may not be altered. Some answers avoided using the given stimulus altogether and consequently restricted the number of credit marks available.

Other areas where problems were observed were:

- Melodies that were not appropriate to the chosen instrument. A common weakness in this area was low melody writing for flute that failed to venture beyond the C an octave above middle C. Such workings failed to display a real awareness of the range or colours of the chosen instrument.
- Melodies that were constructed to a carefully worked out prepared plan. These designs usually involved the use of complex melodic devices such as retrograde and inversion, but they frequently produced lines that did not make convincing aural sense as melodies.
- Overuse of rhythmic and/or melodic patterns. A narrow range of dotted rhythm patterns and ascending/descending scales were the most notable features that detracted from the overall effectiveness of candidates' melodic lines.
- Basic errors of musical grammar, including time signatures written on *every* line of music, inconsistent key signatures, clefs omitted from all but the first line of music, single bars split over two staves and omitted double bar lines at the end of a melody.
- Inconsistent placing of dynamic and articulation markings. Common mistakes included failure to note cessation of *rall* or *pizz.* markings and *crescendo* and *diminuendo* markings that had no appropriate dynamic level at the end of them.

Examiners continue to note that many otherwise worthy melodies suffered from dynamic markings that appeared to have been added at the last minute and were frequently not well related to the candidate's melody. This point has been made in Examiners' Reports over many years, and it needs to be stressed to candidates if they are not to penalise themselves in this section of the paper. Features such as dynamic levels and articulation of the line should be considered integral aspects of the composing process; they should not be added to the line as afterthoughts.

(b) *Word setting*

B.S. JOHNSON, *Song of the Wagondriver*, lines 17-20

Very few candidates selected this option, although Examiners saw a number of good answers. Examiners continue to note that candidates rarely attempt to move beyond a syllable-by-syllable setting of the given text, and only a small number of candidates appeared to be sufficiently confident to make use of devices such as melisma or word painting.

Identifying stressed syllables in the text caused problems for some candidates, and many melodies failed to include appropriate tempo and dynamic indications.

Some melodies contained awkward angular writing more suited to an instrument than the voice, and a few candidates appeared to be unaware of appropriate vocal ranges.

In contrast, some effective workings developed the humorous aspects of the text, highlighting the final line, and some attempted to reflect the imagery of a driver being "out on the road at night".

Question 2

Harmonisation

BEETHOVEN, *Variations on the Russian dance from Das Waldmädchen*, WoO 71, Theme, bars 0²-5¹, 10²-14¹ and 17²-19¹

Examiners were pleased to note an improvement in candidates' handling of this question. Many candidates achieved high marks and were able to display secure harmonic understanding.

- (a) Most candidates were able to produce appropriate bass lines, although only a few attempted to give the line a real sense of character by using passing and/or auxiliary notes. Many answers contained bass lines that exhibited consecutive 5ths and/or octaves with one of the given parts (usually at the join between bars 3 and 4, with the C-sharp/D ascent being mirrored in the candidate's bass line).
- (b) Several workings included bass lines that implied awkward placing of second-inversion chords, and this lack of harmonic understanding was frequently reflected in the chord indications given beneath the stave. In contrast, Examiners were pleased to note that many candidates were able to make appropriate use of a **Ic-V** progression at the end of phrase **A**.

Only a few scripts failed to provide any harmonic indications in phrase **A**, but Examiners were concerned that a significant number of answers had failed to appreciate the rate of harmonic change and gave chord indications that changed at every quaver beat. Some workings included chord changes at the rate of a semiquaver. Careful inspection of the given material in bars 1-2 and 6-8 should have provided candidates with important information relating to the rate of harmonic movement in the extract.

Candidates needed to remember that the harmony they provided in phrase **A** must cause the phrase to dovetail effectively with the given material. In a number of scripts the harmony of phrase **A** made sense in isolation, but was far less effective in securing a smooth transition when placed in the broader harmonic context of the passage as a whole.

- (c) Many melody lines were set rather high and produced unusually large gaps between the alto and soprano voices. The best answers attempted to provide some melodic interest as a result of passing and/or auxiliary notes, but Examiners were concerned that so many workings produced rather pedestrian and melodically unexciting answers composed of four crotchets only.

Most answers appreciated the underlying harmonic base, but many concluded with a chord that lacked a 3rd. The best workings reflected the style of the given material and tended to produce a melodic line that worked in contrary motion with the given bass.

Question 3

Analysis

SCHUMANN, *Rundgesang*, op.68 no.22, bars 1-32⁵

As in previous sessions this question was well answered by most candidates, and many scripts gained maximum marks for the question.

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify chords and inversions accurately. Some candidates failed to perceive the use of a dominant 7th in bar 4, and Examiners credited answers that identified the chords in bars 6 and 7 in relation to E major (the dominant) as an alternative to the tonic (A major). This was not extended to the chord at the start of bar 5, since at that point the music is still clearly in the tonic key. Examiners were pleased that so many candidates identified the second-inversion position of the chord in bar 7 accurately.
- (b) Many candidates identified the note **X** accurately as an appoggiatura, perceiving its harmonic function. Unfortunately a large number of scripts identified the note as a passing note, displaying a failure to appreciate its harmonic significance. Candidates' answers to a similar question in (f), this time involving a lower auxiliary note, were more accurate overall.
- (c) Many candidates produced vague, tortuous and inaccurate explanations of the melodic function of the F double sharp at the end of bar 6. Examiners were disappointed that more candidates had not recognised this as a chromatic passing note.
- (d)(e) These were answered well: most candidates were able to locate non-harmony notes and identify cadences accurately.
- (f) See comments for (b).

- (g) Examiners were perplexed to discover that a large number of candidates who achieved maximum marks for identifying chords in a “mechanical” manner in (a) were unable to display a similar level of harmonic perception in their answers to (g).

Many candidates were unable to focus on aspects of harmony and wrote about irrelevant melodic lines and/or piano figuration. Relatively few candidates were able to show that they had perceived features such as the modulations in bars 29 and 30, changes in tonality at the end of the phrases to be compared, or the replacement of “simple” chords by 7th or chromatic chords when the phrase returned at the end of the passage.

Examiners expect candidates to be able to draw comparisons such as these from a close study of the passage: harmonic understanding will not be restricted to basic identification of single chords in isolation; candidates need to be able to engage with aspects of the broader harmonic context of the music they are asked to analyse.

Paper 6020/03

Performing

General comments

The syllabus requirements were mostly well understood and observed and the standard of the assessments made by Centres was generally satisfactory. As in previous years, where a Centre has a number of particularly able candidates who achieve full or almost-full marks, there was sometimes a danger that the positive achievements of other, but less outstanding, candidates might not have been sufficiently rewarded, i.e. the gap between them may depress the lower mark unduly.

The music presented was almost always well-suited to the candidate and offered a sufficient contrast of technical and musical demands. In some cases, programmes were rather short: merely filling a minimum time has no merit in itself but Centres should be aware that very short programmes restrict the range of skills and achievement that the candidate is able to demonstrate and must inevitably, therefore, restrict access to the higher mark bands. Many Centres included copies of the music performed with their recordings and this was very helpful to the Moderators: in some cases where this was not done, it was not entirely certain that the requirements of the syllabus were being met in respect of the following:

‘At least one piece must be fully notated, using any system of notation appropriate to the instrument on which the performance is given.’

The area of assessment in which Assessors sometimes found difficulty was the third criterion: Choice and control of tempo. The extent to which candidates had ‘choice’ and ‘control’ over the tempo varied widely. Pianists and solo guitarists were clearly free to choose their own tempi and were solely responsible for maintaining or varying it. Many showed good judgement and musicianship in this and deserved their full marks. Differences in the nature of the relationships between accompanists and soloists were strikingly reflected in the matter of choice and control of tempi. Confident soloists who had the advantage of being accompanied responsively were also able to show that they could determine the tempo and indicate clearly where changes were to occur. In many other performances, however, it was undoubtedly the accompanist who was the driving force in this respect: in such cases the candidate could not fully demonstrate ‘choice’ or ‘control’, although many did, of course, still demonstrate a sound sense of what the tempo and tempi changes were and a reliable ability to play in time. The most extreme cases were those (very few) in which, as a last resort, a backing tape was used. These did not allow the candidate any choice or control whatsoever and even denied them the opportunity of demonstrating their ability to interact with another live performer.

The Moderators read all Assessors’ ‘Comments’ carefully. The instruction asks for comments ‘on aspects of the performance which support the marks awarded’. The most helpful were those that provided some thoughtful insight into how the criteria had been applied, something more than just a commentary on the number of wrong notes, or a statement of rough Grade equivalents. Whether the candidate is or is not a hard and consistent worker is not relevant (it is the performance on the day that counts in this examination), nor is a summary of the contribution the candidate has made to the musical life of the Centre in the course of the year.

The video and audio presentation of the performances was generally good. Some candidates had the opportunity to perform to an audience, rather than only to camera and the Assessors (the syllabus requires two Assessors), and this usually provided a welcoming ambience to which they responded well. There are dangers in the use of large school halls, however: recording quality may suffer. In some cases where spoken introductions were almost inaudible candidates were poorly identified: enclosing a written indication of the 'running order' is a helpful backup.