

MUSIC

<p>Paper 6020/01</p>

<p>Listening</p>

General comments

A wide spread of marks reflected outstandingly good performances among the most able candidates but a weak grasp of essential concepts and terminology among insecure candidates. The ability to concentrate intently and focus on stylistic and technical aspects of the extracts while listening was apparent. Implications of questions were well understood and directly addressed in mostly coherent answers.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Some candidates were secure in the identification of keys, chords and the cadence, though a few assumed from the information given in **(f)** that, as the music was in B flat major at bar 9, then bar 8 would also be in that key. While most recognised the Baroque style of the music, there were many who thought that Haydn was the most likely composer.

Question 2

In spite of the possibly daunting appearance of the German text and its translation, candidates were able to appreciate the style and mood of this Schubert song. Some were able to use technical language such as monophonic and homophonic when differentiating between passages but those who relied only on a 'label' as their answer to **(a)** had not met the requirement to 'describe'. For both marks it was necessary to show an awareness that the doubling was an octave lower in the bass of the piano accompaniment. Elsewhere, though, whilst some candidates showed a sensible understanding of what they needed to do to earn full marks: those that were at a loss tended to fall back on simple description of surface features, often in a repetitive way.

Question 3

Answers have improved: most candidates made a real attempt to distinguish which features they were hearing that informed their decisions about style, period or genre. The twentieth-century **(a)** Stravinsky, and Classical period **(b)** (Mozart), pieces were readily recognised. Extract **(c)** Borodin gave candidates who tried to reason from 'single mood' and 'ornamentation' to 'Baroque' more difficulty. There were many curious discussions of terraced dynamics (both absence and presence thereof).

Section B

Question 4

- (a)** A high proportion of candidates deduced 'lamellophone' by a process of elimination but very few recognised the instrument as a mbira.
- (b)** Familiarity with Japanese *noh* and *kabuki* traditions enabled most candidates to answer with confidence. In answer to **(iii)** both genres were accepted as, although the extract was drawn from an example of *kabuki*, the style of singing showed strong *noh* characteristics.

- (c) Most candidates were clear about the instruments and source of the music but many of their answers to (ii), though relevant, were rather tentative, either at a loss to 'describe' what was heard or anxious about identifying a 'correct' answer. What was required was simply the recognition that the basic melodic material was the same as that played by the *erhu* plus two brief details of ways in which it was elaborated or adapted to the different nature of the instrument.

Section C

- 5 (a) At first sight the *Dido and Aeneas* extract looks disproportionately short and simple when compared with the complexity and length of 5(b) but candidates seemed to have found this unexpectedly difficult: while some could recognise the polyphonic/contrapuntal texture addressed in (iii), many again found it difficult to say more about the passage – there were, however, some excellent answers which indicated the order and pitch of the entries and the change to homophony at the end – and very few were comfortable with (iv). While most candidates will have studied the music from a vocal score (with orchestral reduction), all should have known what the composition and accompanimental role of the orchestra is.
- 5 (b) Some candidates demonstrated familiarity with this work. It was disappointing, however, that so many failed to recognise the interrupted cadence (i), even those who had already successfully identified one in Handel's music (Question 1g).

Section D

- 6 a) to d) A disappointingly high proportion of candidates misconstrued 'syncopated' in (a): many answers cited the dotted rhythms of the Sorceress' 'storm' or of Dido's 'remember me'. While candidates were able to mention typical features of Purcell's style such as word-painting and the use of dissonance in their answers to (d) it seemed that few were aware of his emphatic setting of words like 'never' and 'intending' in the Sailor's song, or the awkward rhythms of the Sorceress' 'see the flags and streamers', 'anchors weighing' and the Second Witch's 'Our plot has took'. But candidates were successful in recalling memorable features of one of the dances. In the essays there was a handful of very clear, articulate answers which went straight to the point: that *Dido and Aeneas* was an opera, unlike Purcell's semi-operas and incidental music to plays, because it had recitative and no spoken dialogue. Candidates were able to name at least one other dramatic work (usually *The Fairy Queen*) and quite a few were able to name several plays as well. The candidates who wrote at some length about the tragic ending as an unusual feature which distinguished it from other forms of opera had missed the point – the type of opera with which the comparison, of obligatory 'happy endings', was implied was not to be commonly performed in England until after Purcell's death.
- 6 e) to h) Candidates were generally well prepared. Essays were often long, almost comprehensive, biographies with many of Prokofiev's works mentioned. Sometimes chronology was confused: events attributable to influences during the two World Wars were sometimes misidentified and the October revolution often conflated with the period of Stalin's rule. The best answers were those that were more concise, confining themselves to identifying two other genres or styles clearly and placing them in their cultural context.

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Paper 6020/02

Melody, Harmony and Analysis

General comments

Examiners felt that the general standard of performance by candidates in this year's paper was slightly less strong than in many previous sessions. Very few scripts from this session could be classed as "outstanding" in terms of candidates' understanding and their demonstration of high levels of skill in all three areas of melody writing, harmony and analysis. At the lower end of the mark range, however, there were few scripts that were unable to demonstrate positive levels of achievement in at least one of the three questions.

In general, **Question 3** proved again to be the strongest area of performance for most candidates, and (following the pattern of previous years) the weakest section of the paper was **Question 1** (melody writing).

Again this year some scripts displayed significant errors in terms of musical literacy. The most common mistakes included omitting clefs and key signatures from all but the first line of a written melody, the writing of a time signature at the start of every line of music, and an inconsistent approach to time signatures. In addition, many candidates failed to display a clear understanding of many basic "rules" of conventional harmony in their answers to **Question 2**. Examiners felt that many errors were the result of basic slips of musical literacy and candidates should be reminded to check their answers carefully before papers are handed in.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a)

Melody writing

CHOPIN, *Prelude in A, op.28 no. 7*, bars 0³-2¹

The given pitches inspired answers in a wide range of keys, with the most popular tonal centres being A major and D major. A number of D-major melodies tended to sound rather "awkward" as a result of candidates' additions to the opening pitches, with a number of answers veering uneasily between D major and A major. Several candidates produced answers that placed the melody in E major, but had not appreciated that the use of an appropriate key signature transformed the given pitch relationships.

The weakest answers tended to degenerate into scale patterns and unchanging rhythmic repetition, while others relied too heavily on a pre-prepared structural plan that did not encourage individual creativity or enable a strong sense of idiom to become evident in the writing.

A number of candidates wrote melodies for the flute, and employed a relatively narrow range. In contrast, many candidates who wrote melodies for the violin displayed a stronger awareness of appropriate idiomatic writing for the instrument. In all cases, it is important that candidates have a clear sense of the sound of what they are writing. Consideration of aspects such as tessitura, melodic figuration, performance techniques, articulation markings and the placing of dynamic indications provide Examiners with evidence that the melody has been thought of as sound and not as just a paper exercise. Unfortunately, many melodies contained dynamic and articulation markings that appeared to bear little relation to the contours of the melodic line or to the instrumental figuration.

The best answers displayed a coherent sense of style, a strong awareness of musical idiom and a clear sense of character, and melodic development was evident in the development of the line. As Examiners commented last year, adherence to a structural plan that produces an awkward melodic line is not advised: candidates must be able to “hear” what they have written mentally if they wish to produce answers that will gain access to the highest mark bands for this question.

Question 1(b)

Word setting

HEINRICH HOFFMANN, *The Story of Johnny Head-in-Air*, lines 1-4

Very few candidates chose this option but those who did appreciated the rhythms of the given text in their setting, with the best answers revealing some attempt to reflect the sense of “key” words such as “trudged” and “sky” in the melodic line.

As with answers to **Question 1(a)**, many workings lacked clear and appropriate performance instructions such as tempo indications and dynamic markings.

Question 2

Harmonisation

BEETHOVEN, *Bagatelle: Lustig-Traurig, WoO 54*, bars 1-16

Section (a) [Bass line]: Dovetailing candidate workings with the given material was a significant problem in this question, and many answers opened with parallel octaves between parts from bar 8 to bar 9. A significant number of workings also produced large angular leaps in the bass between the final note of a candidate’s working and the printed bass at the start of bar 13. Examiners did not feel that candidates had considered this aspect of the task with sufficient care.

In general terms, most bass lines were appropriate but relatively few exhibited strong levels of linear interest. Candidates need to consider the effectiveness of non-harmony notes in terms of creating an independent sense of line within the bass part. Once again, it was disappointing that so many answers contained clear examples of parallel 5ths and/or octaves.

Section (b) [Harmony]: Candidates need to consider carefully the use of second-inversion chords. These must always be placed within an appropriate harmonic context, and Examiners noted that many harmonic indications appeared to suggest that candidates were unaware of the contexts in which such chords can be used. In contrast, a large number of scripts were able to display appropriate use of second-inversion chords as part of a “passing 6/4” progression. A few scripts failed to give any chord indications (resulting in zero marks for this aspect of the answer) while in some cases the harmonic indication bore no relation to the note written as the bass line.

Section (c) [Melody line]: Many melody lines produced uninteresting parallels with descending bass line, and a number of examples failed to include a 3rd in the chord at bar 14³. Examiners noted that few candidates made effective use of non-harmony notes in their workings, and these would have helped to craft a more lyrical and effective melody line in many cases.

Question 3

Analysis

HAYDN, *Adagio in F, Hob.XVII: 9*, bars 16-30

As in previous sessions, this question was well answered by most candidates. Many scripts received maximum or near-maximum marks for the question.

Section (a): Most candidates were able to identify chords and inversions accurately. Several candidates tried too hard to find a complex chord symbol for the first inversion of a dominant chord (**Vb**) in bar 3, while others failed to appreciate the added 7th to the same chord at the start of bar 9. Most of the remaining chords were identified accurately, although some candidates did not recognise a standard use of chord **Ic** in bar 7.

Sections (b) to (e): These questions dealt with the function of non-harmony notes. Most candidates were able to describe the functions of the non-harmony notes in **Sections (b) to (d)** accurately, but then experienced real difficulty in identifying non-harmony notes for themselves in order to answer **Section (e)**. Examiners advise candidates to consider carefully the underlying harmonic context in order to identify non-harmony notes accurately. It was not always clear that candidates had appreciated the harmony that underpinned the ornate melodic line in this exercise.

Most candidates identified the interrupted cadence accurately in **Section (e)**, with many scripts including a reference to Haydn's use of a dominant 7th as the first chord of the cadence. Some answers digressed to talk about modulation and these answers suggested a lack of appreciation of the underlying harmonic plan of the extract. Examiners were pleased that so many answers made reference to the use of a suspension as part of the cadence "decoration", although very few scripts mentioned in detail Haydn's use of a double appoggiatura.

Section (g) tended to produce the weakest answers to this question, with many scripts failing to focus on similarities and differences in sufficient detail to gain full marks. The best answers were able to refer precisely to the harmonic progressions used in both passages and to the contrast between an ascent in arpeggio figuration and a rising scale passage. Less detailed answers produced more vague comparisons such as "notes get faster". Very few candidates noted the delayed final tonic chord as the result of Haydn's insertion of an appoggiatura at the start of the bar.

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Paper 6020/03
Performing

General comments

There were some outstanding performances and a number of good ones submitted for this component this year. The vast majority of candidates had prepared well for their examination and there were very few who were unable to demonstrate at least a satisfactory level of skill and understanding.

Most repertoire had been well chosen to suit candidates' abilities and interests. Music was presented from the Western classical tradition, from popular rock and pop, and from non-Western traditions. Centres provided able accompanists who had clearly had an opportunity to rehearse with candidates beforehand and this enhanced the candidates' performances. Where candidates chose music that was less suitable, this was often where the instrumental line was incomplete in itself: e.g. an unaccompanied bass line from a brass band piece with considerable numbers of bars rest. It was difficult for such candidates to show their interpretative understanding of the music and a more straightforward, solo piece, would have been both more satisfying to perform and have demonstrated a wider range of musical skills and thus enabled the candidate to score more highly.

Centres are reminded that candidates should perform on one instrument or voice and that the performance should be marked as a whole and not separately for individual pieces. Assessors generally carried out their tasks responsibly, with the Marking Criteria being well understood and fairly applied. There were some instances where assessors had been rather severe in their marking of the weakest candidates, but this was less of an issue than in previous examination sessions. Assessors made perceptive comments about their candidates' performances, using the Working Mark Sheet to refer to aspects of the Marking Criteria. Most marks, but not all, were correctly totalled – it is worth having this aspect of the process checked by a third party to avoid changes at a later date.

Moderators were grateful to those Centres that provided full documentation with their submission. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. It is essential that each candidate can be correctly identified on both audio and video recordings. The order of performances was not always clear and candidates had to be distinguished from each other by process of elimination. Where candidates announce themselves orally, they should ensure they speak clearly and are positioned close to the microphone. It is also helpful if a written running order is included with the documentation. Centres are reminded that at least one of the pieces performed must be fully notated – using any appropriate manner – and that this should be included in the submission.