
AS
MUSIC

7271/W – Appraising music
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

This year there was a good spread of students across Areas of Study 2 to 5. As was the case in 2017, no schools or colleges opted to study Area of Study 6 (contemporary traditional music) which is a great shame as it is a vibrant and exciting Area of Study.

By far the most popular Area of Study was Music for Theatre, with Pop Music in being the second most popular.

Students appeared confident with the format of this exam, with only one or two students answering more questions than required (this occurred both in Sections A and B). A small handful of students answered questions on a different Area of Study in Sections A and C, which is often not a wise choice, as it is unlikely that they will have been able to prepare in sufficient detail for both Areas.

It is important to note here that across all six of Areas of Study the 10 mark question was generally not well answered. There was some fantastic music amongst the excerpts for students to respond to, but many only supplied either tick-lists of learned answers or generic narratives of the pieces. Neither of these strategies are satisfactory ways to tackle these questions, and limit responses to the lower levels of the mark scheme. Responses should demonstrate an understanding of the piece being listened to, which involves talking about that piece in breadth, and in detail. In questions where specific elements of music are mentioned, no credit can be given for discussion of other elements outside the question wording. In an open question, for example Question 04, we would expect successful responses to be discussing a wide range of elements, and in particular be prepared to discuss harmony and tonality with understanding.

In all 10 mark questions it is advised that quality and not quantity will be more likely to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme. It is perfectly possible to gain full marks by writing in the space allocated and without need for extended answers in additional booklets.

It is worth mentioning here that the equipment that students use to sit the exam appears to make a real difference to their experience. It is much easier to skip through a track to find specific details, and to be able to time-stamp examples if students are using a PC style CD player with visual track references, which is recommended if possible. Diskman-style CD players can be more tricky to use as students have to scan through a track chronologically, which can take up valuable exam time.

Section A: Listening

Area of Study 1: Western Classical Tradition

Question 01 (Locatelli Violin Concerto in D major Op 3 no 12 1st Movement)

This question was largely well answered. The interval between the first two phrases was often found, as was the syncopation. Most students also heard the chromatic scale, but double stopping was a technique which appeared to be less well known, and was often confused with tremolo.

Question 02 (Mozart 'Vedrai Carino' from *Don Giovanni*)

This question was less well answered, and there were a number of common errors. A majority of students identified the time signature as 3/4 or 3/8. However, very few students identified the

interval between the parallel parts. This was almost always identified as 3rds, when in fact it was 6ths, and less than half of responses identified the modulation correctly (surprisingly, quite a few responses opted for a minor key, even though it had modulated to the dominant, G major).

Question 03 (Mozart 'Deh, vieni, non tardar' from *Le nozze di Figaro*)

This question was largely well answered, with lots of students realising the relationship between the two lines of music. A good number of students found the first three notes, with quite a lot also getting the fourth note, but the last two were more frequently incorrect. Well over half of responses achieved 3 marks or more.

Question 04

Many students appeared to understand the style of this question, and there were some successful answers, with the vast majority of students choosing the Baroque option. However, there were a large number of responses which did not address this question effectively. It is important to note that this question is in an identical format every year.

It is vital, in order to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme, that responses discuss the specific piece of music, and do not simply make general remarks. One way of doing this is to clearly reference points of the recording; given that all students have a CD of their own the most efficient way of doing this is to use time stamps, but students could also use defining points, for example 'at the start of the solo episode', or referring to line numbers within the text.

It is also vital that students explain their points fully, for example, 'there are parallel thirds, which is a Baroque feature' does not really tell examiners anything and could be a learnt answer. In contrast, 'the solo section which begins at 0:52 is based on a one-bar syncopated pattern in the violins (playing in parallel 3rds) which is treated sequentially' is not only much clearer, but also gives a number of pieces of information in one sentence.

As an example, a successful answer could include all of the following points, although it is important to note that this is not the only way to gain full marks; a shorter answer with the same level of detail across a wide-range of areas could also achieve full marks:

The excerpt begins with a rising dotted arpeggio idea played in octaves with the basso continuo. This is followed by a falling scalar idea ending in the dominant. This whole phrase is then repeated at the dominant, modulating to its own dominant. From 0:15 there is a circle of 5ths progression (all seventh chords) with a chordal texture added from the harpsichord, and rising arpeggios in the bass. This whole passage is now repeated from 0:26-0:51, tutti and in a higher register, with double stopping in the violin from 0:39. The harmonic rhythm increases towards the cadence each time (0:25 and 0:50 approx) and much of the rhythmic material employs characteristic baroque motor rhythms. The solo section which comes next is based on a one-bar syncopated pattern in the violins (playing in parallel 3rds) which is treated sequentially. This is accompanied only by the continuo creating a polarised texture, which is contrasting with the tutti that came before it. Following this 1:06-1:09 is a further solo violin syncopated motif with the other upper strings playing in thirds and sixths. This is repeated a 4th higher at 1:14-1:16. The final section of the excerpt consists of the solo violin playing a chromatic descending and ascending scalar figure accompanied only by another violin playing a tonic pedal below it, ending in a perfect cadence with an increased harmonic rhythm and a trill.

Much of this advice can be applied to any other 10 mark question.

Area of Study 2: Pop Music

Question 05 (Labrinth, ‘Let the Sun Shine’)

This was generally well answered, with a number of responses achieving full marks.

Question 06 (Daft Punk, ‘Robot Rock’ from ‘Human After All’)

This was less well answered, with many students appearing to struggle to find two features of the drum intro. The range of the solo riff was the hardest question, with the identification of the rhythmic pattern the easiest.

Question 07 (Joni Mitchell, ‘Court and Spark’ from ‘Court and Spark’)

Again, this was quite well done with a number of responses gaining 4 or 5 marks. Students appeared to find the identification of the type of chords in the first part of the question challenging, with only a quarter finding this; conversely, nearly all students identified the additional instrument playing.

Question 08 (Stevie Wonder, ‘Maybe Your Baby’ from the ‘Talking Book’)

A lot of the advice given for Question 04 above stands for this question as well. General comments were in abundance here, but specific examples showing a thorough understanding were less frequent, with few responses achieving the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Area of Study 3: Music for Media

Question 09 (Uematsu, ‘Blue Dragon’ Main Theme)

The first three parts of this question were very well answered, but the altered note in the trumpet melody was often not found and neither was the syncopation.

Question 10 (Bernard Herrmann, Theme from ‘Cape Fear’)

Again, the first three parts were relatively well answered, but many responses struggled to describe the changes to the melody the second time around.

Question 11 (Michael Giacchino, ‘Team Building’ from ‘Inside Out’)

Nearly every student heard the tuba in the first part of the question, and its glissando. However, a number of students appeared to struggle with the interval, but a significant number of students did identify two features heard in the excerpt.

Question 12 (Hans Zimmer, ‘Mutiny’ from ‘Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides’)

Some students appeared to find this excerpt difficult to handle. There were many things that could be said about this excerpt, but similarly to the other 10 mark questions, responses lacked specific and relevant examples. Although there were some stronger answers, the majority of answers were placed in the lower levels of the mark scheme. In an excerpt of this length it is not imperative to provide a narrative of the whole excerpt, but to find relevant and wide-ranging examples which also succinctly address the question. For example ‘bass ostinato at 0:07’ only gives one small piece of information. In contrast, ‘at 0:07 a bass ostinato begins in the lower strings; choppy staccato quavers and crotchets emphasizing a minor 3rd and giving a feeling of violence and danger, accompanied by a rapid drum beat in constant semiquavers and metallic strokes on last beat which has an almost military, fighting feel’ gives a thorough explanation of the point with detailed musical analysis and a clear link to the question.

Area of Study 4: Music for Theatre**Question 13 (Sondheim, ‘Losing My Mind’ from ‘Follies.’)**

Students appeared to find this question more challenging. The start note, the highest saxophone note and the vocal range in particular were often not found, with mixed success on the type of chord as well. A number of responses were not awarded any marks for this question.

Question 14 (Jason Robert Brown, ‘I’m a part of that’ from ‘The Last Five Years’)

By contrast, this question was answered much better. Students appeared to find the number of different pitches challenging, with most finding a difference in the accompaniment in line 4, and understanding the word-setting in lines 8-10.

Question 15 (Schönberg, ‘Morning of the Dragon’ from ‘Miss Saigon’)

The identification of the two percussion instruments was the most successfully answered part of this question with a good number of responses achieving both marks. The least well answered part was identification of the melody line, which was a multiple choice question.

Questions 16 (Weill, ‘What good would the moon be?’ from ‘Street Scene’)

Although this question was not always tackled as well as it could have been, there were some good answers here. The more successful responses ventured into discussion of harmony. A lot of responses included general comments about tempo, dynamics and instrumentation, and some included irrelevant comments about the text (unless linked to the music this cannot be credited). It is worth noting that, as in other 10 mark questions, the more relevant detail that can be given the better. For example ‘phrase ending sound unfinished’ is a broad statement, whereas ‘frequent use of non-chord notes at phrase ends suggest longing, for example added 6th and 9th at the end of line 2’ shows a good deal of understanding.

Area of Study 5: Jazz**Question 17 (Pat Metheny, 'Naked Moon' from The Road to You (Nonesuch, 2006))**

The harmony and tonality questions were generally not well answered here, with very few responses identifying the Lydian mode and only fractionally more identifying the harmonic progression as flat VII-I in the subdominant. Contrastingly, nearly every student who answered this question correctly identified the technique used to create the soft drum sound.

Question 18 (Louis Armstrong (with Ella Fitzgerald), 'Tenderly' from 'Together')

The time signature and the playing technique was largely accurate, but students appeared to find the harmony question more challenging, with very few being able to identify both of the added notes in the opening chord.

Question 19 (Davis 'Freddie Freeloader', from 'Kind of Blue')

The most successful answered part here was the identification of the 12-bar blues chord progression, although the whole question was tackled relatively successfully.

Question 20 (Duke Ellington 'Creole Love Call')

Although there were some very good observations made here, some responses did not address the entire question, only discussing the 'exotic' features of the music. In order to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme, responses needed to discuss both parts of the question; features creating an exotic feeling and also features that are typical of jazz in this period. However, responses which did respond fully to the question were successful in achieving the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Area of Study 6: Contemporary Traditional Music

No students attempted this Area of Study.

Section B: Analysis

The majority of students answered the Baroque option rather than the Mozart option. As a consequence, there was a much wider spread of marks for Question 25, with more students achieving the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 25 (Bach Concerto in A minor for Violin, 1st movement, bars 24-49)

In the short answer questions (25.1 to 25.5) the most successfully answered questions were the identification of an auxiliary note and of a perfect cadence. The least well answered questions were the full description of a chord (two pieces of information required: chord and inversion) and also the composition devices where very few responses identified both imitation and sequence.

Question 25.6 required thorough discussion of both texture and harmony to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme. Although texture was largely well understood, there was some confusion in responses about textural terms. If in doubt, it is advised that a description is often

more successful than guessing at an actual term. There were a number of answers that appeared to simply list all textural terms in the hope of gaining some marks. In terms of harmony, a good number of responses identified one of more of the circles of fifths, however some chose to identify this as modulating to unrelated keys in each bar, showing a lack of understanding of typical Baroque harmony. Very few students tackled the more complex chromatic harmony found in bars 44 onwards, with a large number identifying pedal notes at this point, rather than recognising a homophonic texture.

Question 26 (Mozart: Recitative and opening of ‘Se vuol ballare’ from ‘Le nozze di Figaro’)

Few students chose this option. Of the short answer questions the cadence was most commonly correctly identified, with the locating of 1st inversion chords being done the least well, with over half of response not gaining marks here. Common errors appeared to be occurring where students were finding places where the right hand of the keyboard reduction plays a first inversion chord, not taking into account the bass note being played in the left hand.

Question 26.6 was not always well answered, with a significant number of students not being able to relate points made back to the question (‘Explain how Mozart’s music helps to convey the dramatic situation in the excerpt’).

Sections A and B summary

Aside from the 10 mark questions, common errors were generally made in harmony and tonality questions. These should form basic skills learned regardless of Area of Study. Students also appeared to find identifying the range of a melodic line difficult. It is advised that students remember that as they have control over the CD they can use this facility to help themselves track lowest and highest pitches in this type of question. Instrumental techniques were generally well understood – perhaps because they can be linked to the student’s own practice.

Section C: Essay

Question 27 (Pop Music)

The most popular and successful choice of artist for this question was undoubtedly Joni Mitchell, with some students also choosing to discuss Beyoncé, where electronic timbres were more prevalent, and Stevie Wonder. Language was an issue in this question with a number of students misusing textural terms, and appearing to struggle to describe timbres.

Question 28 (Music for Media)

Successful choices here included Giacchino (Finding Nemo) and Herrmann (Psycho - shower scene). However, a significant number of answers focussed on narrating a scene with some musical detail, but not necessarily linked to strong feelings of shock and surprise. There appeared to be confusion over shock and surprise, with some students describing scenes that were tense, or suspenseful instead.

Question 29 (Music for Theatre)

Despite the overwhelming number of students who chose to answer this question, only some appeared to fully get to grips with rhythm, metre and tempo, and to identify metre, and its relevance. Some of the more successful answers were on Richard Rodgers (Oklahoma!) and

Sondheim (Sweeney Todd), with few students tackling Jason Robert Brown. Again, there was a great deal of narrative writing in this question, with fewer responses really able to discuss fully how rhythm, metre and tempo could be used to create an emotional state.

Question 30 (Jazz)

This specific question on creating melody was generally tackled reasonably well. Stronger answers showed a real understanding of the way that melodic material is crafted in jazz, with the most successful answers talking about Armstrong and Parker. Less successful answers tended again to be more narrative in nature, only discussing melodic features at a basic level.

Question 31 (Contemporary Traditional Music)

No students attempted this question.

Final comment

Examiners have been pleased by the enthusiasm in which students have tackled a variety of Areas of Study, and works which have been discussed in this paper. Examiners would like to thank teachers and students for their thorough preparation for this exam.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.