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Examiners' Report
June 2011

GCE Music 6MU06 01

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Introduction

It is pleasing to report that in the second year of operation of the present specification, there has been an overall improvement in the quality of responses across the board, with the result that the mean mark has risen from 46.8 in 2010 to 49.5 this year.

The unit is designed to test candidates' listening skills through comparison of various musical features in two extracts of music, and the ability to notate a melody and comment on harmonic and tonal features in a third extract. The music will probably be unfamiliar to most candidates, but it will be linked by style and/or genre to the set works for the year. The remaining questions are designed to encourage candidates to write analytically about specific features of the works in question.

The standard of writing in Parts B (Music in Context) and C (Continuity and Change in Instrumental Music of Unit 6) has unquestionably improved. Responses in Part A (Aural Analysis), however, remain patchy, with the result that there is frequently a noticeable imbalance in marks received across the range of achievement, even in A grade performances. It should be noted that examiners are aware that candidates found the dictation test (2/a) especially challenging because of the brisk tempo, and this fact was borne in mind at awarding.

Candidates are required to answer two of the three options in Question 3, and this year the most popular question proved to be 3/b on Flying Theme from ET. Second most popular was 3/c on Tom McElvogue's (jig) and New Irish Barndance (reel). A relatively small proportion tackled 3/a on the Bach Cantata. Of the two options in Question 4, (a) on structure and tonality was much more popular than (b), on melody and harmony.

Examiners are looking for an ability to hear musical features, describe clearly what they hear and also to write in a focussed way about the context of some musical works and specific technical features. Quality of written communication is also assessed. It should be stressed that it is rarely the case that candidates will produce a totally balanced set of responses reflecting their ability, but it is hoped that a Grade E student will show sufficient musical perception to gain marks in the region of 4/10 and 5-6/18 in the listening tests, and marks that correspond with at least the 'adequate' band of the holistic grids for Questions 3 and 4. In the case of Grade A candidates, perhaps marks in the region of 7/10 and 10/18 for the listening tests might be anticipated, while marks for questions 3 and 4 will normally fall in the 'confident' or 'excellent' bands.

This year examiners were impressed by the high quality of responses in 4 (a) and (b), both with regard to analytical detail and the generally pleasing quality of written communication.

They were less impressed by

- * some of the responses in question 3 because of an apparent failure to respond to the specific demands of the question and particularly with regard to contextual aspects
- * responses in the Listening section of the examination, especially those that showed little attempt to relate what they heard to the set works they had studied in preparation for this examination.

With regard to future teaching strategies, it should be remembered that examiners try to relate the tests to the set works for the year. It was disappointing to observe how few realised that Excerpt B in the first question was modelled on the Galliard and, given that one of this year's set works was a portion from a Bach cantata, it was disappointing that in the second question so many rejected the correct date and composer in the multiple choice questions.

In the case of Question 3 set works, candidates should think not only about purely technical features, vital though these be, but how these features reflect aspects of the work's historical and social origins and where relevant, its expressive intent.

Question 1 (a)

Responses to Question 1 (a) were very often correct, the most frequent errors involving timpani and/or bass drum.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates frequently experienced difficulty both in perception of the music and its description, with many disorderly, misleading statements. Descriptions of Excerpt A were often insufficiently focussed, with, for example, candidates merely referring to the presence of polyphony or counterpoint, rather than imitation or canon. There was generally a failure to show how Vaughan Williams changed textures as the music proceeded.

With regard to Excerpt B, most candidates succeeded in noting the melody-dominated homophony, but only a very few mentioned the presence of the counter-melody towards the end.

(b) Compare and contrast the **textures** of the excerpts. (3)

Excerpt A has a much more fuller, richer texture, more counterpoint texture with more instruments being used. Excerpt A also has a more melody dominated Homophony texture. Excerpt B is more Homophonic, with a clear melody & accompaniment texture. Fewer instruments are playing so the texture seems thinner.

(c) Give **two** ways in which the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt B differs from



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Examiner Comments

The answer opens with a vague, unhelpful remark and is followed by unfocussed comments about counterpoint and melody-dominated homophony. A mark was awarded for noting the melody-dominated homophony in Excerpt B.



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Examiner Tip

Make a few notes in rough showing the order in which you hear the various musical events.

(b) Compare and contrast the **textures** of the excerpts.

(3)

A uses an imitative texture near the end. It has a melody and accompaniment texture for the majority of the piece. The first few beats of A are ~~homophonic~~ homophonic. A uses doubling in the melody. A has a section of only accompaniment where the brass play on the beats and offbeats.

(c) Give **two** ways in which the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt B differs from



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Examiner Comments

In this case, the candidate gained full marks because of the more precise location of the different textures.

Question 1 (c)

In questions concerning melody, it is important to realise that information about instrumentation or in which part of the texture the melody appears, will be considered irrelevant. The mark scheme gives a full outline of what was expected in this instance. The question specifically asked for differences, and so to gain the mark a full contrast had to be made: it was not, for example, sufficient to state that Excerpt B's melody was diatonic.

(c) Give **two** ways in which the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt B differs from the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt A.

(2)

- 1 ~~Excerpt B~~, Excerpt B keeps a steady pace throughout the excerpt.
- 2 Excerpt B uses a hemiola.



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Examiner Comments

Both statements are irrelevant.

(c) Give **two** ways in which the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt B differs from the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt A.

(2)

- 1 Excerpt A contrasting melodic line with strings and percussion ^{playing together}, whereas Excerpt B does not
- 2 Melody in Excerpt B goes up in steps whereas Excerpt A does not



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Examiner Comments

In this case, the candidate commented first on instrumentation and then (incorrectly) on a melodic feature.



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Examiner Tip

Avoid trying to draw a contrast by making a statement, and then simply adding that the other excerpt 'does not'.

(c) Give **two** ways in which the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt B differs from the melodic writing at the start of Excerpt A.

more chromatic -> chromatisch *more diatonic, fewer leaps* (2)

1 It is more diatonic in B, whereas A is more chromatic

2 There are fewer leaps in B than in A



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Examiner Comments

Here there is one correct contrast, and one incorrect. The points, however, are clearly and efficiently made.

Question 2 (a)

Because of the brisk tempo of the excerpt, this proved to be a challenging task. Some candidates succeeded in completing the passage fully, but in general better responses gave the first seven notes correctly. The dotted rhythm at the end presented difficulties for most, and the distinctive octave leap was rarely notated.

(a) Complete the melody line of bars 17 and 18. You may use the skeleton score for rough work, but you **must** copy your answer onto the staff below. (8)

(a) notate melody

(b) (i) Identify the following:



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The attempt started well; it was a shame that the candidate left it unfinished and could not hear the octave.

Question 2 (b) (i)

The relative minor was often identified, although an appreciable number of candidates lost the mark by failing to write the sharp sign. Very few realised the second key was in fact the subdominant rather than the tonic. Cadence recognition was not totally secure.

Question 2 (b) (ii)

Description of the chords was rarely entirely correct. Even the relatively few candidates who identified both the diminished seventh and neapolitan sixth frequently described the augmented sixth as a dominant seventh. In such instances it is vital to listen to the harmonic context in order to analyse the dissonance successfully.

Question 3 (a)

This was the least popular of the three options, and was often marred by irrelevance. Weaker responses typically suffered from a lack of focus on the music itself and a failure to provide substantiating examples. There were also many instances where candidates failed to use appropriate terminology: as in question 1, it was not enough to state that the music was polyphonic or contrapuntal, as a reference to canon, imitation or strict counterpoint was required.

3 (a) How does Bach convey a sense of despair in **movements I and II** of Cantata No 48 'Ich elender Mensch'?

(13)

- The rising sequence in the string ritornello (e.g. bars 1-8) in movement I creates a sense of longing and despair.
- The use of diminished chords in this same passage (e.g. bar 2 beat 1 and bar 3 beat 3) creates harmonic tension which contributes to the sense of despair.
- The initial leap of a minor 6th in the melody the choir sings (e.g. bars 12-13) adds to the sense of despair as ~~the~~ minor intervals are often used to convey sadness.
- This minor 6th leap is changed into a minor 7th in bars 98-99 and then to an octave in bars 113-114 in the Soprano part which ~~gives~~ ^{conveys} a sense of reaching out and longing for an end to the despair.
- The melody the choir sings leaps up to begin with, but the pitch descends overall from here. For example, in the soprano in bars 12-19 the melody reaches a G in bar 14, but then moves down by step in bar 15. On "Leibe die(ses)" in bar 18 it tries to rise again, but only reaches a D and then descends in leaps to the D an octave lower in bar 19. This conveys a sense of

despair as it suggests the writer or singers have given up on the chance that they could be 'delivered'.

- In movement 11, the rhythm is syllabic because this movement is a recitative. In bar 3 in particular the use of rhythm can be seen highlighting the speech patterns with ~~the~~ semiquaver rests and a semiquaver-quaver rhythm used on the words "bei mir". This creates a sense of a thinking voice and highlights the despair being felt.
- The fluid use of tonality in this movement (there is a modulation in nearly every bar, for example there is a modulation to A♭ major in bar 6) adds to the sense of unease and despair.
- The diminished 7th on the word "Elend" in bar 2 and the dissonant minor 9th between the bass and alto highlights the word 'sorrow'; therefore adding to the sense of despair.
- There is little sense of harmonic movement as the strings play sustained chords & ~~and in places~~ in bars 6-7^{beat 2} only the second violin and cello move, creating this sense of lack of movement. This and the fact that there is a perfect cadence in bars 8 and 15-16, pulling the music back to the tonic, suggests a sense of being stuck and unable to move away from the despair.
- The fact that Movement 1 is in a minor key (G minor) adds to the sense of despair.



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Examiner Comments

This example of a good answer uses bullet points to convey information clearly if not always efficiently. A mark was not given for the second statement as the candidate failed to specify diminished seventh chords. The fourth bullet point, with its detailed observations about how Bach extended intervals for expressive effect, was particularly pleasing.



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Examiner Tip

Try to give detailed examples with bar references.

Question 3 (b)

This was the most frequently answered question, with many candidates gaining marks in the top two bands. Weaker responses were typified by absence of illustration, or else a tendency to dwell excessively on the action on screen.

Question 3 (c)

There were some very thorough responses to this question, exhibiting a sound knowledge of both the style and the structure of the work. There was, however, occasional confusion as to what constituted a traditional or non-traditional element in the music.

- 3 (c) Show how Niall Keegan blended traditional and non-traditional features in Tom McElvogue's (jig) and New Irish Barndance (reel).

(13)

The instrumentation is very traditional as flute music is very typically known as Irish.

The most traditional aspect of the piece is the ~~use~~ choice of instrumentation (the flute) and the recording implies that it has been performed in an Irish pub setting, especially with the foot tapping & audience noise. Also, the piece is highly ornamented, which implies that ^{it} there may be improvised at times, or maybe just learnt off by heart and not necessarily following a score.

Non-traditional features are that it follows a sort of "pattern" as every other bar starts on a G, but in some ways this can be traditional as it shows the root note of the key. There is also small use of chromaticism. More traditional features are that it makes use of repeated motifs (b. 5 + 13) and also sequences (b. 29)



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Examiner Comments

This relatively weak response is characterised by a lack of substantiation, or else a failure to make the point fully. No mark was awarded for choice of instrument in the second line as the candidate neglected to specify Irish and wooden. Full illustrated marks could have been awarded for *ornamented* and *chromaticism* had examples been given.



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Examiner Tip

Remember to give examples wherever possible.

Question 4 (a)

This question proved to be the more popular of the two available options, with many excellent responses. In general, only a few candidates stopped short at giving an 'abstract' description of e.g. sonata form (i.e. a description which fails to specify bar numbers for section beginnings and endings and locations of changes of key). The best candidates succeeded both in giving full analytical details and in demonstrating continuities in the composers' approaches to tonality.

Generally, quality of written communication was of a pleasingly high standard, although organisation of information in this question posed some problems. Those candidates who elected to deal with matters of structure and tonality separately sometimes found they had no choice but to duplicate information. Those who dealt with both aspects simultaneously inevitably found that they could convey their thoughts much more efficiently.

If you answer part (a) put a cross in the box .

If you answer part (b) put a cross in the box .

The structures of Haydn's Symphony No. 26,
Brahms' Piano Quintet in G minor and Duke
Ellington's Black & Tan Fantasy ~~are~~ reflect
popular structures.

The first movement of Haydn's 26th Symphony is in Sonata Form, as was the first movement of many Symphonies of the Classical Period. It consists of ~~an~~ ^{Exposition} Exposition where the first and second subjects are introduced, followed by a Development where the subjects are varied and developed and ends with a recapitulation with the 1st and 2nd subjects in the tonic key of Dm.



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Examiner Comments

There is here an abstract description of sonata form which served as an introduction to an otherwise excellent essay. Its one reference to keys was misleading.



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Examiner Tip

If you want to write an introduction, do not spend too much time and effort giving only very general information. A better opening gambit here might have been to say that all three works opened in a minor key and employed functional tonality.

Question 4 (b)

This question was generally not so well answered, with many candidates lapsing into irrelevance. It proved to be but a short hop from describing (correctly) conjunct melodies in Holborne's Pavane to the composer's use of polyphony and consort music in general. There seemed to be widespread confusion and self-contradiction over conjunct and disjunct, and some difficulty in distinguishing between passing chromatic alteration and modulation in Bach. Descriptions of 'Four' were often better managed than those of the other works. Candidates also found it easier to give information about harmony than melody.

Organisation of answers could be random at times, with some candidates deciding against a chronological approach, preferring to start off with Davis and then proceeding to the other works in whatever order seemed convenient.

If you answer part (a) put a cross in the box ☒ .

If you answer part (b) put a cross in the box ☒ .

Mile Davis' has made use of very complex chords in Four, such as 9^{ths}, 11^{ths}, 13^{ths}, and sus. chords. He has also used chord substitution as the piece develops, and also thematic substitution. Melodically, he has experimented with lots of different techniques such as half valving, ghost notes + pitch bending. The melody has a very wide range. He also includes trills and glissandos.

Holbourne uses many interesting ^{Pavane} cadences in his Pavane + Galliard, from perfect (b14-15) to phrygian (b 7-8) ^{Galliard}. He also includes suspension (b2-3) and false relation (b10-15). There ~~is~~ are sequences and imitation used in the opening bars of the pavane. He also uses much chromaticism throughout the piece.*

Bach uses many melodic techniques, such as upper mordents (b.1), appoggiaturas + acciacaturas (b. 20). He uses non-traditional chords such neopolitan chord and augmented 6^{ths}.



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It looks as though this candidate was running out of time. In spite of this, an appreciable number of marks could be awarded and indeed, had some of the points been expanded with an example, e.g. chord substitution, the special techniques in 'Four' and the Neapolitan sixth in Bach, s/he could have obtained over half-marks.



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Examiner Tip

Keep writing. Quality of written communication matters, but if all else fails, list the points you wanted to make in note form.

Paper Summary

In general, there is abundant evidence that candidates were well prepared for this examination, and centres should be congratulated for their efforts. It is true that not every student will find listening tests straightforward, but it may be that some hazards can be avoided through:

- * listening to music other than the set works
- * making an orderly record of what is heard as the listening tests are played
- * in dictation tests perhaps placing a dot above the staff in the skeleton score on the first hearing to establish the extent of the exercise
- * listening to the context when trying to establish keys, cadences and chords
- * for Question 3, studying the broader historical background of each work
- * for all questions, developing a firm chronological grasp so that composers and their works may be more securely linked to the correct historical period.
- * continuing to focus on application of appropriate terminology.

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