

A Level Music

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Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Music (9MU0)

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About this exemplar pack

This pack has been produced to support Music teachers delivering the new A level Music specification (first teaching September 2016; first assessment summer 2018).

The pack contains model student responses to the A level Music Appraising paper 3 (Question 6). It shows model student responses to the questions taken from the sample assessment materials. Please see the example [course planners](#) for more support on delivering the course content.

The A level questions address two Assessment Objects: AO3 and AO4.

AO3 – Demonstrate and apply musical knowledge and understanding

AO4 - Use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music

The examples in the pack show model responses to the A level questions, in which set works are evaluated.

Following each model answer you will find examiner comments on how the marks have been awarded, and any ways in which the response might have been improved.

Mark scheme for A level Appraising paper, Question 6

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows limited awareness of contextual factors (AO3) Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Some basic musical vocabulary used with errors/inconsistency (AO4) Little attempt to link to other relevant works (AO4)
Level 2	7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes general links between the music and the historical, social and cultural context in which it was created and developed (AO3) Makes general points, identifying some musical elements with general explanation of effects. Musical vocabulary is used but with some errors/inconsistency (AO4) Attempts are made to refer to other works, with some errors/inconsistency (AO4)
Level 3	13-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops relevant links between the music and the historical, social and cultural context in which it was created and developed (AO3) Offers a clear response using relevant musical examples. Satisfactory use of musical vocabulary (AO4) Relevant works are used to basic points (AO4)
Level 4	19-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes detailed links between the music and the historical, social and cultural context in which it was created and developed (AO3) Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded musical examples. Competent use of musical vocabulary (AO4) Relevant works are used to justify points (AO4)

Model student answer A

Evaluate Berlioz's use of melody, harmony and instrumentation in his *Symphonie Fantastique*, Movement I, in relation to the work's programme.

Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

Hector Berlioz was a French Romantic composer born in 1803 and dying in 1869. He was also an expert on orchestration and a music critic. He wasn't always going to be a musician, his parents wanting him to be a doctor, and he didn't start studying music at all until he was 12, and much of his music shows that he wasn't formally trained, like the first movement of *Symphonie Fantastique*. Despite this many of his pieces are for large orchestra, showing that he quickly learnt a lot about music.

Berlioz liked music to tell a story, or programme music. Lots of composers at the same time wrote programme music, like Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* or *On Wenlock Edge* by Vaughan Williams. Often he used instruments like characters in his story. Prokofiev did this too. In this movement the violin and flute together are used to represent the main character. The other instruments are not given any characters in the story. Most of Berlioz's other pieces also focus on one character, like *Harold in Italy*. This is because his music always fixes on one tune all the time. This is called monothematicism and Haydn uses this a lot too.

Because Berlioz came to music later and had little training his music often sounds unusual. He changes tempo whenever he wants to and makes use of irregular phrases. No one else was writing music like this when he was. That is why his harmony is very chromatic and weird. This could be because he wanted us to realise that the character he was describing was unusual too.

The piece is called *Symphonie Fantastique* not because it is very good but because it is about the supernatural. French composers often wrote about supernatural things, like Saint-Saens *Danse Macabre*. He also used the violin for his main character, who was the devil. However, I do think that *Symphonie Fantastique* is a very good example of Berlioz's music.

EXAMINER'S COMMENTARY

There is an attempt here to address aspects of the question but there is much irrelevance (in the first paragraph) and inaccuracy, particularly in the choice of inappropriate examples from other works. There is an awareness of the work's historical context but most points made are very general. There is some use of musical vocabulary. The response fails to relate the music to the programme as requested in the question, and this allied with the amount of inaccuracy and irrelevance brings the response to the lower end of level 2: 8/30.

Model student answer B

Evaluate the use of melody, instrumentation and structure in *Se Quema la Chumbamba* showing how these elements create a piece of fusion music.

Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

The cultural life of Cuba displays a great number of influences. Geographically considered part of North America, it has strong cultural links with Latin America, and having been a Spanish colony until 1898 there remains a strong European, specifically Spanish, influence. It is a multi-ethnic country of great diversity: aboriginal Taino and Ciboney peoples live alongside the ancestors of African slaves and their European masters, with centuries of cultural cross-fertilisation between. The syncretic nature of its genres makes the musical language and heritage of Cuba one of the richest in the world. This diversity is captured in the music of Familia Valera Miranda, a musical family who have brought *Son cubano* to the attention of the world.

Son cubano fuses the structure of the Spanish *cancion* with African percussion, is the basis of most Latin American music. The set works *Se Quema la Chumbamba* and *Alla va Candela* are examples of this style. All their musical elements draw on the cultural diversity of Cuba, as I will show in this discussion of melody, instrumentation and structure in *Se Quema la Chumbamba*.

The diversity is immediately apparent in the instruments used. From Europe there is the Double Bass, a familiar member of the Western strings family. Claves and maracas are characteristic instruments of Caribbean and Latin American cultures, such that George Gershwin used claves in his *Cuban Overture* to immediately conjure up the image of that country, and maracas have a revered tradition associated with the ancient religions of the region. Both these instruments were used by Leonard Bernstein to create the Latin American feel to parts of his score for the musical *West Side Story*. The cuatro, an instrument from the guitar family found across the area, has a featured solo in *Se Quema la Chumbamba*. The legacy of African drumming is heard in the use of bongos, the pair of Cuban single-skin hand drums modelled on older African designs, like the djembe. Immediately from this list of instruments the successful fusion of many cultural influences can be seen in this ensemble typical of those playing Cuban son.

The vocal melodies in *Se Quema la Chumbamba* are syllabic and dependent on minor keys, a reference to the influence of the diatonic system from Europe, and perhaps specifically to the modal folk traditions of Andalusia, in particular Flamenco. Like equivalent popular music from Spain and elsewhere in Europe the vocal melodies have a limited range, easily sung by amateurs, and are mainly conjunct, any leaps generally outlining the notes of the

accompanying triads, themselves very limited, mainly focusing on Tonic and Dominant harmonies, with use of sevenths and some dissonant ninths. Given the live nature of the performance the melodies mutate and show that they are subject to some improvisatory development. The melody of the cuatro solo has a greater freedom, with more, larger leaps and less regular phrasing. This improvisatory melodic freedom could be seen as another Western influence on son, coming from jazz. The irregular phrasing and free use of rhythm are certainly suggestive of this. Melody, and harmony too, are the strongest links between son and its European counterparts.

The influence from Africa is stronger in the structure of the music, which is basically call-and-response, as is much music from that continent. In Sub-Saharan African cultures call-and-response structures form the basis of all public gatherings, civic, religious and social, as a way of including the whole community. It has since spread to almost all styles of popular music, including gospel, blues, jazz and hip hop: this structure is famously used in *My Generation* by The Who. In son the “call” is known as the Pregon: originally the improvised cry of the street vendor. This is answered in the “response” known as the Coro, which, as its name suggests, is sung by a group of people. A Cuban son using a call and response structure is specifically known as a *son montuno* and is associated with the singing of farm workers in the field, as is often reflected in the text, as here. *Se Quema la Chumbamba* adds an introduction (on the cuatro) to the son montuno structure: another feature lifted from European music. The introduction comprises of three different treatments of the same four-bar melody. It is followed by two similar four-bar melodic phrases forming the Pregon, itself followed by the four-bar Coro, regular phrasing being another European feature of this music. Part way through there is a cuatro solo of 30 four-bar patterns, incorporating a bongo improvisation in cycles 22 to 28. The song is brought to an end by a final repetition of the Coro.

Son is part of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Cuba: the most influential of its musical genres. In all its musical elements it shows the influences of the cultures that have played a part in Cuba’s history but in fusing them something new, vibrant and distinctively Cuban is created, as the music of La Familia Valera Miranda shows. The importance of this style as a precursor of salsa and other Latin American genres further reinforces this fusion of diverse cultural features as one of the most significant international musical genres.

EXAMINER'S COMMENTARY

The music here is excellently placed in its historical, social and cultural context and the focus throughout is on how the elements together combine to create something new from a successful fusion of musical styles. Relevant works are brought in to justify points. This is particularly difficult with this question, where many of the influences are from the oral tradition so often styles (such as flamenco) are referenced rather than stating specific works or composers. This would be a high-end Level 5 response: 30/30

Model student answer C

Evaluate Stravinsky's use of rhythm, metre and sonority in the introduction from *The Rite of Spring*, in relation to other orchestral works from the first half of the 20th Century.

Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* caused a riot when it was first performed in 1913. It is said this was mainly because of the style of the dancing but the music was quite unusual too. Other music composed at the same time, like Holst's *St Paul's Suite* and Vaughan Williams' *London Symphony*, sounds very different. In focusing on rhythm, metre and sonority I will try to relate Stravinsky's ballet to other orchestral works of the same time.

Stravinsky's music in this ballet uses lots of complex rhythms. This is unusual in ballet where dancers normally need to hear a steady beat, as in Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*. The complex rhythms include cross rhythms and syncopations. Jazz was just being invented and it used syncopations too. Stravinsky had written other ballets before this one, like *The Firebird*, but they used less complex rhythms.

Alongside complex rhythms Stravinsky also changes metre a lot. Other Russian composers had been doing this too, like Mussorgsky in *Pictures at an Exhibition*, because they thought it sounded more like Russian folk music and they were interested in nationalism.

Most orchestral music gives the tune to the strings but Stravinsky makes the strings mainly accompany the other instruments, particularly the woodwind instruments. He did this throughout his life, taking upper strings out of his *Symphony of Psalms*. He makes the woodwind instruments use the extremes of their range, like the high bassoon at the beginning, because they could now make instruments that stayed in tune. Lots of instruments have to use special playing techniques to create new sounds. Other composers at around the same time, like Mahler, were exploring new ways of using the orchestra.

So in relation to other works written at the same time Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was very unusual and different and as such it influenced lots of composers alive today.

EXAMINER'S COMMENTARY

This response is fairly, if not wholly, accurate, but it is not a full or sophisticated response to the question. There is some, limited attempt to relate the music to its context. Musical vocabulary is used correctly and there are some musical examples to illustrate points. This response lacks detail and a controlled argument. It is a Level 3 response but at the upper end of this level: 18/30.

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