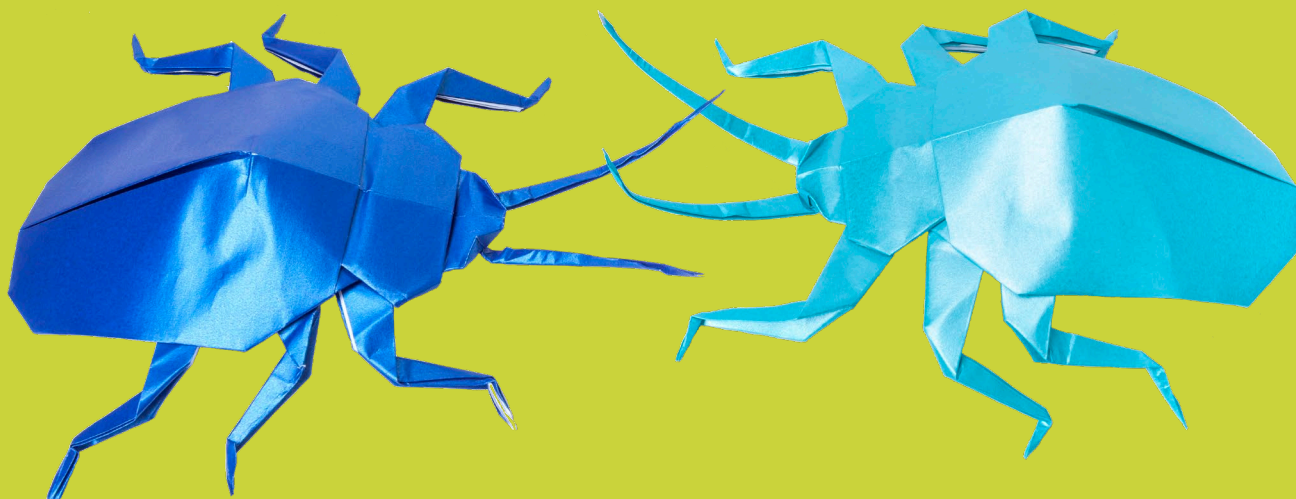


A level Music Appraisal

Question 5 Essay guidance and exemplars

NB: updates were made in April 2021 and these are highlighted.



Introduction

These exemplar assessment materials are provided to enable centres to support their A-level Music Appraisal (9MU0_03) candidates in the skills required for success responding to Question 5, a twenty-mark essay discussing an unfamiliar extract of music.

Live assessment material from 2019 has been used to provide exemplar candidate responses across a range of levels. In addition, the start of the document breaks down each of the various components within each essay to illustrate what is being assessed and provide information as to best practice.

The exemplification of the Senior examiners' decisions is based on the mark scheme criteria, which can be downloaded from our subject page (see link below). Centres should utilise the commentary of the exemplification of marker decisions to support their internal assessment of candidates. Centres may find it beneficial to review this document in conjunction with the following resources (available on our website):

- Mark scheme – 9MU0 Paper 3 – June 2019
- A-level Music 2016 specification
- A-level Music 2016 sample assessment materials
- Set work support guides
- Edexcel A-level Music Anthology

Our Music Subject Advisor (Jeffery Hole) is also here to help. You can contact Jeffery with any questions in the following ways:

Phone: 0344 4632935

Twitter: @PearsonMusic1

Subject Page: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/music-2016.html>

Guidance

The extended response questions (Section B) of 9MU0 03 are awarded a maximum of 50 marks. This means that they account for 20% of the GCE A Level qualification overall.

Timing Guidelines



Examiners have noted several short responses to these questions and have suggested that candidates may be devoting too much of the allocated exam time to Section A (Questions 1-4), leaving little time for the extended responses. The following is intended as guidance for candidates. The examination is completed in 120 minutes and is marked out of 100. It might be useful to think of each mark in Section A as being equivalent to a minute, thus completing Section A in roughly 50 minutes, allowing roughly 70 minutes to complete the extended response questions. Candidates should certainly not spend more than an hour on Section A and should ideally practise working in appropriately timed conditions in advance of the examination.

Question 5

In this question candidates are required to critically analyse an unfamiliar piece of music. Because the music is unfamiliar, and candidates are analysing the music in examination conditions this question is assessed entirely under Assessment Objective 4 (use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music AO4). The analytical and appraising skills acquired in studying the set works are here applied to unfamiliar music.

As stated in the specification (page 66) candidates need to “use their knowledge and understanding of musical elements, context and language to make critical judgements.” Musical elements are outlined on pages 70-71 of the specification, and musical contexts and musical language on page 72.

Unfamiliar music is defined in the specification (page 78) as music that is “neither set works nor **Appendix 4 Suggested other music**”. In discussing question 5, the specification states that the unfamiliar music will be “related to one of the set works”, sharing similar stylistic characteristics. The relevant Area of Study is always stated at the start of the question.

AO4

Assessment Objective 4 (AO4) requires candidates to use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music. The fact that the music in question 5 is unfamiliar to candidates ensures that it is these skills that are being tested and not just the demonstration and application of musical knowledge. Evaluative and critical judgements arise from the inclusion within the question of some element of historical, social or cultural context.

Musical Elements

In order to provide a full analysis of the music heard it would be expected that any discussion would cover most of the musical elements (described on pages 70-71 of the specification). Focusing on one or two elements alone would not enable a complete discussion. At level 5 on the assessment criteria it would be expected, therefore, that a candidate demonstrated a thorough coverage of a range of elements including a focus on particularly relevant elements of the unfamiliar piece.

Element	Description
Organisation of pitch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harmonic change, cadences, for example interrupted, and melodic and harmonic devices.• Complex chord progressions, for example the use of secondary dominant, and melodic devices, for example augmentation. <p>As well as the study of how melodic lines are constructed and common melodic devices, such as sequence, inversion etc. the study of the harmony in the music is an equally important feature. On a basic level this includes the repertoire and types of chords as well as their use in formulaic cadential progressions. Harmonic devices and more complex chord progressions too should be studied, such as circle of fifths, the use of the secondary dominants etc.</p>
Tonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How keys are related to each other, for example circle of fifths.• Complex and remote key relationships, for example enharmonic. <p>In essence, this is the key structure of the music and is often related to the music's form or structure. The relationship between keys is a vital component, such as the relative major/minor, dominant, dominant of the dominant etc. It is expected that the study of the set works will encompass complex key relationships and enharmonic change.</p>
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex structures, for example sonata form.• Increasingly complex structures, for example fugue and through-composed music. <p>The knowledge of the form or structure of music is inherent in the understanding of the composition as a whole. Students will</p>

	<p>encounter complex structures in the set works such as sonata form, arch form, fugue etc. It is through the understanding of the music's structure that the organisation of melody and harmony makes sense and shows again the independence of the musical elements.</p>
Sonority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combinations of vocal timbres and instrumental techniques, for example con sordino. • Further combinations of vocal timbres and instrumental techniques, for example sul ponticello. <p>This includes an understanding of how sounds might be altered such as con sordini, sul ponticello, flutter tonguing etc. It also requires an understanding of how combinations of instruments and/or voices create different sonorities.</p>
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex combinations of musical lines (parts), for example homophony and polyphony. • More complex applications of these, for example fugue. <p>This element encompasses common textures of monophony, homophony, polyphony, heterophony and fugue. Students should also be able to comment on interesting textural features in the music they study.</p>
Tempo, metre and rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrical and rhythmic devices, for example changing metres and syncopation. • Complex metrical and rhythmic devices, for example additive rhythm and polyrhythms. <p>As well as general observations regarding these features, students need to study more-complex metrical and rhythmic devices, such as additive rhythms, cross rhythms and polyrhythms. Many of the more complex uses of these elements will feature in the 20th-century areas of study.</p>
Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive devices, for example contrast and extended ranges. • Refined control of dynamics and extreme ranges. <p>The expressive use of dynamics to enhance music and how this relates to the elements listed above.</p>

Musical Context

As the specification makes clear (page 72), historical context is only one aspect to be considered here. The purpose and intention of the composer must also be considered, and there will always be guidance on what specifically to consider within the question itself. Candidates are required to discuss how the music is created, developed and performed. To justify their arguments here they will be expected to relate their discussion to other relevant works, as required by the question. This is often referred to simply as **other music** and is discussed below.

Musical Language

At level 5 on the assessment criteria it is expected that candidates will demonstrate excellent use of musical language, showing an accurate, clear understanding of musical vocabulary. Examiners will need to see evidence of this to credit it, and since language is linked to the discussion of musical elements, omission of elements may restrict the musical vocabulary used. A Music Vocabulary List is provided as Appendix 3 of the specification (pages 90-97) but, as stated on page 90, “The list is not exhaustive”.

“Discuss” as a command word

All tasks on the examination are driven by command words, and their general definitions are published in Appendix 5 of the specification (page 100). The command word for Question 5 is “Discuss” and its definition has three parts, as explained in the chart below:

General Definition	As applied in 9MU0 03
Identify the issue/situation/problem/argument that is being assessed within the question	Identifying how the musical elements relate to the question
Explore all aspects of an issue/situation/problem/argument	Exploring the effects of the musical elements
Investigate the issue/situation/problem/argument by reasoning or argument	Justifying the argument by making connections with other music

In summary, candidates would be required to identify what they hear in the music and to explain the effect of what they hear (the ‘what’ and the ‘why’). They would then justify their explanation by relating to other music.

Other Music

The question requires candidates to relate to other relevant works to justify their points. These could be taken from the set works that they have studied, from Appendix 4 Suggested other music list of **other music** published in the specification (Appendix 4) or any other music.

These other works are included in the discussion to justify the musical points being made. Candidates are expected to identify something in the music, to describe or explain its effect, and to justify this explanation with reference to other music. This is reflected in the wording of the assessment criteria.

The best candidates, when referencing **other music**, will specifically link the effect of the **other music** to the music heard, rather than simply listing another, similar piece.

Assessment Criteria

Indicative content is provided in the mark scheme to assist the examiners. There is no expectation that any candidate would make every point listed; they are simply examples of what are the most likely accurate observations. Examiners are aware that candidates are thinking and writing at speed to complete this examination.

It must be emphasised that this question is assessed against a levels-based mark scheme rather than a points-based one. A candidate producing a long list of elements of the music heard without explanation of effect, and without justification with **other music**, will be less successful than a candidate making fewer points that are fully explained and justified with other relevant works.

Question 5 exemplars and commentaries

5 New Directions

Listen to Track 5 of the CD.

This piece was composed in the middle of the 20th century and suggests turbulent times in European history.

Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

(20)

Level 1 - 3 marks

“The start of this piece doesn’t sound very busy, however it is a minor key. This signifies perhaps the heart of the cold war, where everyone thought everything was okay, but really was an underlying ideological conflict. The flute and piccolo continue for a few bars with pizzicato quavers. The strings then appear with sforzando and accented crotchets, which could be a symbol of conflict beginning in Asia around the start of the 50’s. As this builds up with the addition of the brass section on the crotchets, this could be how this conflict began to have a knock-on effect on the European countries & the two main superpowers (USSR & USA). After this there are chugging string chords with random accents which sound like Stravinsky’s ‘Rite of Spring’. This same chugging like theme is repeated later on in the piece. The quaver motion gives a sense of turbulence and unrest that was in Europe during the mid 20th century.”

Examiner Commentary

There is an attempt to respond to the question but ideas are not linked with correct musical observations. The candidate identifies only a very limited number of accurate musical points with some errors in use of musical vocabulary and with very limited coverage of the elements (valid points were made about rhythm and sonority, but other elements are mentioned in either a vague or inaccurate way). It is a short response for a 20-mark extended response question and lacks musical information. The only attempt to contextualise the music with other music is a very vague reference to The Rite of Spring, so there is very little justification of the candidate’s arguments.

Summary

A couple of features are correctly identified but there is no attempt to explain their effect or to justify discussion of them by reference to other music. The omissions in identifying the elements are so significant that this work does not reach the top of Level 1.

5 New Directions

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Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

(20)

Level 2 - 7 Marks

“The 20th century included lots of development in music moving away from conventional forms and ideas, but instead becoming more free and ground-breaking with the way music was expressed.

The piece begins with a dominant woodwind melody and low sounding horns before a strong addition that rallies over with fast staccato chords in quavers, providing a strong accompaniment. The horns provide another layer to the texture. The use of instrumentation of the orchestra highlights turbulent times in European history with the fast quaver string accompaniment highlighting the constant turmoil and ‘stress’ of the difficult times in the 20th century.

Similarly, in the ‘Rite of Spring’ many of the same elements can portray the same mood when the atmospheric changes during the entrance of the ‘old lady’ the music instantly becomes heavy and more accented with an unease in the atmosphere created through the symphonic orchestra. The minor tonality also excentuates (sic) the ‘atmosphere of the music expressing the turbulent times of the 20th century Europe.

The fast tempo, along with on beat movement and dotted rhythms also further highlight the business and disrupt of European history with emphasis towards the end where it gradually slows down to broadening the note values to long held notes. It begins slow before building to a fast tempo of faster semiquaver-quaver movement before reducing in tempo again.

This is also supported in the dynamics that build with the tempo of the piece. This allows the music to create more depth and provide more rhythmic variety to support textural changes too.

In Karlkeinz ‘Gesang der Junglinge’ lots of these musical elements are highlighted, such as development of rhythm that becomes more syncopated and faster moving notes to create contrast. In addition, Schubert’s ‘Erkoning’ uses the same tempo changes and dynamic support to express the situation of the story - in this case is father and son - that forms an image similar to this 20th century piece creates an imagery of unrest in the turbulent times of European history.

Moreover, the melody is fragmented between the instruments beginning in wind and string instruments that is then passed around and developed. Throughout, lots of conjunct, ascending and descending sequences can be heard in the inner parts along with broken melody lines play short repeated sequences in the upper parts of string. Towards the end of the melody is dramatically emphasised with the heightened use of percussion - trumpets - ending the extract

highlighting how the composer has used the percussion sound to end on a dramatic, tense moment letting the turbulent effect of European history linger and allows the listener to reminisce

To conclude, the use of melody, rhythmic variety and orchestration provides lots of support in creating a vivid image towards the turbulent times in European history with strong emphasis on the negative impact heard throughout the music through broken melodies, Pizzicato strings, inconsistent rhythmic changes and a minor tonality.”

Examiner Commentary

This essay identifies more elements of the music than the previous one (Level 1) and makes attempts to link back to the question. There is evidence of some musical vocabulary and attempts are made to refer to other works to justify the composer’s intentions.

However, there is some inaccuracy (for example stating that the dynamics build with the tempo of the piece) and the coverage of the elements is still less than thorough in order to provide a description of the piece. Attempts to link back to the question rarely make a musical point and appear contrived (e.g. ‘The use of instrumentation of the orchestra highlights turbulent times in European history’). There is also some inaccuracy in the use of musical vocabulary. The reference to The Rite of Spring is more successful here as an explanation of the composer’s intentions, but all the other **musical** examples are deployed with less success and are not clearly linked to correct musical observations. References to **other musical pieces** are inconsistent throughout and it is important to reference the name of the piece and composer with accuracy.

Summary

Although this work very closely matches the descriptor for Level 2, significant omission of elements and limited success in attempts to relate to other works mean that this cannot be at the top of the level.

5 New Directions

Listen to Track 5 of the CD.

This piece was composed in the middle of the 20th century and suggests turbulent times in European history.

Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

(20)

Level 3 - 11 Marks

“The composer uses many elements to reflect the turbulent times in European history. One example is the driving “moto perpetuo” rhythms of the strings that is heard so often, for example at the beginning of the extract the strings play repeated chords most likely all down bows as the lower brass play harsh repeated notes over the top of this. The driving chords of the strings pushes the music forwards, almost making it seem like there is no time to take a breath in between all of the madness. This reflects the turbulent times in European history. These driving string rhythms are also seen in Holst’s ‘Mars: Bringer of War’, where throughout the whole opening section the strings play the forceful iconic rhythm that drives the music forward and reflects the ‘war’ aspect of the piece, as the rhythm is an unstoppable force.

Another way the composer reflects the turbulence of European history is through the use of scalic passages provided by the woodwind. These passages can be heard almost all the way through the excerpt, later on provided by the upper violins. These are very quick chromatic scalic passages both ascending and descending that create a background of chaos beneath the low rumbles of the brass. These passages consolidate the turbulent feeling and makes it difficult for the listener to forget the turbulent feeling. This use of quick scalic passages is used in pieces such as Mozart’s ‘Magic Flute Opera’, for example in ‘No.4 the Queen of the Night’s’ scalic passages at the end of the piece reflect her orders to Tamina to save her daughter. These scalic passages represent the turbulent journey he is about to go on. Also there are lots of unexpected bursts of tutti chords throughout the smoother section before the repeat of the first idea. As the strings play a legato melody the brass and wood- wind interject at various points with a big fortissimo chord that is designed to startle the listener and remind them that although the legato melody is calm, the turbulence is still present and this reflects the real-life situation in Europe throughout history. This use of interjected chords is also used in Henry’s Page’s ‘Elphyne’ in the ‘Sneeze’ movement, where quick staccato chords are used to surprise the listeners.

Another way the composer reflects the turbulence of European history is through the use of repeated notes. This is heard at the very beginning in the low brass, where alongside the driving string pattern there is low repeated brass notes which each time have a longer rhythmic phrase and allows the music to become more and more exciting, and builds up a log of tension. This allows the listener to feel the turbulent life throughout European history. This method of repeating notes is also used in Hermann’s ‘Psycho’ in ‘the murder’ where the strings play repeated notes that get more and more agitated that unease the listener and let them know that something is going to happen.

There is a lot of unexpected harmony that appears in the excerpt, for example the string chords at the beginning. The 3rd chord is not what a listener would expect to hear from an orchestral piece and this use of unexpected harmony unsettles the listener and allows them to experience the turbulence of European history. Unexpected harmony is also used in Stravinsky's 'Fire Bird Suite', especially in 'infernal dance' where there is lots of unexpected harmony and chords used that prepare listeners for the Firebirds appearance.

Overall the composer has successfully used many musical elements to represent the turbulence in European history."

Examiner Commentary

This essay covers more of the elements of the music (rhythm, sonority, melody, dynamics, harmony), and generally describes their effect, rather than simply identifying them. An example of this would be "As the strings play a legato melody the brass and wood- wind interject at various points with a big fortissimo chord that is designed to startle the listener and remind them that although the legato melody is calm, the turbulence is still present and this reflects the real-life situation in Europe throughout history". Varied **other music** supports the main points (for example Holst). There is evidence of musical vocabulary (for example moto perpetuo), and the links to the question are less contrived than in essays at a lower level.

However, not all the references to **other music** are successfully handled (for example, Psycho and Magic Flute) and some do not provide a justification to the linked piece.

Summary

There is a mixture here of observations that are identified, described and explained. The best fit is in Level 3 but the issues with wider listening would not place this at the very top mark of the level.

5 New Directions

Listen to Track 5 of the CD.

This piece was composed in the middle of the 20th century and suggests turbulent times in European history.

Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

(20)

Level 4 - 14 Marks

“The composer uses strong dissonances which create a jarring and violent atmosphere. Strong dissonances are also used in Prokofiev’s ‘Piano Sonata No. 6’, where dissonant intervals such as minor 9ths and minor 2nds are used to portray Prokofiev’s anger at the war. The small sections of conjunct, singing melody are interrupted by loud and bashful dissonant chords, suggesting that any nice, beautiful landscapes are demolished by the brutality of war. The short fragmentary melodies sound lost in the huge texture created when the majority of the orchestra play, mirroring how things are often lost or forgotten in chaos and panic of war. A similar effect can be heard in the 1st movement of Shostakovich’s ‘Symphony No. 8’, where a large timpani roll takes over from delicate melody and launches loud dissonant chordial section in the whole orchestra

The prominence of trumpet and low brass is militaristic and heavily associated with armies and conflict. Prokofiev’s incidental music for ‘Lt. Kije’ opens with a monophonic cornet call, this mirrors a call for battle. The repeated bass notes in the low brass are emphatic and mimic the destructive power of conflict. The repeated down bows in the strings is violent and aggressive and is also used in Hermann’s ‘Psycho’ to mirror the knife movements in the murder score. The use of continuous quavers mimics the marching troops and the constant onslaught of war. This is also used in Shostakovich’s ‘Symphony No.11’. The second movement portrays the events of 1905 in Russia and the repeated quavers mimic the marching of troops throughout the city. The large importance of percussion section in the piece emphasise the noises of war, and use of instruments such as timpani and gong mimic the firing of machine guns and the explosion of bombs. There is also a percussion only section in Shostakovich’s ‘Symphony No.11’ which portrays the violence and brutality of conflict.”

Examiner Commentary

Although this essay covers fewer elements and musical observations than the previous example, it is succinct and well-argued. Points are made and mostly explained (as seen in the first two sentences). **Other music** is appropriately chosen and very relevant to the points being made, focusing on (mainly orchestral) music from roughly the same era, and where a larger work is referenced, the particular movement is usually stated. The candidate shows knowledge of **other music** examples, giving a short musical description of the moment in those pieces which creates similarity with the unfamiliar piece, and giving a musical justification to support the point made.

The quality of this response is Level 4, because of the explanation of the musical effects (for example “The repeated down bows in the strings is violent and aggressive and is also used in Hermann’s ‘Psycho’ to mirror the knife movements in the murder score”).

Summary

This response tackles a limited number of musical elements (sonority, harmony, melody, rhythm) but generally does so explaining and justifying the observations made. The work is Level 4 in quality but towards the bottom of the range because the coverage of elements has significant omissions.

5 New Directions

Listen to Track 5 of the CD.

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Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works, wider listening or other music.

(20)

Level 5 – 18 marks

“The extract begins in an agitated section, with the pizzicato strings, irregular phase lengths, the flutes in the upper register making disjunct leaps and the use of staccato articulation making the listener feel on edge. The tonal ambiguity is furthered by the short melodic motif repeated by the woodwind (which were only starting to become prominently used by mid-20th century) followed by the long held pedal note in the lower woodwind adds to the listener’s anticipation, suggesting danger is near. This is similar to Vaughan Williams’s ‘Symphony No.6 in the last movement, where the quiet strings and tonal ambiguity thanks to the chromaticism reflect the unresolved quiet of the end of WWI before the chaos of WWII.

The strings then cut into the silence with sul ponticello accents, playing descending tri-tones - adding to the sense of distress and followed by blaring horns and trumpets with a gradual crescendo, creating a more violent atmosphere and hinting at the turbulence to follow. The descending line accents into sharp violent stabbing chords that repetitively fill out the texture and create a blur of aggressive noise, with irregular placed accents adding to the agitation and violent turbulence suggested - both Stravinsky and Bernard Hermann employ a similar feature, with Hermann using a minor/major 7th chord throughout the film score to create a sudden sense of terror, known infamously as the ‘Hitchcock chord’, and Stravinsky using an E flat dominant seventh in first inversion over an F flat major chord with a doubled 8ve in the ‘Ritual of Abduction’ (the Rite of Spring Ballet) to represent the danger nature is facing, with its repetition legitimising the impending force approaching.

The use of brass in this section cuts through the ominous strings to play a loud blaring pedal note, as if acting like an air-raid warning cutting through the chaotic turbulence of the supporting score - a warning to the listener, just before the music changes to a more bi-tonal section where the stabbing chords are still irregularly present, with the shifting time signatures, but is more gentle, with the addition of the harp and more functional harmony provided by the return of the pizzicato strings - as is the case in the second movement of Vaughan Williams’ Symphony No.6 - where the pizzicato is probably reflective of the fear of the Russian people under Stalin at the height of the purging/disappearances of artists.

Eventually the more gentle harp section thins out over the invading stabbing chords and we are left with a lingering woodwind (major) melody - the calm before the storm, before the strings sweep back in with the descending tri-tonal shape followed by an imitating brass section as the listener slowly falls back into the turbulence and anarchy suggested by the minor triadic outliers of the lower brass and the stabbing chords (which are now no longer in the strings, but upper brass, with

the flutes filling out the top register, with a playful articulation like a bird or a child, caught above the turbulence - similar to Prokofiev's characterisation of the flute as a bird in 'Peter and the Wolf', another piece written during the first purge in Russia despite being written for children.

The climbing of the strings ascending stepwise melody in conjunction with the brass which now overpower the flute (now gone) and all of the lower section, begins to make the piece sound like a turbulent storm, with the return of a few stabbing chords and the fast violins sounding reminiscent to Britten's 'Storm' in Peter Grimes - with the strings playing fast and frantic short melodic motifs as if being drowned out by the brass.

There are a few moments of tutti where all the instruments join in the mass confusion of chords and dissonances, and the slow (in unison) rising chromatic melody is the build up for the final turbulence before the timpani (like the thunder of a storm) and the start of the tam tam confirm the triumphant disarray of the turbulence and chaos."

Examiner Commentary

This essay is dense with musical vocabulary. The coverage of the elements is good; although there is less on texture, sonority has been fully described. The most prominent musical elements of the piece are explained in detail. All musical points are justified throughout. There is generally excellent use of musical vocabulary throughout.

Other music shows variety of repertoire and references the movement of the larger work, placing the music in context. A couple of the other music suggestions offered are not quite as relevant as the others such as the Peter and the Wolf reference.

However, the essay is constructed in a chronological/stream of consciousness way that means that the response at times lacks clarity and becomes repetitive. It is unusual because candidates who tackle this question chronologically are usually less successful in coverage of the elements, and therefore tend to miss important aspects of the music. However, this candidate produced an initial planning page that will have assisted in the writing of the essay.

It should be noted that in response to this question a concluding paragraph that simply repeats the content of the essay is unnecessary.

Summary

The work is of Level 5 quality, owing to coverage of elements and use of musical vocabulary, however examples of other music do not always justify the point being made, placing it in the middle of the level.