



# GCE Examiners' Report

Music

GCE AS and A level

Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## Executive Summary

In the **Performing Units** candidates generally performed to their highest personal standards. There were some excellent performers, but the choice of programme was over-ambitious for some candidates, and some failed to meet the minimum time required. The administration and timetabling of the examinations were excellent in most cases. However, there were instances where examination forms were inaccurately completed by the candidates themselves. It was also noted that the examination rooms should be fit for purpose and the instruments, particularly pianos, should be in good working order.

In the **Composing Units** many candidates produced creative and well-controlled compositions within various Western Classical Tradition styles. There was evidence of balanced and coherent compositions with excellent instrumental variety and interesting thematic material. The best candidates showed a clear understanding of the styles in which they were composing, with effective use of musical resources and elements in their compositions, with clear thought given to dynamics, articulation, texture and harmony. Some issues were noted with missing or incorrect uploads such as missing score pages, candidate numbers, or logs that wouldn't open. Some labelling of files was unclear and confusing.

In the **Appraising Units** candidates demonstrated a deep understanding of various musical styles and genres, with many showing a clear ability to discuss them accurately. There was evidence of good use of the two-column format in the comparison and bullet points in other answers, which made them concise and to the point. The stronger candidates showed strong analytical skills and a good knowledge of specific information related to their chosen areas of study, including references to a number of different pieces. They also demonstrated a clear understanding of harmony, with many able to discuss chords and chord progressions in detail. However, there is room for improvement in areas like pitch and rhythm. Some candidates seemed to struggle with basic orchestral terminology and key musical terms like 'timbre'. There were also instances where candidates did not answer all parts of the question, which affected their overall score. There were issues with candidates not reading questions correctly, leading to incorrect answers, and not fully understanding terms such as 'harmony.'

<b>Areas for improvement</b>	<b>Classroom resources</b>	<b>Brief description of resource</b>
<p>Performances should achieve the minimum required duration.</p> <p>Repertoire should be carefully chosen to match the candidate ability.</p>	<p>NEA Walkthrough – Unit 1 and 4. (WJEC resources page.)</p> <p>Unit 1/4 Performing FAQs. (WJEC GCE music page)</p>	<p>NEA walkthrough for students.</p> <p>Frequently asked questions and guidance.</p>
<p>Focus on the development of ideas in both WCT style compositions and free compositions</p>	<p>NEA Walkthrough – Unit 2 and 5. (WJEC resources page.)</p> <p>CPD: WJEC Music Getting started with Composing January 2020</p> <p>CPD: WJEC GCE Music CPD Teaching Composition December 2021</p> <p>CPD: WJEC AL Music Teaching Composing at A Level (2023-4)</p> <p>(All available via Portal)</p>	<p>NEA walkthrough for students.</p> <p>CPD resources from previous events which include handouts for both teachers and students.</p>
<p>Focus on the full requirements of every question. If references to other works are required, these should be specific. If bar or beat numbers are required then answers without these will not be credited.</p>	<p>Exam walkthrough – Unit 3 and 6. (WJEC resources page)</p> <p>CPD: WJEC AL Music – Improving Attainment at A Level F2F CPD Material Winter 2024.</p> <p>(Available via Portal)</p>	<p>Exam walkthrough for students.</p> <p>CPD resources from a previous event which includes handouts for both teachers and students.</p>

# MUSIC

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1 AND UNIT 4 PERFORMING

#### Overview of the Unit

Once again, a warm welcome was given to all examiners. The majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live. Most examiners reported that cases of nervousness and anxiety amongst candidates were less prevalent this year.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Timing:

There were still some issues with candidates not performing for the minimum time again this year. In an effort to clarify this, the Board decided that the visiting examiners would time **from the start of the candidate's first note to the end of the candidate's final note of each individual piece performed.** Rests, which are written into the work by the composer in order to give the performer a rest, would be included in the time. However, if there were long periods when the candidate was not performing (eg) a DC return to a long introduction, a 2nd verse in a duet which is sung by another singer, or a 32 bar break for solo piano in a jazz piece, or other long interludes when the candidate is not performing, these would not be included in the time.

Centres should carefully check the timings of each piece (allowing for a slightly quicker performance on the day due to nerves) but should not enter these timings on the mark sheet. The visiting examiner will be responsible for timing the individual pieces as they are performed, live. Please note that, when using a Backing Track, the length of the candidate's performance is not necessarily the total length given of the track.

I should also like to mention the following when giving consideration to the candidate's choice of programme:

##### Live accompanist v Backing Track:

Candidates who use backing tracks are not penalised, however in most cases, and if at all possible, the flexibility and support afforded by a live accompanist, is preferable. Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

##### Page turner and audiences:

Do arrange for a page turner if this is necessary or helpful to the candidate. There is no restriction on others, whether members of staff, students or parents and friends, being in the examination room as long as all mobile phones are turned off and they are not affecting the progress of the examination.

### **Unaccompanied pieces:**

Once again, the physical support given by an accompanist is often preferable to a candidate being “out on their own”. Whilst we realise that unaccompanied pieces, in particular, studies, often form part of the repertoire of many public exam boards, these are not always the best choice for this examination. There are exceptions, of course, such as the JS Bach unaccompanied violin or cello works, but these should only be programmed by the most accomplished candidates.

### **Performances given from memory:**

Although this is to be commended, it is not a requirement of this exam. The examiner will allow a restart but not a second attempt. If a breakdown occurs well into the performance, “picking it up” is sometimes an issue when there is no score to refer to.

### **Second instrument or voice:**

As this is not a requirement of the exam, there is no advantage to be gained by performing on more than one instrument or voice. Candidates should only perform on more than one if both are of an equivalent standard.

### **Administration, Paperwork and Preparation:**

In most cases, the administration and timetabling of the examinations was excellent with many centres providing running orders. In the case of longer sessions at colleges and where there are consortium arrangements between centres, please continue to build into your timetables comfort breaks for the examiners. Allowing 15 minutes, possibly 20 minutes for the longer recitals, for each candidate seems ideal in most cases. Please be aware of school bells and tannoy announcements which may impact on your candidate’s performance. If at all possible, please timetable AS and A level examinations separately. Please note that examiners may arrive up to 30 minutes before the examinations are due to commence in order to set up and ensure a prompt start. Thank you for reserving a parking space for the visiting examiner, especially if you aware that parking is an issue at your centre.

Most centres had downloaded the correct forms as required but, in some instances, these had been completed by the candidates themselves. Please double-check these for accuracy. Candidates’ full names, rather than shortened forms or nicknames, should be entered on the forms. In addition, forms need to be completed neatly and legibly. In some instances, examination numbers were missing from the forms when they were given to examiners. Please include the names of composers, in addition to the titles of the pieces to be performed.

Please ensure that the link with an Area of Study has also been completed. At A level, the links are Western Classical Tradition, Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music, Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre, Jazz, and 20th or 21st Century Art Music. On occasions, the links made are rather tenuous.

Examination rooms were, on the whole, fit for purpose. Please ensure that the instruments used, particularly the pianos, are in good working order (including the pedals) and have been recently tuned. Some centres choose to use electronic keyboards. When a candidate is not playing their own instrument eg. a piano, they should be allowed to familiarise themselves with it before the examination.

In cases where the standard of the repertoire is known, it would be helpful if this information was given on the form.

Most candidates provided copies of their music for the examiners. Photocopies of the originals on A4 paper need to be made as the examiners will take these away at the end of the session. Please ensure these are complete and in order, and are correctly labelled with the candidate's name and number. Please ensure that the music provided accurately reflects the performance being given, especially when downloading tab from the internet. In order to achieve the top marks for accuracy, singers must ensure that the vocal melody line has been added to lead sheets which also gives lyrics and chords. Please clearly mark any repeats, cuts or any other modifications on the copies. In addition, ensure that the edge of the music has not been cut off on the photocopy.

There were many excellent performers but some candidates need to give more careful consideration to their choice of programme as some are over-ambitious. Conversely, the occasional candidate performed a lower standard piece (amongst more difficult repertoire) which resulted in a lower overall mark. When using a backing track, please ensure that the track is a true backing track, with the candidate's part omitted, not a complete recording which includes the part the candidate is performing. Backing tracks should not be streamed live from the internet but should be downloaded and checked.

In some instances, extracts from works were performed. It should be noted that the playing of extracts will, in many cases, lead to **a lowering of the level of difficulty** for the work performed.

There is no requirement to perform an ensemble at AS or A level but some candidates choose to include an ensemble piece in their programmes. On occasions, more care is needed in choosing ensemble repertoire in order to ensure that the individual parts are significant and of the required standard. These parts must not be doubled by any other performer. Candidates also need to be aware of the technical challenge afforded by their own compositions if they choose to perform their own piece. Teachers and candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.

Performers need to ensure that they pay attention to the performance directions on the music. Some drummers and guitarists are not aware of the need for contrast, especially of dynamics. **There should be no audible click tracks.** However, if a backing track is used by the candidate, through headphones, it must also be audible to the examiner (without the click).

Some singers lack projection and communication due to over-reliance on their music. If the music or lyrics are needed, it would be preferable for them to be placed on a stand, slightly to the side of the performer. Best practice includes rehearsing the performances “in situ”, giving careful consideration to the position of the candidate in relation to the accompanist and the examiner; try to create the sense of occasion by involving other students and use this as an opportunity to check all the equipment which will be used. Give careful consideration to the position of an audience if present on the day, behind, and not encroaching on, the examiner, especially considering the recording equipment the examiner is using. As per examination guidelines, there should be no mobile phones present in the examination room (other than that being used by the examiner as a timer, which is preset to Airplane Mode.)

In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound-checked in advance allowing the examination to proceed without hold-ups. Take care with the positioning of microphones and consider carefully whether microphones need to be used for an acoustic performance, especially in a small room or classroom.

On the whole, the feedback from the examining team was very positive and I am very grateful to all those involved, including the team based in the office in Cardiff

# MUSIC

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 2 COMPOSING

#### Overview of the Unit

Unit 2 Composing assesses AO2 i.e. **Create and develop musical ideas with technical and expressive control and coherence.**

This comprises developing composing skills to demonstrate the manipulation of musical ideas and the use of musical devices and conventions. It includes broadening musical experience and interests, and developing imagination and creativity, as well as extending the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to communicate effectively as musicians. This unit will also develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of instruments and styles, and of relevant approaches to composing. There will be an opportunity to develop awareness of music technology and its use in the creation and presentation of music. Learners will develop as effective, independent individuals, reflecting on their own music and personal judgements.

Learners will study the musical language, techniques and conventions associated with Western Classical Tradition in order to develop knowledge and understanding of music. Learners will use the musical techniques and conventions of this tradition to compose one piece of music to a chosen brief. The second composition will be based on the learners' own interests, as they set their own free brief.

The assessment is based on the following strands: Creating Musical Ideas – the construction and presentation of ideas which respond to the chosen brief; Developing Musical Ideas - thematic material and use of compositional techniques and a combination of musical features to provide a coherent result; and Technical and Expressive Control of the Musical Elements – including instruments, music technology and communication.

This year, candidates produced creative and well controlled brief compositions within various Western Classical Tradition styles. There was good evidence of well balanced and coherent compositions with excellent instrumental variety and interesting thematic material. Harmonic language was appropriate, showing sensible progressions and phrases concluding with clear cadences. There were fluent and lyrical melodies in many works. In the free compositions, there was a wide range of styles utilised, and it was encouraging to see enthusiasm and musical creativity in many works. Sometimes there was imaginative writing, and much thought had gone into the method of composing and the successful outcome. Some weaknesses were still prevalent, such as very busy textures, use of repetition, disjunct material and unpredictable harmonies.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Administration**

The majority of centres adhered to the correct administration procedures this year, and there were no real problems to report. There was a very small minority of centres which did not upload within the time constraints.

### **Uploading work/Labelling**

Examiners noted a few issues here. There were some missing or incorrect uploads such as missing score pages, candidate numbers, or logs that wouldn't open. On the whole, centres were very quick to remedy the situation and upload the correct versions. It is highly recommended that the candidates and/or teachers carefully check the files before they are uploaded, so that they are the correct ones, and that they open and work.

It is worth noting that some labelling of files was unclear and confusing in some cases, for example, not stating which composition was the brief or the free; it is recommended that centres follow the suggestions given by the WJEC. However, this was extremely rare, and centres should be congratulated on being well organised in this respect.

### **Candidate Logs**

The vast majority of candidate logs, bar one or two written versions, were typed and either submitted electronically or scanned to provide documents of good quality. Almost all candidates and teachers provided the necessary authentication signatures. Generally, the quality of candidate logs varied greatly, with several being extremely vague, scant and brief, not truly reflecting the intention of the compositions. Some written logs appear to have been rushed at the end of the composition process rather than being completed at various points during the year. These provided little insight into the musical features or indeed the planning and refining process. Sufficient detail is always required, particularly when it comes to assessing the Creating Musical Ideas column, which directly refers to the candidate's response to the brief.

On the other hand, there were many detailed efforts and impressive accounts of the process of composition. These demonstrated a clear understanding of the styles in which the candidates were composing. A good example would feature a clear explanation of how the piece linked to the brief, and an outline of the structure, tonality and harmonic devices. Examiners still encountered a full bar-by-bar analysis of the composition, which is not required, especially if a score is included.

Candidates who used quotes of existing pieces were mostly clear about this in their logs, and most mentioned their use of loops, where relevant. It was sometimes unclear, in the absence of a score, how some parts had been created, as this was not noted in the logs. It is important that the teacher and candidate can confirm that they have completed all work on their own; the candidates must also cite any material that is not theirs in the appropriate space in the log.

Some candidates stated suggested advice from teachers and acted upon this advice during their creative process; this is highly commendable. There were quite a few candidates who mentioned musical influences regarding their compositions; it was apparent that much in-depth research had occurred during the process. Examiners constantly comment that influences are always interesting to read and give further insight into how the composition was initiated and created. However, there were far more cases this year of candidates not mentioning influences at all. Once again, musical terminology spelling was a problem for a few candidates; perhaps more checking is required before uploading the final draft.

## **Scores and Recordings**

There were very many high standard conventional scores, fully marked with musical directions, dynamics and tempo markings. Some candidates marked up their printed scores with chordal progressions and musical devices; examiners found this useful. Once again this year, ICT was effectively used to create professional scores. Notation and sequencing programmes used included Sibelius, Muscore, Noteflight, Cubase, Logic, Capella, Flat, BandLab, GarageBand and Note Performer; this latter programme provided an impressive final outcome. Many screenshots were provided this year, and it is important to note here that the specification states that a score or a detailed written description of the composition accompanied by an outline of the melody and chords is required. This did not always happen. However, some detailed lead sheets offered much musical information and were welcomed by examiners. There were some candidates who opted to compose a pop song or similar, but unfortunately did not provide any lyrics or chord symbols; hopefully this was an oversight this year.

Recordings were mainly computer generated and well balanced generally, with quite a few live recordings this year, some of them professionally recorded. There were far more examples this year of an imbalance in some recordings; this would most definitely be another opportunity for the candidate and/or teacher to thoroughly check and correct the levels before uploading the audio. Centres should by now be aware that in this unit, it is the composition that is marked, not the performance.

## **Comments on individual sections**

### **Composition 1 - The Western Classical Tradition - Brief Composition**

It is always worth bearing in mind that in the first composition, examiners are judging and assessing the response to the brief. There was a pleasing sense of strongly focused teaching in many centres, resulting in competent and adept compositions which made musical sense.

**Brief 1: Compose a short piece for either a 3-part or 4-part choir, to be performed in a memorial service. The piece may be accompanied, or unaccompanied. You may wish to use your own text, or may choose some or all of the following: [*Lacrimosa.....*]**

This was chosen by relatively few candidates, with some choosing sections from the *Lacrimosa*, as well as *Kyrie Eleison* and Welsh and English hymns. The influences mentioned included Mozart, Gregorian chant and Mahler, but a few candidates ventured further to mention more contemporary composers outside the WCT style, such as Whitacre. However, there were some good attempts to create suitable homophonic and sometimes polyphonic textures, displaying a mostly secure understanding of harmony. The word setting was not always well handled, and the vocal ranges were sometimes far too high or too low. The melodies were sometimes overly disjunct, and a few efforts were extremely short in length. Some candidates added a piano or organ accompaniment, which added to the fullness of the composition.

**Brief 2: Compose a short piece of instrumental music to be performed in an event organised to celebrate the history of Wales.**

This option was chosen by around a fifth of candidates, with many writing for string quartets or woodwind and brass ensembles. The harp and piano featured in many compositions. Influences included many Baroque and Classical composers, as well as a mention of harp music. This sometimes resulted in veering towards the folk music genre, with some compositions being 'influenced' by Welsh folk tunes and songs. Although some candidates noted a specific event in Welsh history, there were others who ignored this completely, not mentioning any relevant links, and it therefore hindered the examining process at times. The tonality and melodic elements were sometimes modal in flavour within some simplistic efforts. At the other end of the scale, there were some substantial and mature compositions, well within, and capably reflecting, the remit of the brief.

**Brief 3: Compose the first two sections of an accompanied instrumental solo which makes use of a variety of different textures.**

This was a very popular choice by candidates, and it was approached in so many different ways. There was obvious research regarding structure and style, mainly Baroque and Classical, and many candidates succeeded in writing a Minuet and Trio, the first two sections of a piece in Sonata Form, or the A and B sections of a Rondo. There was evidence of fluent melodies, sensible harmonies, well-handled modulations and effective instrumentation. It seemed that some candidates chose to ignore the second part of the brief – using a variety of different textures – writing fully homophonic pieces or employing a monophonic line for much of the work. The more successful outcomes fully realised the textural control and variety, sharing the melodic material with the accompanying instrument, and creating fluency and balance throughout.

**Brief 4: Compose the opening of a piece of music intended to introduce a TV programme about the river Teifi.**

This was by far the most popular choice this year, with some very effective and musical interpretations. Candidates had researched the movement of the river, the rocky outcrops and the wilder waters, mainly by citing Smetana's 'Die Moldau' or Mendelssohn's 'Fingal's Cave' as their inspiration. All these influences were successfully reflected in the music. There were some highly effective, imaginative and programmatic pieces, many of which scored highly. There was effective use of instrumental timbres such as orchestral music, harp, piano and woodwind ensembles, containing some musically shaped melodic ideas. Many pieces were in a Romantic style, and the harmony was appropriate in many cases, exploring a variety of interesting chords and aiming for a clear structure. Many compositions included a unifying theme, and the music often followed the journey of the river. There was also more variation and control of the musical elements within this particular brief. On the other hand, some candidates found it challenging to compose within the WCT style, perhaps because of the programmatic nature of the brief. These compositions were rather limited with a lack of structure and expressive and technical control.

## **Composition 2 – Free Composition**

There was a wide range of chosen styles that made the listening and assessing of the free compositions extremely enjoyable. The detailed logs in many instances noted the personal interests of many candidates, which is to be praised and encouraged. Here are some examples of the extensive genres encountered this year:

- Jazz, Bebop, Soul, Ragtime, R&B, Fusion
- Folk, Welsh music
- Indie, Grunge, Heavy Metal, Hip-Hop, Electronic
- Musical Theatre
- Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionism, Minimalism, Experimental
- Conventional forms - Rondo, Ternary, Theme and Variations, Sonata
- Film music: Sci-fi, Horror, War, Fantasy
- Video game music, Animé
- Programme music
- Choral pieces, Hymns
- Royal Events

Some of the influences mentioned in the logs included film composers, such as Hans Zimmer and John Williams, a variety of rock and pop groups, jazz musicians, and a plethora of WCT composers.

The logs in many cases made for interesting reading and noted much musical detail. Instrumentation included a few orchestral efforts, works for piano, instrumental trios, string and wind quartets, jazz ensembles of varying size and timbres, and rock and pop groupings.

There were some stylistic compositions, showing musical control, instrumental understanding and well managed and exciting ideas. It was satisfying to listen to different styles of creativity without the constraints or boundaries of the first composition. There were instances of compositions with fascinating and captivating melodic lines that displayed a clear development leading to a fully coherent outcome.

In other works, development was most definitely the weak point, as well as repetitive harmonic progressions, unassociated modulations and a generally wayward direction of the music. Also, examiners noted that there were some songs without lyrics or chord symbols, film music which did not note a genre, scene or character; vague or extremely short briefs and logs; disjunct ideas which were underdeveloped, and overuse of primary chords in root position.

### **Creating Musical Ideas**

There was clear evidence of strong and suitably structured melodic lines, which flowed well, displaying control and balance. Most candidates were able to create some effective ideas, and there was an appropriate structure, competently using conventional forms. Some works contained contrasting ideas which were so diverse that they sounded like two different pieces, and this affected overall coherence. There were also instances of a total lack of melody, or being extremely simplistic, and too much repetition and layering.

It was always good to see that teachers had worked hard with their candidates to realise that a melody needed direction and flow, leading to development and expansion.

## **Developing Musical Ideas**

It is always worth reiterating here that in the Western Classical Tradition Brief composition, there is no discrete column for Developing Musical Ideas, but it would be expected to see changes in melodic or harmonic lines, so that the music is moved forward. In the Free compositions, development of musical ideas is assessed, and examiners expect competent growth using a range of compositional devices to further enhance the initial ideas.

Some pieces were so short that there was little scope for development. These pieces were often ones which lacked coherence at times, and the outcome was somewhat inconsistent. There were some repetitive efforts, which were based on the same melodic ideas and/or chords throughout; such pieces would have benefitted from a contrasting section. Once again this year, despite mentioning this many times in previous reports, the extensive use of repeats hampered the development of ideas; repeat marks should be avoided. There were candidates who wrote in contemporary styles, including pop and rock, who often created appropriate ideas, but these ideas were repeated with little development. However, the better efforts displayed a true and valid attempt to vary and develop the accompaniment, including adding instruments, or backing vocals singing layered harmonies. The more successful candidates developed their ideas using a range of devices, including imitation, sequence, augmentation, diminution and many others.

## **Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements**

In the assessment for this column, examiners were looking for effective and secure technical control of the musical elements, communicated effectively with expressive control. Generally, good use was made of music technology by the majority of candidates. Many compositions made effective use of musical resources and elements in their compositions, with clear thought given to dynamics, articulation, texture and harmony. There was competent handling of chords, tonality and harmony, with effective modulations and cadences, as well as interesting and varied chord patterns. Some instrumental writing was very appropriate, well written and idiomatic. There was imaginative writing, and much thought had gone into the method of composing and the successful outcome. There were some stylistic compositions, showing musical control, instrumental understanding and well managed and exciting ideas.

Some pieces were inconsistent and lacked overall coherence; this was often where the chords chosen did not support the melody, or where individual parts did not fit together well. Where the music was less well controlled, it led to dissonance, and some pieces lacked cadence points, and the music suffered from shapeless phrasing. Some parts would have been unplayable, especially piano and brass writing. There were also some very fast pieces which sounded rather frantic and rushed.

### **Summary of Key Points**

- Continue with correct administration; labelling, adding signatures, checking and uploading compositions and logs.
- Always check the Assessment Criteria, taking note of the two-column format in the Brief Compositions, and the three-column format for the Free Compositions.
- Ensure that the Brief for both compositions is completed on the candidate log; examiners assess ‘the response to the brief’ in the first column.
- Research instrumentation, styles and musical techniques in order to employ a variety of elements.
- Always aim for a composition with a beginning, a middle and an end, displaying musical growth and coherence.
- Aim for refining, improving and modifying musical ideas and elements to create a unified composition.

# MUSIC

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 3 APPRAISING

#### Overview of the Unit

This Unit assesses AO3 (demonstrating and applying musical knowledge) and AO4 (using analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music) in their entirety.

There are options within each section of the paper:

Section 1: Rock and Pop / Musical Theatre / Jazz

Section 2: The Development of the Symphony / Religious Choral Music

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### AREA OF STUDY B – ROCK AND POP 1965-1990

#### Question 1: The Way you Make me Feel – Michael Jackson

- Q.1
- (a) Most answered this correctly – candidates did not have to specify major or minor, unlike at A level.
  - (b) Many answered this incorrectly. Candidates need to be clear about the classifications of time signature (simple, compound etc.) in order to be able to answer this sort of question successfully.
  - (c) Responses were very varied with candidates clearly unclear what a syncopation might look or sound like.
  - (d) A number of candidates got the description of the chord correct, but not the naming of the notes. This is a common type of question, for which it is worth being well prepared, practising writing the note names in different types of chords.
  - (e) Few answered this correctly. Candidates need to listen to chords in surrounding bars as well as work out which chords are possible with the melody notes given (with an E and an A, the answer was fairly straightforward to work out).
  - (f) Many answered this with a third rather than a sixth.
  - (g) Few answered this correctly. Candidates need to practice following rock and pop music through with a lead sheet.
  - (h) Many answers achieved 4 or 5 marks but very few the full 7. A concise list of instruments and what they are playing is what is required for marks. Line numbers are important in order to get credit.
  - (i) Most answers were correct.

## Question 2: Main differences between Pop/Rock and Heavy Metal

Many answers showed a deep knowledge of this repertoire and an ability to discuss it accurately, with clear differences explained between styles. Artists that were frequently used for Pop/Rock were Beatles, Queen, Stevie Wonder, Abba. Frequently referred to for the heavy metal were ACDC, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden. Less good answers often strayed onto styles not relevant to the question, and/or did not reference enough songs or performers. Some general answers were clearly prepared in advance but not sufficiently tweaked to address the question. Four specific examples were needed to achieve the upper marking bands.

## AREA OF STUDY C – MUSICAL THEATRE

### Question 3: Sun and Moon – Miss Saigon

- Q.3
- (a) This was generally well answered question, but some did not name the notes correctly. This is a common type of question, for which it is worth being well prepared, practising writing the note names in different types of chords
  - (b) Many answers were incorrect, with C# minor often mentioned.
  - (c) Answers were mostly incorrect.
  - (d) This was mostly correctly answered.
  - (e) This was mostly correctly answered, with the majority choosing the correct cadence.
  - (f) A little bit muddled here – very much a mixed response, with many mentioning instruments, and others writing very few features.
  - (g) Some answers gave the expected response of sequence but many chose to describe instead the antiphony/call and response between the voices. Answers naming instruments or voice types (or vocal techniques such as 'belting') were not credited as these are not devices (i.e. a compositional device used by the composer).
  - (h) Many candidates correctly described the melody. There were not marks available simply for saying it was mostly conjunct or disjunct, largely because neither of these general descriptions are really true.
  - (i) Many candidates answered this incorrectly, suggesting a fourth, fifth or octave. In this style, thirds and sixths are a much more likely answer, which is worth bearing in mind while listening.
  - (j) Most answered this correctly.
  - (k) Many candidates answered this correctly, but the answers were very varied, covering all the possible composers in the specification. Listening to playlists featuring the music of these composers would help students be more familiar with their styles.

#### **Question 4: Book Musicals / Sung-through Musicals**

Candidates largely answered this question well, referencing different styles found in Cole Porter, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and the plethora of styles within Lloyd Webber. Les Mis and Miss Saigon were most often referenced as sung-through examples. Some more unusual examples included numbers from *South Pacific* and *Kiss Me Kate*. Some answers mentioned the musicals in general rather than specific songs, which limits access to higher mark bands. Many candidates used abbreviations, which in the time pressures of this exam, is absolutely acceptable. Some answers were general, stock answers that did not properly address the question, a tactic that should be avoided. Four specific examples were needed to achieve the upper marking bands.

#### **AREA OF STUDY D – JAZZ**

##### **Question 5 – No Room for Squares – Hank Mobley.**

- Q.5
- (a) Most answered this correctly
  - (b) Many candidates did not know the correct vocabulary (trading fours) and left this blank.
  - (c) Many missed a mark here as they omitted the ‘tenor’ from the saxophone. Knowing the different TYPES of saxophone is important for this sort of question.
  - (d) Many candidates showed a good knowledge of jazz features, although some clearly needed to be able to identify and correctly describe the different parts of the drum kit.
  - (e) This was mostly correctly answered, with candidates being able to use the relevant terminology.
  - (f) This was mostly correctly answered.
  - (g) The majority of candidates answered this successfully.
  - (h) Many candidates had a good knowledge of the usual roles played by the rhythm section and the correct vocabulary (e.g. walking bass and the piano comping) in order to describe it, which is what was needed to get the marks.
  - (i) Many candidates got this right.
  - (j) A lot of correct answers, but some candidates were a long way out with the earliest answering being 1943, and the latest 1982, even though the Jazz period covered by this Area of Study ends in 1965.

##### **Question 6 – Big Band Jazz / Bebop**

There were many good responses, showing a good understanding of the styles, with diverse and interesting examples offered. Candidates need to discuss the two styles equally with some spending much more time on the first style. Four specific examples were needed to achieve the upper marking bands.

## AREA OF STUDY A – WESTERN CLASSICAL TRADITION

### Question 7 – Clarinet Quintet

- Q.7 (a) Many candidates left this blank. Knowledge of basic orchestral terminology is important in order to be able access this type of question.
- (b) Candidates largely showed the required level of analytical skills to answer this quite well.
- (c) This was well answered, with only a few leaving it blank.
- (d) Most candidates performed much better on rhythm than pitch, with the tie in bar 12 apparently confusing many. Only very few added the G# and D# accidentals. Too many answers were left blank – it is a shame not to attempt this question.
- (e) Candidates mostly answered this question correctly.

## THE SYMPHONY

### Question 8 – Comparison

Over the last few years, candidates have increasingly made good use of the two-column format and the opportunity to write in bullet points. It was not a good use of time to write in prose, continually writing 'In Extract 1, there is....' etc. Candidates should also be careful not simply to list general features of earlier and later symphonies in the hope that they will apply to the extract. A good answer requires careful listening, although a knowledge of likely features obviously helps. Another pitfall to avoid is spending too much time on general historical information.

### Question 9 – Haydn Symphony No. 103 in E flat – ‘Drum Roll’

- Q.9 (a) Most got London, but few gave the correct answer of King’s Theatre. A range of more and less plausible responses included Hampton Court, Drury Lane, the Ritz, Wembley and the O2.
- (b) Many did not answer this well and a surprising number left it blank. Candidates need to be clear that ‘harmony’ means chords and chord progressions and a detailed knowledge of the score is required.
- (c) The term ‘timbre’ seemed to confuse many candidates. It is important to revise key terms, their meanings and the sort of responses that will be relevant.
- (d) Many answered this correctly.
- (e) This was mostly answered correctly, but ‘Melodic augmented 2<sup>nd</sup>’ was the least often attempted. Candidates should know what a melodic interval is and be able to work out specific intervals.
- (f) This was generally answered well.
- (g) Most candidates knew the answer to this question.
- (h) Some candidates clearly did not turn the page to answer this question – important basic exam technique. It is important clearly to state how the music is different in the SECOND of the two sections in order to gain the marks.

## RELIGIOUS CHORAL MUSIC

### Question 10 – Comparison

Over the last few years, candidates have increasingly made good use of the two-column format and the opportunity to write in bullet points. It was not a good use of time to write in prose, continually writing 'In Extract 1, there is....' etc. Candidates should be careful not simply to list general features of earlier and later choral works in the hope that they will apply to the extract. There were some very full comparisons including many stylistic features, which allowed candidates to achieve the top bands.

### Question 11 – Mozart Requiem

- Q.11 (a) This was mostly answered correctly, with many noting Vienna (and one Vietnam). A large number of candidates suggested 1791 rather than 1793.
- (b) Many candidates correctly located at least some of these features. Be sure to include beat numbers where this is needed (i.e. it is required for the interval but not so much the counter melody).
- (c) The question on key was answered inconsistently, but many were correct on the cadence.
- (d) Candidates need to be clear that 'harmony' means chords and chord progressions and a detailed knowledge of the score is required. Many answers referred to features of texture, with monophonic and homophonic appearing frequently.
- (e) This is a standard Italian term but not generally answered correctly.
- (f) Candidates mostly answered this correctly.
- (g) Some candidates seemed confused by the term 'timbre'. It is important to be comfortable with technical terms, but the majority noted the solo soprano and the strings only, as well as the differences in dynamics.
- (h) Many candidates answered this question well although not all made a clear link between the music and the meaning of the words.

# MUSIC

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 5

#### Overview of the Unit

Unit 5 Composing assesses AO2 i.e. **Create and develop musical ideas with technical and expressive control and coherence.** This comprises developing composing skills to demonstrate the manipulation of musical ideas and the use of musical devices and conventions. It includes broadening musical experience and interests, and developing imagination and creativity, as well as extending the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to communicate effectively as musicians. This unit will also develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of instruments and styles, and of relevant approaches to composing. There will be an opportunity to develop awareness of music technology and its use in the creation and presentation of music. Learners will develop as effective, independent individuals, reflecting on their own music and personal judgements.

Learners will study the musical language, techniques and conventions associated with Western Classical Tradition in order to develop knowledge and understanding of music. Learners will use the musical techniques and conventions of this tradition to compose one piece of music to a chosen brief. The second composition will be based on the learners' own interests, as they set their own free brief.

The assessment is based on the following strands: Creating Musical Ideas – the construction and presentation of ideas which respond to the chosen brief; Developing Musical Ideas - thematic material and use of compositional techniques and a combination of musical features to provide a coherent result; and Technical and Expressive Control of the Musical Elements – including instruments, music technology and communication.

This year, candidates composed works which were organised, effective, mature and sophisticated, displaying much thoughtful control in the brief compositions in defined styles which were well within the Western Classical Tradition. There was excellent control of several different musical elements, varying textures, sensible cadences, and very fitting idiomatic writing. The free compositions showed impressive development of original ideas, skilful use of instrumental timbres and idiomatic writing throughout. Centres can be congratulated in developing clearly an understanding of harmony, melody, rhythm, structure and texture, all of which had a positive impact on candidates' musical creativity. The outcomes were controlled, adventurous and effective. Some weaknesses included some inconsistent outcomes, showing much repetition of musical material, a lack of contrast, simplistic melodies, partial structures, and a general lack of articulation, dynamics and techniques which would have enhanced the overall composition. Some works were overlong and lacked variety or coherence. It was noticeable this year that there was a lack of information on some logs regarding screenshots and lead sheets, with some inappropriate detail noted in a minority of compositions.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Administration**

There were no major problems with most centres, apart from a few missing authentication signatures, missing scores and recordings, unclear labelling and no briefs mentioned. Most of these were promptly replaced on request. It is worth reiterating that both teacher and candidate must confirm that the creative work is solely that of the candidate, and that any work not composed by the candidate must be acknowledged in the appropriate space in the log.

### **Uploading work/Labelling**

Examiners mentioned a few issues this year, as noted above. It is recommended that the candidates and/or teachers carefully check the files before they are uploaded, so that they are the correct and complete ones, and that they open and work.

### **Candidate Logs**

Generally, the quality of candidate logs varied greatly. There was a great deal of detail in many logs, demonstrating a clear understanding of the chosen styles or genres and noting the use of devices in the compositions. Examiners noted that it was interesting to read about the process of composing in many logs. The candidates' written comments certainly gave an insight into the compositional process, and how they created, developed and moved their composition forward. Many candidates gave a detailed and chronological account of their processes, all of which clearly supported the musical outcome.

There were other logs which were insufficiently detailed. There were missing descriptions in some sections in the log, such as the output or who was performing, and others did not clarify which software was used. Even though the log is not assessed, and spelling and grammar are not directly marked, it is always good practice to check both before uploading the final account.

A whole range of influences were mentioned in the logs, from many Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern composers, as well as more contemporary composers such as Einaudi and Whitacre, jazz and film composers and many rock and pop singers and groups. As in AS, there were many cases of not mentioning influences at all.

### **Scores and Recordings**

Most candidates used conventional notation to create their scores which were of excellent quality and high standard. There were also some well written and logical lead sheets this year where candidates had incorporated well annotated screenshots. However, there were a few examples of sole screenshots, omitting any annotation, lyrics, chord symbols and so forth; these were rather unhelpful to examiners. The well annotated screenshots with much detail and information aided the assessment process very well indeed.

ICT was effectively used to create professional scores. Notation and sequencing programmes used included Sibelius, Musescore, Capella, Flat, BandLab, GarageBand and Note Performer.

Recordings were mainly computer generated and well balanced generally, but there were quite a few live recordings this year, some of them professionally recorded. As in AS, it would be very welcome if centres could carefully check the recordings before uploading; there were instances this year where some instruments or vocal lines were rather quiet compared to other parts. There were also examples of interference or muffled sounds in very few cases.

## **Comments on individual sections**

### **Composition 1 - The Western Classical Tradition - Brief Composition**

Please be aware that in this first composition, examiners are judging and assessing the response to the brief. Generally, there were some excellent interpretations of Western Classical Tradition styles, showing a musical understanding of elements and techniques, with successful outcomes in many compositions. On the other hand, there were some compositions which were not related to Baroque, Classical or Romantic styles of composing, with no relevance to a convincing and controlled piece. In these works, structure was lacking, harmony was weak, and melody was repetitive, all displaying a limited understanding of the chosen style.

#### **Brief 1: Compose a short song for solo voice and accompaniment to be performed in a concert in Bangor University. You may choose appropriate lyrics or write your own.**

There were not many examples of this brief, and the main influences were lieder or lyrics in Welsh. There were some lyrical attempts, following the conventions of Western Classical Tradition, but sometimes the style was not always successfully reflected. Melodic ideas were sometimes musically shaped, and harmony worked well in the more successful pieces. Word setting left much to be desired in many efforts, and the accompaniments for piano, or organ in some cases, tended to be repetitive or followed the vocal line too closely. There were comments from examiners that some of the accompaniments were bordering on being more contemporary in style.

#### **Brief 2: Compose a short movement for a suite to be performed by a small instrumental ensemble which features textural contrast and harmonic sequences (for example, cycle of fifths).**

This was a far more popular choice of brief, and there were some excellent examples where candidates had researched the dances of the suite and had thoughtfully considered suitable harmonic and melodic progressions and contrasting textures. There were other works which made no effort to replicate a suite dance, with the candidates merely composing an instrumental ensemble piece with no reference at all to a suite movement.

The most popular suite options were the gavotte, sarabande, gigue, allemande and minuet. Some well-structured compositions complied well with the associated style of the chosen movement. Chosen instrumental ensembles included many string quartets, as well as brass or woodwind ensembles. Those who chose to feature textural contrasts wrote two contrasting dances, such as gigue and sarabande, or composed canonic sections. There were missed opportunities here to create textural variety as sometimes the melody was always in one instrument, instead of sharing with other instruments.

Harmonic sequences were less utilised, with a minority aiming to write a cycle of fifths, but not always wholly successfully. If a brief mentions devices, then the candidate should be aware that these need to be featured; and 'featuring' may mean appearing more than once within a composition. The weaker harmonic efforts tended to be in the Baroque style, with much use of parallel movement, and some basic and repetitive chord progressions. There were instances of some modal flavours where a major dominant chord was not utilised in perfect or imperfect cadences.

**Brief 3: Compose the opening section(s) of a prelude to set the scene for a forthcoming production of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.**

This was another popular option by candidates, and responses varied greatly in style and standard. Most candidates understood the purpose of a prelude, and wrote suitably programmatic-style compositions, mainly reflecting the ideas of the storm or the relationship between the characters, including Prospero, Miranda, Ariel or Caliban. As with any descriptive and programmatic efforts, the Western Classical Tradition style was sometimes overlooked, resulting in an inconsistent and too 'modern' or 'cinematic' outcome, and losing sight of the necessary features of pre-twentieth century style. Boundaries of harmony and structure were frequently pushed to the limits, resulting in an inconsistent outcome. Instrumental timbres were sometimes clearly used to evoke the mood and drama, and in the better examples, there was a sophisticated control of harmony, melody and instrumentation.

**Brief 4: Compose the opening section(s) of a vocal work for SATB, intended for performance in the North Wales Choir Festival. The work may be accompanied or unaccompanied. You may write your own words or choose appropriate words for your piece.**

Very few candidates chose this brief, and there were some appropriate and coherent outcomes. Those candidates who chose this option tended to have an interest in choral music and some experience of singing. Word setting was sometimes well executed, and use of melody and harmony was mostly fluent. There was also evidence of good technical and expressive control of the musical elements, and an attempt had been made to create interesting parts for the singers. Candidates did not always understand vocal ranges, with extremely high soprano lines at times. The accompaniment writing was sometimes not as strong as the vocal writing, but it often provided contrast and variety. The least successful compositions were often harmonically unstable without a clear melodic line to propel the music forwards.

**Composition 2 – Free Composition**

As in AS, there was a wide range of chosen styles in the free compositions. It is always encouraging to see that candidates follow their own musical interests, instead of relying on constrictive class tasks, which would not always get the best from the candidates. It was clear here that there was freedom for candidates to compose in any style or genre.

In the logs, candidates should be made aware that the words 'Free composition' does not constitute a brief; a description is required of what the candidate aims to achieve within the free composition. Examiners assess the response to the brief in the first column of the assessment criteria. Here are a few examples of the genres encountered this year:

- Jazz, Swing, Bebop, Soul, Ragtime, R&B, Fusion
- Pop, Rock, Indie, Heavy Metal, Hip-Hop, Electronic, 80s music
- Welsh – pop songs, choral music
- Musical Theatre
- Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionism
- Conventional forms - Rondo, Ternary, Sonata
- Film music: Sci-fi, Horror, Romantic
- Video game music
- Programme music

Influences mentioned in the logs included film composers, many rock and pop groups, a variety of WCT composers, and contemporary music. There were a few examples of Lo-fi and electronic dance music, and in most cases, these showed insufficient content or development or variety to score highly. The musical ideas tended to be short and limited and were not particularly complex in terms of rhythm or texture.

Instrumentation included a few orchestral pieces, works for piano, various instrumental combinations as trios and quartets, piano solos, jazz ensembles of varying size and timbres, and rock and pop ensembles.

There were some very stylistic efforts, with musical melodic lines, interesting and varied accompaniments, much textural variety and firm evidence of development. These clearly met the composing criteria in an effective and sophisticated way. At the other end of the scale, there was insufficient or brief content, a distinct lack of development, simplistic or triadic harmony, and partial structural unity. There were still examples of film music without a storyline, song without lyrics and/or chord symbols, and pieces that seemed unfinished or incomplete.

### **Creating Musical Ideas**

There were many examples of compositions which gave a sophisticated response to the chosen briefs. Ideas were highly effective and fully structured, with some very creative and characterful ideas. A good understanding of effective and sometimes adventurous harmony and cadences was shown, and all these elements impacted on candidates being able to access the higher band marks. There was also some very idiomatic writing in a variety of styles, with strong melodic ideas within the chosen genre. Some candidates displayed high levels of creativity and musical maturity and wrote with finesse. Sometimes there were overlong compositions, over eight minutes in one case, relying too much on repetition rather than creating enough thematic material.

### **Developing Musical Ideas**

Teachers should be aware that in the WCT Brief composition, there is no discrete column for Developing Musical Ideas, but it would be expected to see changes in melodic or harmonic lines, so that the music is moved forward. In the Free compositions, development of musical ideas is assessed, and examiners expect competent growth using a range of compositional devices to further the initial ideas.

There was good development of ideas in evidence, with a sophisticated use of a wide range of compositional techniques by some candidates, including motivic and thematic development, sequence, imitation, augmentation, diminution, inversion, modulations and fugal ideas. The more successful outcomes were ones where candidates had developed and varied their initial ideas, often adding complex layers to build texture.

The less successful works were short or repetitive, often using the same chords and accompaniment patterns throughout with little variety or development. These would have lacked clear organisation, often being inconsistent and lacking in coherence. There were occasions where the initial musical ideas were strong, but there was a lack of any real degree of development. Conversely, there were also cases where the musical ideas were rather weak but where a good effort was made to develop the material.

Some pieces were very short, thus impacting the candidates' ability to demonstrate development. If candidates did not gain marks in the higher bands, it was due to a lack of further creative development of initial ideas.

## **Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements**

In the assessment for this column, examiners were looking for effective and secure technical control of the musical elements, communicated effectively with expressive control. Generally, good use was made of music technology by the majority of candidates.

Some of the instrumental writing was highly effective, and even sophisticated from the more successful candidates, who demonstrated a clear and skilful command of instrumental timbres to create colour and mood. This was particularly strong in programmatic compositions, but also in pieces for solo instrument and accompaniment.

The higher scoring candidates made a sophisticated use of a variety of elements; clear thought had been given to dynamics and articulation, with real attention to detail. The control of harmony in some compositions was impressive.

Those compositions which scored in Band 3 were appropriate, rather than sophisticated or highly effective, particularly regarding use of resources and elements. There were also pieces which were inconsistent or lacking coherence, and candidates here demonstrated a lack of musical understanding. There was sometimes a lack of overall clarity here, and some candidates struggled to create compositions appropriate to their chosen style. Again, however, some candidates struggled to create harmony appropriate to their chosen style.

### **Summary of Key Points**

- Continue with correct administration; labelling, adding signatures, checking and uploading compositions and logs.
- Always check the Assessment Criteria, taking note of the two-column format in the Brief Compositions, and the three-column format for the Free Compositions.
- Ensure that the Brief for both compositions is completed on the candidate log; examiners assess ‘the response to the chosen brief’ in the first column.
- Research instrumentation and musical techniques in order to employ a variety of elements.
- Always aim for a composition with a beginning, a middle and an end, displaying musical growth and coherence.
- Aim for refining, improving and modifying musical ideas and elements to create a unified composition.

**MUSIC**  
**GCE**  
**Summer 2024**  
**UNIT 6 APPRAISING**

**Overview of the Unit**

This Unit assesses AO3 (demonstrating and applying musical knowledge) and AO4 (using analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music) in their entirety.

There are options within each section of the paper, with the more popular choices underlined:

Section 1: Impressionism / Chamber Music in Wales

Section 2: Popular Music in Wales / American Musical Theatre / Jazz Legends

Section 3: The Development of the Symphony / Religious Choral Music

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**AREA OF STUDY F**

**STRAND 1 - IMPRESSIONISM**

This was the more popular of the two first strands from Area of Study F.

**Question 1: Debussy – Reflets Dans L'eau**

- Q.1 (a) Many people chose 'Whole tone' as an answer here, very few spotted the syncopation and gradual rise in pitch through the section. Many pupils wrote 'dissonant', which was not accepted as an answer.
- (b) Very few candidates knew this term, and many left it blank, it would be worth centres looking at Debussy's French instructions as in addition to 'en dehors', 'en animant' was credited as an answer to question (a) which few candidates chose.
- (c) Some candidates noted the use of Motif B, the octave doubling and using the top of the texture, very few commented on the use of diminution. Once again there were some blanks here.
- (d) Even with the two possible sets of bar numbers, there were so many wrong answers here. This type of question always seems to encounter a potluck approach, even with the score in front of the candidates! Centres should be aware that if a pedal point is asked for this would normally indicate that more than one bar is needed in the response.

- (e) A fair attempt here, with the majority gaining one if not the whole two marks.
- (f) The better candidates wrote well, with an honest effort to compare both pieces, as well as concentrating on use of piano and its writing. Most made a concerted effort to compare both pieces, and there were some very good valid statements. The weaker candidates hardly wrote anything at all, or concentrated on anything else except use of the piano. There were some examples of only writing on one piece, and not mentioning the other at all.

## **STRAND 2 – CHAMBER MUSIC IN WALES**

This was the less popular of the two areas chosen by centres.

### **Question 2: Plowman – Night Dance No. 2**

- Q.2
- (a) Some candidates missed out the flute altogether, concentrating on general comments such as rhythmic interest. The better candidates noted the octave repeat, and one or two mentioned the blue notes.
  - (b) Harmony again was not well answered; some candidates wrote dissonant or chromatic and hoped for the best. Perhaps it should be mentioned that terms such as harmony, tonality, timbre etc should be well and truly learnt in the classroom!
  - (c) Most candidates got this correct.
  - (d) Many candidates still don't read the question correctly and choose bar numbers outside of the range given, some element of pot luck here.
  - (e) There were some good efforts here, particularly in the differences section.
  - (f) The same difficulties arose here as in the Impressionism ten marks question – lack of knowledge on both pieces, a big effort on the Plowman and less on the Wilson-Dixon, or vice versa. The better candidates offered full accounts of the use of piano and kept to the point.

### **STRAND 3 – POPULAR MUSIC IN WALES**

This was the second most popular strand chosen this year

#### **Question 3: Pili Pala – Kizzy Crawford**

- Q.3
- (a) This was well answered, with many noting relevant statements to get the full two marks.
  - (b) Surprisingly well done here. I think candidates now expect a chords question and answer accordingly. The only fault was missing out the G#.
  - (c) Most candidates were able to state features in one or two instruments, although some still mentioned percussion! Most candidates got the full two marks here.
  - (d) The most popular answer here was the melismatic treatment, and some mentioned the low vocal register also.
  - (e) Some poor answers here! Some candidates drew a blank, and there were very many wrong answers given here, candidates don't always understand the meaning of 'harmony'.
  - (f) This structure question was well answered, with the majority gaining full marks here.

#### **Question 4: Kevin Carter – Manic Street Preachers**

There were some very credible answers here, and it was obvious that many candidates knew other MSP songs very well. There was an attempt to answer on all three features, with the majority concentrating on the structure. One or two candidates wrote very well on the MSP style, citing many relevant examples and songs in the process. There were some mature and musical accounts here.

## STRAND 4 – AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE

This was the most popular choice this year,

### Question 5: - Meadowlark - Schwartz

- Q.5
- (a) Harmony again! – this led to some irrelevant answers. The most popular answers were the dissonance and chromatic nature.
  - (b) Parlando or recitative was mentioned regarding the vocal melody, and the lower string ostinato pattern was the most popular in the instrumental accompaniment.
  - (c) The very few who didn't gain a mark here were those who mentioned the harp, celesta or just plain old piano!
  - (d) The main answers here were the restricted range and the more lyrical second section.
  - (e) Another good attempt here, with many gaining the mark. There were only very few blanks here.
  - (f) Candidates didn't fare well here, as some mentioned the word, but not explaining how it was treated in the music! The most common answer was the flute on 'meadowlark'.
  - (g) Structure was again well answered, with very many gaining the full two marks here.

### **Question 6: Someone is Waiting – Sondheim**

This was well answered on the whole. Obviously, some centres had researched Stephen Sondheim really well, and the other relevant songs mentioned were from a wide range of musicals, such as *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. The descriptions of the structure were well answered, as well as interesting features of the harmony. There were some genuine insights into Sondheim's style, written in a logical and clear manner, as well as realistic comparisons with other Sondheim songs. The weaker candidates wrote much less and failed to mention other suitable songs, some candidates also mentioned works other than those by Sondheim which were irrelevant.

### **STRAND 5 – JAZZ LEGENDS**

This was the least chosen option this year.

### **Question 7: Caravan – Ella Fitzgerald**

- Q.7
- (a) A good attempt here, with some gaining the full marks.
  - (b) This was not so well done, with rather mixed-up facts overall.
  - (c) An excellent response here, as expected with jazz candidates!
  - (d) This was also answered well.
  - (e) This was very well answered – there were many options on the marking scheme, and most gained the full two marks here. Walking bass and piano comping were popular correct answers.
  - (f) Mixed answers here, despite it being a popular form used in Jazz.

### **Question 8: The Maids of Cadiz – Miles Davis**

There were some good high scoring answers here, obviously well researched as regards Miles Davis generally. The majority knew about Miles Davis' style amid much contextual knowledge. Relevant Davis works were mentioned by many, with convincing description in the better efforts. The main flaw was not mentioning all the instruments, and therefore not gaining access to the top band of marks. Some candidates chose pieces by Miles that were not similar in style.

## AREA OF STUDY E: THE WESTERN CLASSICAL TRADITION

### Question 9: Cello Sonata - Brahms

A range of marks on this question, including many who achieved full marks. Pupils seemed un-phased by the change of clef.

- Q.9 (a) The two errors were only marked correct in very few scripts, although the first error (rhythm) was the better answered. Some circled the correct location but failed to follow through.
- (b) The missing pitch and rhythm started well, with most gaining marks in the first and second bars but then degenerating into either complete omission or far too high a pitch. The triplet crotchets were sometimes written as triplet quavers. Many candidates concentrated on the rhythm only.
- (c) This was very a fairly good attempt to recognise the diminished seventh, although there were answers that included major, minor and dominant.

## THE SYMPHONY

### Question 10 – Symphony No 1 Brahms – Movt 4

- Q.10 (a) Irregular answers here, an element of guesswork definitely apparent.
- (b) The comparison, even though this should be expected by now, was not well answered on the whole. Not many gained the full four marks here. However, there was enough detail in the mark scheme to ensure at least three of the four marks. Many mentioned far more than four statements to gain the full marks.
- (c) This question was not so well answered. Many failed to mention the function of the bars, and 'compositional devices' were muddled in some accounts. The better candidates wrote very many statements, all assuring full marks here.
- (d) Conversely, this was very well answered, with many markworthy statements. There were very many full marks here. One thing that struck me was that some had mentioned 'dotted rhythms' where they actually meant 'staccato'. This happened in more than one centre. Also, many candidates wrote about the repeated perfect cadences at the end, rather than plagal cadences.

### Question 11 – Use of harmony and tonality 1830-1910

This essay was well done by many candidates, with many relevant symphonies mentioned, and a good account on the whole of harmony and tonality. The usual composers mentioned were Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Mahler, and there were also some refreshing examples mentioned, such as Danse Macabre, Franck Symphony No.1, Scheherazade and Don Juan. There were musical and logical accounts by many. There were one or two outstanding essays this year – a pleasure and joy to read such mature and musical efforts.

Unfortunately, as per usual, there were some really brief or off-track answers and mixed-up facts.

## RELIGIOUS CHORAL MUSIC

### Question 12 – Verdi Requiem – Dies Irae

There were so many candidates who gained the full fifteen marks here – very pleasing to see this.

- Q.12 (a) This was an excellent set of answers, with many relevant and suitable statements reflecting the text. Many gave more than five apt answers, and many candidates scored well here.
- (b) The better candidates did well here, and wrote copiously on the music, comparing both sections. Again this was a possible full marks for many candidates.
- (c) This was also well answered, with the majority gaining full marks. There were some really good descriptions, and candidates seem to favour the detailed analysis type of question. Some candidates however chose to ignore the function part of the question.
- (d) A poor effort here overall. There were very many wrong answers.

### Question 13 – the ways voices are used in religious choral music.

The **Use of Voices** question was again difficult, though there was a wide range of named examples. Many candidates started appropriately with one or all of the Beethoven examples (Mass in C, Missa Solemnis and Christ on the Mount of Olives) and the influence of Opera (Berlioz, Rossini and Verdi) was explored. The Caecilian Movement was known to many. The difficulty was to **describe the different ways in which voices are used**. A few managed this admirably.

## Supporting you

### Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 22404300

Email: [Music@wjec.co.uk](mailto:Music@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/music-as-a-level/?sub\\_nav\\_level=course-materials#tab\\_resources](https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/music-as-a-level/?sub_nav_level=course-materials#tab_resources)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

### CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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