

2019 VCE Music Performance written examination report

General comments

Most students attempted all questions. The overall standard was reasonable.

The higher-scoring responses in Section A demonstrated an understanding of the elements of music and appropriate terminology. Regular practice in listening to works and writing about them is vital to develop the listening skills required.

It is important for students to become accustomed to writing concisely and clearly. Students may use dot points to ensure that all the points they wish to make are covered in their written response. Students should be wary of simply repeating the question as the response to enable them to explore their ideas. Appropriate music terminology is also required.

Many students used a sharp pencil for Sections B and C, which is advisable. Students are advised to check that there is no ambiguity in the pitch when writing notes on the staff. Students should also check that accidentals are written level with the note to which they relate, so there is no ambiguity about the pitch. Accidentals should be written before the relevant note.

Students are advised to read the questions carefully. Many students highlighted key terms of the questions.

When undertaking transcription questions, students are advised to complete their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space provided for the answer.

Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music sequencer, especially to program rhythms, chords and chord progressions for aural practice. Class singing of melodies and performance of rhythms regularly is highly recommended to develop an understanding of the connection between the sound and the musical notation.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Listening and interpretation

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	9	16	25	26	17	7	3.5

Students were asked to describe how the performers used phrasing and improvisation / embellishment / ornamentation to achieve expressive outcomes. The question required students to describe the use of the two elements of music.

Many responses struggled with the concept of phrasing. Often the treatment of phrasing can create expressive outcomes. In this excerpt the singer's unpredictable, unequal length of phrases in the verse created tension, which was resolved in the chorus with more regular phrasing.

Improvisation / embellishment / ornamentation was handled well. The most successful responses mentioned the improvisatory, chatty style of the verse and the vibrato at the ends of phrases. The dropping of pitch on the word 'talk' created a speaking effect. The singer used scat-style ornamentation in the chorus. The higher-scoring responses were able to link these concepts to the expressive outcomes, noting the differences between the verse and the chorus, and they were able to describe accurately what types of embellishment were used, stating what the expressive outcome was.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	10	39	37	13	2.5

This question required students to describe how the performers created and sustained mood and character in this excerpt. Students should avoid merely repeating the points made in Question 1a.

This was a broader question that enabled students to focus on a range of elements. Key to answering this question was the ability to link what the performers did to create and sustain the mood and character. Responses had to identify the mood and character. The highest-scoring responses referred to both the singer and the band and noted how the intensity grew throughout the excerpt. Some high-level responses focused on the use of guitar and bass riffs (repetition). that gave a relentless feel, as the double-time feel from the drums gave momentum. The singer's conversational style in the verse and the emphasis on the ending consonants created tension. The character relaxed momentarily at the pre-chorus at the words 'there's nothing I can do' and the band stopped the repetitive riffs, instead playing sustained chords. At the chorus, there was a full sound by the singer on the words 'blah, blah' with syncopated funk guitar and wah-pedal adding to the excitement.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	4	9	13	17	18	19	12	8	4.8

This question required students to discuss how the performers used tone colour and articulation to achieve expressive outcomes. It was necessary to address both aspects of treatment of tone colour and articulation.

The discussion of tone colour required students to be able to describe the unique tone colour of the instruments to create the expressive outcome. The highest-scoring responses highlighted the

contrasting tone colours throughout the excerpt and described how they created the playful character. The harp began and created a canvas on which other colours were laid down: the xylophone's wooden sound, the piano in its high range creating a tinkling effect, and the airy sound of the flutes. The strings punctuated with a pizzicato accompaniment before entering with their own pattern played arco, which was bright in tone. The instrumental colours did not blend and were juxtaposed to create maximum contrast.

The discussion of articulation required students to identify how the players play the notes – how they begin, how they end and how they are connected to the surrounding notes. Responses needed to specifically link them to the expressive effects. The higher-level responses were able to discuss some of the following points: The harp began with an ostinato with the plucking of strings creating a feeling of delicacy. The xylophone picked up the ostinato with detached articulation. The detached articulation of the piano along with the tonguing on every note of the flutes added to the playfulness. The strings used both pizzicato in the accompanying role, with *détaché* bowing in the ostinato and slurred articulation in the second half of the melodic phrase. The detached style of articulation through most of the instruments created momentum and a playful expressive outcome.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	0	1	2	5	8	8	12	13	15	11	12	7	5	7.4

In their responses to this question, students had to refer to three of the following: articulation, balance of music lines, tone colour and tempo. They had to compare the ways in which the two interpretations created different expressive outcomes through these elements of music.

Responses presented comparisons in a range of formats. Some listed points evident in each interpretation. Others used a two-column format, aligning the descriptions of the specific features of each interpretation. The highest-scoring responses made a clear comparison between the two interpretations, linking the treatment of the three elements of music to the expressive outcomes.

Students are reminded to check the terminology associated with each of the elements of music to develop a clear understanding of what the elements of music mean.

The following are examples of possible relevant points.

Articulation

- Gnarl's Barkley: The short, sharp articulation of the opening bass and drums creates drive and energy. The bass is plucked in a mid to high register. The main vocalist's diction is clear and although some vowels are widened ('crazaah'), the phrases are quite clipped, leaving space between them. Sung speech on certain words ('ha, ha, ha' and 'well') creates a conversational feel. Bowed strings and sustained vocal harmonies, along with the heavy use of the snare drum, add to the intensity in the chorus.
- Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox: By contrast, this begins with sustained chords in the keyboard (vibraphone) setting up a relaxed feel. The singer's articulation is more relaxed with emphasis on the vowels and embellished with slides and some melisma. This, along with the very legato articulation, creates a relaxed feel. At the words 'crazy', a lighter feel is created by the introduction of the clarinet with its long breathy notes, the high register piano and brushes on the drums.

Balance of music lines

- Gnarl's Barkley: This performance is clearly focused on the voice and it is clear and forward in the mix. Backing vocals gently fill space with 'ooh'. In the chorus, when the strings are added, the texture is thicker but the voice is never overpowered. The bass is more aggressive and is

used as the time keeper, forward of the drums. The drums, along with heavy snare, contribute to the overall increase of sound and energy but the voice remains at the foreground.

- Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox: This interpretation is also focused on the opening vocalist and the accompaniment is minimal, allowing her to create an intimate, gentle and almost improvisatory feel. In the chorus, when the song moves to a stricter time, the clarinet, drums and acoustic piano are added, but never crowd the singers as they decorate the spaces between phrases. The male vocalist is harsher in style and his solo adds more energy. The two singers are balanced in spite of their different tonal colours in the second chorus. This maintains the relaxed feel of the song.

Tone colour

- Gnarlz Barkley: This song uses a male voice in a mid-high range. Vibrato warms the tone, and falsetto at high range adds intensity, together with some spoken words. The bass in its higher range in the verses adds to the intensity. The countermelody of the high-register strings creates a soaring feeling. The sustained vocal harmonies add to the warmth of the tone colour.
- Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox: From the reverberant opening chords of the keyboard to the gentle, almost under-sung verse of the vocalist, a much warmer tone colour is established. The tone of the male vocalist is harsher and more aggressive with a slight rasp. The clarinet is smooth and dark, mirroring the female vocalist's style at the start. The tinkling tone colour of the high-register acoustic piano contrasts with the more emphatic bass in the chorus. After the entrance of the male vocals, the male and female sing in harmony, with the tone colours of the singers more closely matched to add to the increased energy. The electric piano and bass give a reverberant tone colour, adding to the warmth of the song.

Tempo

- Gnarlz Barkley: This song is locked into tempo from the very first beat of the introduction and does not waver. Although the increases in texture, dynamics and intensity may give the impression of an increase in tempo, it remains at a moderate tempo. This tempo is strongly maintained by the bass and drums, which contributes to the energy and drive of this song.
- Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox: A more relaxed feel is set up from the very beginning, with the introduction and the first verse slow, almost free-time (contrasting to the Gnarlz Barkley version). Although the keyboard keeps a very discreet 85 crotchet beats behind the improvisatory vocals, the relaxed feel is maintained. At the chorus, the drums and piano introduce a rhythmic double-time feel and the tempo increases slightly, whereas Gnarlz Barkley's version does not change tempo. This creates a lightness of mood, but the overall relaxed feel is maintained. The vocalists embellish with freedom against this time being kept for them by the band.

Section B – Music language (aural)

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	17	16	21	34	2.5

- The first interval was a major sixth.
- The second interval was a major second.
- The third interval was a major seventh.
- The fourth interval was a tritone (or augmented fourth or diminished fifth).

Many responses identified the first two intervals correctly; however, the final two intervals sometimes proved problematic. The third interval was played harmonically only.

Students are reminded to practise hearing and identifying intervals that are presented harmonically. To obtain full marks, both quality and quantity needed to be correct.

Students must avoid using 'M' or 'm' to indicate intervals, as this is unclear and if the interval was not clearly identified, it was deemed incorrect.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	16	18	25	36	2.7

- The first was a melodic minor scale.
- The second was a blues scale. Minor blues scale was also an acceptable answer.
- The third was Mixolydian mode.
- The fourth was Lydian mode.

For full marks the response had to identify the specific minor form (melodic minor) and give further information; for example: 'Melodic minor scale because it is the only minor scale that differs ascending and descending.' This scale was presented ascending and descending.

Most responses identified the blues scale.

The third was similar to a major scale but it had a lowered seventh, making it the Mixolydian mode. Regular singing of scales and modes in the teaching and learning program should assist students with aural identification of modes.

The final answer, the Lydian mode, sometimes proved problematic. Although it was presented descending only, students should practise reversing the notes to make the scale ascending as they 'inner hear' the scale if they are more comfortable with ascending scales.

Marks were not awarded for incomplete answers (for example, 'minor' instead of 'melodic minor').

Question 6a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	20	35	23	22	1.5

- The first interval was a major second.
- The second interval was a perfect fourth.
- The third interval was a minor second (or augmented first).

The interval in the middle of the melody sometimes proved problematic. Memorisation of the melody so that students can replay the melody silently in their head during the silent working time can assist in breaking the melody into sections to identify intervals. Identifying intervals in short melodies and then increasing the length of melodies could also assist. Students were required to identify both the quality and number of the interval to be awarded full marks.

Question 6b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	27	73	0.8

Many responses correctly identified the tonality of the melody as major.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	20	18	17	30	15	2.0

- The quality of the first triad/chord was minor.
- The quality of the second triad/chord was suspended fourth.
- The quality of the third triad/chord was half diminished seventh.
- The quality of the fourth triad/chord was augmented.

Responses generally showed a good command of chords.

The recognition of the half diminished seventh chord that was presented harmonically proved challenging for many students. Some students confused the full diminished seventh chord with the half diminished seventh chord. The half diminished seventh chord has a minor seventh above the root, whereas the full diminished seventh chord has a diminished seventh above the root.

Singing of chords when learning them, and focusing on the differences, should assist.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	9	28	27	33	2.8

The correct answer was as follows.

Bass note	D	G
Quality	dom7 or V7	major

Responses generally recognised that the last two chords formed a perfect cadence – one of the common cadences listed for study, being able to identify the bass notes correctly. The seventh chord of the dominant seventh was not identified in a few responses.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	8	18	16	15	12	14	11	5	4.1

Bass note	A	F	C	D
Quality	minor 7	major	major	minor 7

This progression proved to be quite difficult for some students. The first chord to be recognised had the bass line rising by step from the given bass note G, so it had to be a chord based on A. Students should be aware of the tonic chord that the chord progression starts with and to make note if it returns. It did so in the third chord to be recognised. The bass line then went up by step from the C, so the next chord was based on D. Many students were unable to hear the sevenths of the A minor seventh and the D minor seventh chords. Practice is important for identifying whether

a chord is a triad or a seventh chord. It was necessary to make the quality clear (major or minor) – ‘m’ or ‘M’ alone were not sufficient.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	20	20	15	12	11	4	3	3	12	2.9

The correct answer was as follows.



The given music of the melodic transcription opened with a stepwise descending melodic minor passage. The given part then leapt to C, which was the tonic of the key of C minor. The first note to be recognised was a perfect fifth higher than the C. Many responses could not identify this note correctly. The next leap was to the upper tonic, C followed by upward stepwise motion until the F of the second bar. The following notes, F C Ab and F, made up a minor chord. Many students were able to hear that the last note was F, which then rose by step to the given note G.

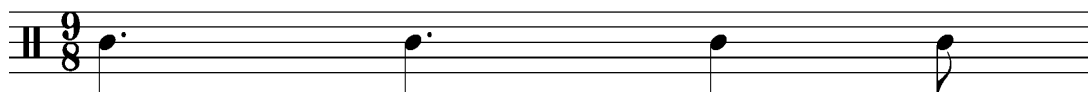
When the rhythm is given, it is important to write notes that correspond to the given rhythm. For example, in the first bar requiring notation, the G was tied to another G. Some students did not check the rhythm above and wrote the rhythm incorrectly, ignoring the tied note. Many students were able to hear the overall contour of the melody. Unfortunately for some, the inaccuracy of the opening leap meant an incorrect response in the following notation.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	11	14	14	10	12	29	3.6

The correct response was as follows.

Bars 2 and 4



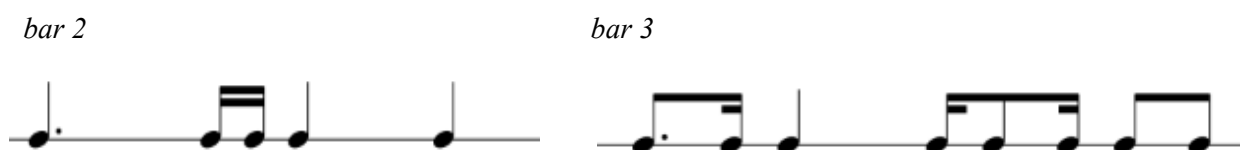
Responses demonstrated a good understanding of 9/8 time. A majority of responses notated the first bar correctly. The quavers in the fourth bar were difficult for some students.

Students should check that their grouping of notes reflects the value of the beat. In this case, the notes should have been grouped to show the dotted crotchet beat.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	9	19	22	11	8	5	5	6	14	3.4

The correct answer was as follows.



The dotted crotchet followed by two semiquavers at the beginning of bar 2 proved problematic in many responses. Students had to be aware of where the beat falls. The second and third notes in bar 2 did not fall on the second beat of the bar, rather after the beat. The remaining two notes of bar 2 were on the beat, and therefore two crotchets. The syncopated pattern of semiquaver, quaver, semiquaver on the third beat of bar 3 was difficult for many students.

Students are advised to practise clapping rhythms that include various groupings of semiquavers and quavers in complex patterns, including examples of syncopation, to prepare for this type of question.

Section C – Music language (written)

Question 13

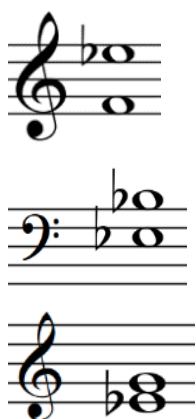
Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	10	21	58	2.3

- The first interval was a minor sixth.
- The second interval was a minor third.
- The third interval was a diminished fifth.

This question was generally answered well; however, the diminished fifth sometimes proved problematic. When identifying intervals, it is important to identify the quality and number of the interval. 'Tritone' will not suffice, as the interval was clearly written as C sharp up to G, which is a diminished fifth. A tritone is only accepted in aural identification of intervals.

Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	11	21	60	2.4



This question was generally handled well. Some responses involved a misreading of the change of clefs, which affected the notes written on the staff.

Students should ensure that the accidentals required are exactly level with the note to which they relate and are written before the note.

Question 15a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	20	24	7	48	1.8

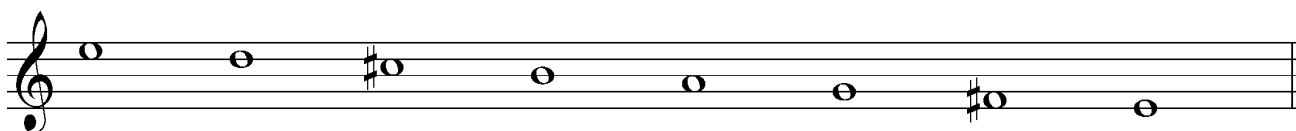


This was generally handled well. Two marks were awarded for correct notes and one mark for correct stems and direction of scale. Correct accidentals or appropriate key signatures were accepted.

Students are reminded to adhere to conventions of musical notation, including appropriate stem direction.

Question 15b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	36	1	60	2.2

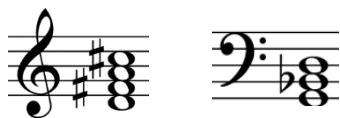


Various methods of writing the Dorian mode were accepted. Many responses used a key signature instead of accidentals.

Two marks were awarded for correct notes and one mark for correct stems and direction of scale.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	25	55	1.4



Students were required to write chords in given keys. Some responses did not include the seventh of the IV major seventh of A major, writing a triad only. The confusion of clef also led to some incorrect notes.

It is important to read the instructions very carefully, taking note of whether they ask for a triad or a seventh chord.

Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	12	11	21	46	2.8

The correct answer was as follows.

Diatonic function	submediant (or VI or 6)	subdominant (or IV or 4)
Quality	minor 7th	major

Responses had to identify the diatonic function in the key of G major of two chords as well as whether they were a triad or seventh chord and the quality of the triad or seventh chord. Many responses missed the seventh of the first chord to be identified.

Although roman numerals or numbers are accepted as identifying the diatonic function of a chord, when using technical names (for example, submediant or subdominant), students need to check that they have a sound knowledge of the names.

Question 18a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	51	49	0.5

Correct responses circled one example of a dominant seventh chord. This occurred on the second beat of bar 2. The excerpt featured music for a choir in four parts with the harmonies occurring vertically.

Some responses circled notes melodically, which did not make up a dominant seventh.

Students should ascertain the key of the excerpt first. In this case the music was in the key of Bb major so a dominant 7th would consist of F A C Eb. Students were required to find a chord that contained those notes.

Question 18b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	42	58	0.6

The correct answer was 6/8 time. Correct responses recognised that the notes were grouped in dotted crotchet beats. There were two dotted crotchet beats in each bar (except for the upbeat), so the music was in 6/8 time.