



2006 **Music Styles GA 3: Aural and written examination**

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2006 exam was the first under the new study design, and students' responses to the examination paper indicated that there was, on the whole, a good understanding of the requirements of most areas of study. There were few very poor responses and some very strong responses to individual questions, although only a few students were consistently strong across all sections. It is again necessary to reinforce comments made in previous years' Assessment Reports relating to the need to carefully read all questions and take notice of the marks available, the inadvisability of prepared answers and the need to be quite clear about the works studied and how they fit into each semester's program.

In preparing for the 2007 examination, students and teachers must refer to the current study design and the assessment advice published for 2006–9. While most students appeared to have been prepared for this new study in 2006, some were still unclear about where they could use their set works in Section B. Others had perhaps not developed sufficient depth in the composition/arrangement/improvisation area to be able to answer a range of questions, which is important due to the increased significance of this part of the study.

The paper comprised a total of 102 marks over three sections. All sections of the paper were compulsory, and most students answered all questions in each section as directed. The assessment criteria for the 2006 examination were published in the Assessment Guide, and the examination format followed the published description. Questions addressed all the published criteria, and the format was very similar to the published sample examination material. Students and teachers should be familiar with the criteria when preparing for the examination. It would be helpful for teachers to consider the criteria and the structure of the examination when developing class work and School-assessed Coursework assessment tasks. Once again, some students would have benefited from more experience in reading questions and identifying key areas for response, and then putting their answers on paper quickly, clearly and legibly. Poor handwriting and incorrect spelling of composers' names and titles of music works studied, as well as musical terminology, was noted again this year. The number of marks allocated to each question should be a helpful guide for students to plan their time during the examination.

Section A (five questions worth a total of 45 marks) was based on a series of musical excerpts provided on CD. In this section, the time allocated for responses was determined by the time allowed on the recording. The total time for this section was 47 minutes, and the available marks reflected this considerably increased time in the 2006–9 study. The preambles to Questions 1 and 2 provided some extra written stimulus along with the audio stimulus material. The extended Questions 4 and 5 allowed students to demonstrate their listening and aural analysis skills; these questions included concepts of contrast, repetition and variation, which form part of the key knowledge in all sections of this new study. A good understanding of the elements of music (for example, tone colour, instrumentation, structure, melody, rhythm, texture, etc.) was essential for students to demonstrate their capacity for critical response.

Most students demonstrated some knowledge of the individual elements of music; however, many continued to provide long lists in a 'scattergun' approach to listening to the excerpts. Some students still struggled to use the elements of music to illustrate their understanding, or to answer the specific questions that were asked when more depth was required in a description or a discussion. Many were hampered by their inability to use musical terminology appropriately; students should be able to use and understand words used within the study design for elements of music and compositional devices. However, when reference is made to instruments or techniques which have been heard and recognised, but are not required to be known by name, any creative way of expressing the thought was acceptable, and marked accordingly. Nearly all students attempted to answer every question in Section A.

Section B (four questions worth a total of 32 marks) required students to provide both short and more extended answers to questions about the major works (or collections of minor works) in different styles that were studied in Units 3 and 4. After the recording finished, students controlled the time they spent on each question, and once again some students could have planned their time more appropriately by noting the number of marks allocated to each question and responding accordingly, rather than assuming that all the lines provided on the paper had to be filled up. A better indication of how much to write was apparent from reading the question and noting how many marks were available, and whether a description or a discussion was required. A question directing the student to 'discuss' should have indicated that a fuller response was required.

The questions in this section required clear and concise responses to specific questions. Some students attempted to write all they knew about the works, and had obviously prepared to regurgitate a large amount of interesting but unnecessary information, while perhaps not addressing the specific question that had been asked. Students must realise



that the chief requirement is to answer the question, and that marks are not awarded solely for demonstrating knowledge which is not relevant to the question.

There were some excellent responses to Section B questions, and some students demonstrated a very clear understanding of the works they had studied. A wide range of works had been studied, though Peter Sculthorpe was a clear winner in the Australian category, with a number of his works represented. There were a number of interesting works from 1910 onwards – that date allowing for the inclusion of sections of *Rite of Spring*, which was still a popular choice, although there were also some much more recent works from a variety of genres. Students need to know when the works were composed, and use the correct work for the question. Some students who did have a post-1910 work (which they used elsewhere in the paper) unfortunately wrote about Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, which was not in that category. Marks could not be awarded for those responses.

Section C (one question worth 24 marks) required students to reflect on the processes of composition/arrangement/improvisation, which forms an important part of the study in Units 3 and 4. The prompts for each part of the question gave a good amount of information to assist students with the direction of their responses. It also required students to use their key knowledge and skills in a hypothetical expansion of their own composition/arrangement/improvisation, and this proved to be a good way for students to demonstrate their understanding of the processes.

The selection of works for study in Units 3 and 4 is very important, and the study design should be carefully checked for advice regarding this selection. There is scope for enormous variety within the various sections and it was pleasing to note that students were studying appropriate works (which can include sections of larger works rather than whole symphonies, etc). If the option of a movement or a section of a work is taken, the student should be able to clearly identify the section or movement, and it would be helpful if the section had a coherent structure of its own. Being able to study the treatment of a number of elements of music in the section/movement/work makes it easier for students to cope with the variety of questions that could be posed.

Unit 3 requires the study of two short works, movements and/or collections of minor works in differing styles, one by an Australian composer/creator. Unit 4 requires the study of two works in differing styles, one of which should have been created since 1910. Teachers should note the key knowledge and key skills specified for the outcomes in each unit, and ensure that the selected works will provide the necessary material. The chosen works or movements do not need to be excessively long. If one movement of a work is studied, it is still important that the student is aware of the significance of that movement within the whole work. Students should be aware of exactly what works are required for each section of the study design. They should also be able to provide accurate titles in their examination responses, clearly identifying the sections of works studied and names of composers. It is acceptable for titles to be abbreviated in responses to questions, so long as the abbreviation clearly identifies the work.

In all sections of the paper students were able to respond using a range of formats such as bullet points, diagrams or prose. Students made use of all these styles of response, and often the bullet point responses in Section A were the most useful and efficient. However, students must be aware that, although this can be a useful starting point, even a long list will not necessarily answer a specific question. Bullet points can also be used successfully in more extended responses, as a number of students demonstrated, but prose responses generally enabled students to better demonstrate understanding of concepts and 'discuss' issues as required by some questions. Highlighter pens were used to great advantage by a number of students, who wrote prose style responses and demonstrated links between the discussion and specific parts of the question. There is no point in using a highlighter, however, if it is just to appear to be organised. More tables of points appeared in responses in 2006, which can be useful; however, their usefulness does not automatically extend to completely answering a question. The eloquent prose of some prepared answers did not always constitute a 'discussion', as the specific purpose of the question itself was not answered. In these cases, it was often clear that the students had a large amount of information about the studied works at their disposal, but had not been able to synthesise the material in order to demonstrate an understanding of the particular issues raised in the question.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

SECTION A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	6	17	25	21	17	11	3	4.7

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This question was not particularly well-handled. Although they described some aspects of use of rhythm, many students had more of a ‘scattergun’ approach and listed things that happened rather than focusing on the treatment of one other element of music. Most students did refer to at least one compositional device.

A number of students referred to the inherent melody, discussing the way that phrases were shaped with ascending and descending pitches, and variation of pitches, higher and lower, creating contrast.

High-scoring responses featured detailed descriptions of ways rhythm was used in the excerpt, including:

- use of repetition, albeit with change
- phrase lengths
- repetition of syllables
- balance
- use of silence
- collage of sound – built up in layers
- phrase shapes feature ascending and descending pitch shapes
- use of consonants – ‘t’ and ‘d’ syllables give phrases character
- use of syncopation
- rhythmic repetition and variation
- diminution
- variation of pitch – lower pitches contrasting with higher pitches
- reiterated rhythm at the end.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	0	3	10	27	27	20	10	2	4.9

Interestingly, most students did not refer at all to the introductory bars of music, ignoring the organ altogether and treating the piece as if it began with the solo voice. A number of students who attempted to describe the aspects of texture had some difficulty due to poor use of musical terminology, including the word ‘texture’. Students should be able to correctly use the music terminology listed in the study design. Those who made their meaning clear but did not use appropriate terminology were given partial marks.

High-scoring responses featured detailed descriptions of ways elements of music were used to convey atmosphere and/or emotion, including the following.

Melody

- serene, sacred, church-like
- soaring ‘heavenwards’
- conjunct
- scalic
- long phrases contribute to a calm, peaceful atmosphere
- theme introduced by organ, then repeated by the treble voice

Texture

- seamless graduation from bass through to treble with successive vocal entries
- monophonic (solo)
- homophonic (choir)

Tone colour

- organ introduction
- voices alone (a capella)
- use of treble solo

Harmony

- diatonic
- strong major feel, but pull to the minor
- predictable
- spread of pitches across the range of voices

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Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	0	2	7	17	25	26	13	9	5.4

This question was handled very well by most students, although some students tried to list everything that occurred and were not clear about which two elements they were addressing.

High-scoring responses featured detailed descriptions of the treatment of the listed elements of music, including the following.

Instrumentation

- extended rock band – horn section with rhythm section in funk/fusion
- use of slap bass
- sound effect of nuclear explosion – synthesiser

Rhythm

- strong driving rhythm – hip-hop style, steady beat (not swung)
- rhythmic effect from interplay/dialogue between instruments
- use of repetition
- use of syncopation

Texture

- begins with synthesiser, ascending pitch and increasing dynamic for explosion effect
- punctuated homophony – chords turned into lines
- layers of instruments
- voice both dominates and forms an independent layer
- instrumental break at the end of the excerpt

Articulation

- short, sharp articulation
- in wind and brass interpolations
- in vocal style and interjections

Question 4

4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	0	13	87	1.9

Although most students recognised and knew the correct language to describe the instruments, any way of expressing the sound sources was acceptable, and there were several excellent 'alternative' descriptions of the sound of a harpsichord. The countertenor voice was also mostly recognised as a 'high male voice', although there was no penalty for identifying it as a female voice.

Answers included:

- string orchestra (violins, viola, cello, double bass)
- basso continuo
- harpsichord
- countertenor voice
- other ways of describing the above sounds, such as string family, high male voice, etc.

4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	0	2	23	36	39	3.2

This part of the question was also handled well by most students, and led on from the previous identification.

High-scoring responses described the role of instruments in a range of styles, such as the following.

- counter tenor – melodic line in homophonic texture
- voice and violins share a melody which sometimes alternates and sometimes duets when the two lines are interwoven

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- source of improvised embellishments
- vocal contribution relating to the text
- harpsichord and cello form an essential foundation as basso continuo
- chordal accompaniment underpinning the structure

4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	0	3	16	23	27	21	10	3.8

More analytical thought was required in this question, which was reflected in the mark allocation. A synthesis of ideas and knowledge was necessary. The question was only answered well by a few students, although the full excerpt was heard three times and the information at the beginning of the question included a translation of the text.

High-scoring responses featured descriptions of the use of contrast and repetition in ways such as:

- parts A and B have distinctly different moods – contrast
- some reference to contrast of text in parts A and B
- big picture repetition creates overall form (A recurring)
- within part A – repetition of melodic phrases
- opening melody is basis of intro, part A and coda (repetition)
- orchestral interludes offer a break from tension, and give the singer breathing space.

Question 5

5a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	1	45	54	1.6

This part of the question was reasonably well done by most students.

Characteristics of the melody referred to in high-scoring answers included:

- short, concise fragment
- bright, cheeky
- antecedent/consequent phrasing
- rhythmic repetition
- use of semiquavers
- rhythmic anacrusis
- balanced, even phrases
- major tonality
- mostly conjunct movement, with occasional upward leap of a fifth.

5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	10	32	38	18	2.6

The responses here were not quite so successful, and students needed to put a little more thought into answering this question. The question related to all areas of study in Music Styles, not just 'Responses to music', and required a synthesis of students' knowledge. There are some excellent prompts in the appendix to the study design relating to writing about melody.

High-scoring responses included descriptions such as:

- the main melody recurs throughout
- initially introduced by violin, then shared by the whole quartet, each taking turns
- tone colour of each of the four string instruments is exploited through this repetition and variation
- usually the main melody is heard in its entirety before it is introduced for the next statement
- sretto-like contrapuntal texture used briefly as imitation between the voices creates a complex texture.

5c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	9	33	38	18	2.7

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Most students wrote about texture and dynamics in this part, and again their use of appropriate musical terminology could have been better.

High-scoring responses included descriptions of ways elements of music were used to create intensity, such as the following.

Texture

- gradual thickening of texture
- examples of a variety of textures within the excerpt – homophonic opening, single voice introducing new sections, some imitative, contrapuntal textures as the excerpt progresses
- the motivic nature of the melody allows this development to take place and build intensity

Dynamics

- gradual increase in dynamics as more instruments play
- ascending dynamic hand in hand with pitch increases intensity
- instruments alone and in combination create different dynamic effects

Rhythm

- repetition of short rhythmic fragments
- metric reinforcement of the first beat in the bar
- dance-like quality
- drum-like patterning of the rhythm
- overlapping of the rhythmic phrases increases and gathers momentum.

Articulation

- pointed

SECTION B

Section B required students to discuss specific works they had studied. Students needed to demonstrate some of the key knowledge and skills they had acquired during the course of study, and the works (or selections or collections of works) chosen for study need to afford them the opportunity to do this. Students and teachers should also remember that at the heart of this study of Music Styles is the music itself. In general, responses that refer to contextual issues, use of elements and compositional devices, without referring to the sound of the music that has been studied, appear to be shallow.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	1	6	9	15	20	22	18	7	5.2

The best answers here concentrated on the music and how it evolved in relation to the influence. Many students regurgitated prose describing contextual issues, some of which were significant, but did not link the discussion to the music in any more than a very cursory way.

For full marks to be awarded, the contextual influences needed to be significant, and the response had to include very specific links to the style of the music.

Examples of significant contextual influences discussed by students included:

- influence of (for instance) Asian and Aboriginal music on particular works
- practical issues relating to the scoring of a piece for specific players
- musical influences of other composers
- commercial considerations relating to the rescoring of a work so that it could be played by a regular orchestral combination, rather than requiring several less common instruments
- rescoring/reorganising of a work so that it became a concert work, rather than a film score.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	0	4	11	16	20	19	18	11	5.4

7a.

This part of the question was generally handled well.



7b.

Some depth of discussion was necessary for full marks; for instance, identifying the use of contrast, then describing how this occurs and referring to its impact in the work, or the style of the composer, etc. The question did not require an extended response – just a clearly expressed paragraph or two.

Question 8

8a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	11	20	30	34	2.8

Students who used a diagram saved time and words here. In fact, trying to describe structure/form in some works was very difficult without a diagram. The structure needed to be clearly described, or the diagram well-labelled, for full marks. Identifying the structure as, for example, 'similar to sonata form', without any further explanation of the form was not sufficient. Explaining the type of form, for example in a diagram, and referring to the use of the form in this work was the most successful way of answering the question and often resulted in full marks.

8b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	9	29	36	21	2.6

Students needed to clearly refer to the music, identify the use of repetition and show how it was used in this work in order to receive full marks for this question.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	3	8	8	16	11	17	22	11	5.1

A discussion was required here, not just a description of the way that variation has been used. Students who synthesised the information linking the use of variation to the resulting sound of the music were awarded more marks. A very good response may still have been quite succinct.

SECTION C

Question 10

10a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	0	4	19	38	40	3.1

This question gave many prompts, and was generally well answered if these were followed appropriately.

10b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	4	6	6	14	19	14	20	10	5	6.3

The best students adapted their learnt material to suit this question. Unfortunately, some students did not address all the requirements of the question – two compositional devices and the elements of structure/form and texture. This meant that they could not score full marks.

10c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	10	37	29	21	2.6

There were a few excellent responses from students who had clearly addressed this part of the key knowledge; however, many students were ill-prepared for this question. Some good answers here used the prompts given in the questions and answered them using dot points.

10d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	3	11	24	26	20	13	3.8

There were some excellent responses here that gave a clear insight into how a composer might go about making the work longer and/or more suitable, even if the initial composition was underdeveloped or little more than an idea. The

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best responses gave a real sense of what it was all about, and **also** demonstrated both knowledge and understanding of the compositional processes used to compose/arrange/improvise.

Some students had clearly run out of time at this point and failed to complete their responses.