



**2009 Music Styles GA 3: Aural and written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

The 2009 examination consisted of three sections and comprised a total of 100 marks. All sections of the examination were compulsory and the format followed the guidelines published in the Assessment Handbook. The question style and the length of the examination were consistent with the published sample assessment material.

The students seemed to be familiar with the structure of the examination. The vast majority of students completed the examination and met the requirements of the study design, particularly with regard to the selection of works studied in Section B. Some students struggled to tailor both their critical responses in Section A and the material they had prepared for Sections B and C to the specific questions asked in the examination. Regardless of the quality of, and insight displayed by, students' responses, unless the response addressed all the issues raised in the question, full marks could not be awarded.

Although discipline-specific terminology was effectively employed by many students, some used terms in a manner which suggested they did not fully understand the words they were using. This was particularly the case with 'heterophonic', which was used incorrectly by numerous students. Heterophony refers to the process whereby a single horizontal pitch structure (typically a melodic line) is played by multiple instruments/voices with differing rhythm or different degrees of ornamentation. It most commonly occurs in non-Western music and Western art music of the past 100 years. Students often used this term erroneously to apply to multiple strands of melody working together (polyphony) or conventional orchestral unisons and doubling.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

**Section A**

Section A consisted of five questions and was worth 45 marks. An audio CD lasting 54 minutes and 12 seconds accompanied this section of the examination. The length of the CD corresponded to the weighting of Section A as set out in the sample assessment material.

High-order responses were characterised by thoughtful, ordered answers that displayed high levels of aural acuity, and were consistently pertinent to the questions. Analysis in these responses was marked, where appropriate, by highly detailed structural diagrams; observations about tonality, melody and harmony; insightful commentary on the interaction of instrumentation, tone colour and texture; and by a capacity to respond critically to each excerpt. Appropriate music terminology was employed and, where metaphor was used, it worked to enhance the students' responses rather than stand in place of, or indeed displace, music terminology.

Mid-level responses tended to have more difficulty in linking the students' listening analyses to the requirements of the questions. These responses were often marked by a reaction to musical features early in the excerpt, whereas more considered responses took the entire excerpt into account.

Low-order responses were characterised either by very little writing, or by writing that took the form of a listening diary that made little attempt to respond to the requirement(s) of the question. With the exception of Question 4, all students were able to make some pertinent observations about the excerpts.

**Question 1**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	0	0	6	24	28	23	19	4.3

Students demonstrated a high degree of competence in responding to this question, with 70 per cent of the cohort scoring four or more out of a possible six marks. However, many students wrote far more than was necessary to achieve their result, costing, in some cases, valuable examination time. The question required students to describe the layers of sound that were used in the excerpt – a task that most students related (correctly) to instrumentation and tone colour. Descriptions of other elements were entirely admissible, provided the students' response worked to identify and describe the layers of sound in the excerpt. For example, students who described the structure of the excerpt often gained marks through tangential references to the layers, but ended up writing far more than was necessary to answer the question. High-scoring responses employed relevant music terminology and were able to describe the three layers in terms that included, but were not limited to, the following.

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## Vocal line

- A female singer employed an improvisatory singing style.
- The vocal line faded in and out.
- Vocalisation based on manipulation of syllables worked to alter the timbre of the voice.
- It was a primarily conjunct melodic line that used Indian/non-Western scale forms.

## Electronic interjections

- This layer first featured percussive ‘stabs’ of sampled sounds that acted to punctuate the entries and exits of the vocal line.
- Later in the excerpt, this layer ‘morphed’ into samples of an Indian string instrument played initially in reverse.

## Percussion

- Tabla featured an ostinato that recurred throughout the entire piece.
- Synthesised drums faded in and out in a phasing relationship with the vocal line.

## Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	0	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	22	13	16	7.3

This question required students to identify the musical features at work in a piece in Rondo form. Students were provided with a prompt in the form of a five-part sectional division of the answer section of the work. High-order responses identified at least two features in each section, apart from section 5 (where only thematic repetition needed to be identified), and clearly differentiated the features of sections 2 and 4. Lower-order responses tended to focus exclusively on the identification of instrumentation. Responses included but were not limited to the following features in each section.

### Section 1

- The instrumental introduction featured strings, plucked instruments, winds and drums playing music that became the *Gaudete!* chorus.
- The chorus entered with the main *Gaudete!* theme, which used pitch material that employed the minor mode and harmony characterised by fourths and fifths.
- The section concluded with a *Picardy* third (modal mixture).
- The rhythm employed irregular groupings of three and four beats (‘talea’ time rather than a conventional time signature).

### Section 2

- A solo female singer was accompanied by a plucked instrument.
- The melody featured a primarily conjunct line with occasional leaps of a third.
- The repetition of the idea employed an expanded vocal range.

### Section 3

- Two iterations of the *Gaudete!* theme were employed in this section.
- The dynamic range ran from forte on the first repetition to fortissimo on the second, emphasised with increased instrumental accompaniment.

### Section 4

- This section featured an initial vocal solo based on the material presented in section 2, but with some development.
- The second part of the section employed a vocal trio that used contrasting material harmonised in fourth and fifths (reminiscent of parallel organum).

### Section 5

- This section featured the final repetitions of the *Gaudete!* chorus preceded by a brief instrumental flourish.

## Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	0	1	11	18	27	26	17	4.2



This question gave students scope to describe repetition and variation using any element and any section(s) to exemplify these devices. Responses ranged from a detailed description of how Rondo form embodied repetition and variation to a description of how thematic material was transformed from the 'B' to the 'C' sections (sections 2 and 4). Some responses focused on variation in the elements (notably dynamics and instrumentation) throughout the repetitions of the *Gaudete!* chorus. All such answers were capable of garnering full marks. Lower-order responses tended to deal with issues of repetition and variation in a superficial manner. The instruction to 'describe' meant that students needed to do more than just identify examples of repetition and variation.

### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	0	0	3	5	9	18	19	23	15	8	6.2

This question elicited a range of responses, and some students provided a generic description of three elements rather than describing how the elements worked together to build intensity in the excerpt. The best responses responded directly to the issue of intensity and featured examples of elements working together to create this effect. Students and teachers are reminded that while the division of music into 'elements' is a useful way of analysing and understanding music, all elements of music feature some degree of overlap. Many students routinely described elements in isolation – the instruction to 'explain' provided students with an opportunity to show how elements interact. Student responses included, but were not limited to, the following observations about the listed elements.

#### Melody

- The high tessitura of the strings and winds contrasted the 'usual' register of these instruments – the contrast, over time, worked to build intensity.
- The melodic contour featured increasing increments of a semitone.
- Repeated melodic ideas were used in sequence and augmentation.
- The passages of brass fanfare featured extensive use of high tessitura.

#### Texture

- The music featured a call and response between the trumpets and the horns against the lower brass and the winds and strings.
- Conventional 19th century orchestral gestures worked to pre-empt or 'telescope' the conclusion to the excerpt; as a result, many students linked the ideas of inevitability and intensity.

#### Tone colour

- The orchestra was used according to a conventional 'functional' division.
- Passages of string writing were used to build tension through ascending gestures – this tension was then prolonged and released by the brass.

#### Harmony

- The excerpt featured a transition from minor to major tonality.
- Chromatic harmony built tension until a very prolonged plagal cadence worked to decorate the final tonic.
- The plagal cadence was decorated with chromatic neighbour motion in the inner parts.

#### Dynamics/Volume

- The excerpt featured a consistent use of crescendo, often working according to instrument group.
- Hair-pin crescendos were frequently used against motivic gestures.
- A consistent fortissimo persisted once the music reached the final tonic and continued through the plagal cadence.

### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	0	1	9	20	25	24	21	4.3

High-order responses provided a detailed description of repetition and contrast. Some students elected to use the mandated element of rhythm as an example of how repetition and contrast operated in the excerpt; others chose to add a separate description of rhythm. While both approaches were able to garner full marks, students who described three issues separately, rather than using rhythm as an example of the operation of repetition and contrast, needed to write more than they otherwise would have in order to score well. Students and teachers are reminded that where a question contains an instruction such as 'in your answer refer to rhythm' (or other element), the intention is that the element be

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used as the 'lens' through which a device is considered, not as another domain to the question. Lower-order responses struggled to describe aspects of repetition in the excerpt. Capable responses included the following observations.

## Repetition

- Melodic motive governed much of the development in the piece – ideas were used in sequence and harmonised by a variety of jazz extensions and parallel moving harmony.
- Repetition was used extensively through repeated beat patterns and a rhythmic ostinato.

## Contrast

- A range of sound sources acted to contrast with the piano.
- Contrast was embodied in the overall structure of the excerpt with a 'B' section consisting of virtuosic runs that employed a whole-tone scale.
- Harmonic areas were contrasted through modulation.
- Stylistic contrast was evident in the juxtaposition of jazz and pop idioms.

## Rhythm

- The excerpt featured an augmentation of the main theme towards the end of the excerpt (this suggested the influence of minimalism).
- Syncopated jazz rhythms were contrasted with a 'pop' pedal point.
- The excerpt featured perpetual motion through the use of driving rhythm and constant quaver/semiquaver motion.

## Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	3	15	13	23	21	17	6	5.2

Like Question 3, this question required students to link elements of music to a particular musical effect. While most students effectively responded to the requirements of the question, some presented a broad analysis of the entire excerpt instead of focusing on how the singer used his voice. Only the parts of the response that dealt with the issue of the singer's voice working to create a sense of energy were able to garner marks.

## Tone colour

- Energy was created through the use of scattng – different vowel sounds acted as the vehicle for this technique.
- Plosive consonants were used to underpin rhythm – this worked to transform the tone colour.
- Occasional longer notes used a gradual-onset vibrato.

## Articulation

- Short, staccato notes were employed in scat sections.
- A wide variety of accent was used; significant lyrics received a greater degree of accent.

## Rhythm

- Syncopation was achieved through a change in accent on repeated phrases (for example, 'Too darn hot, too darn hot').
- Brief rhythmic fragments in the scat sections functioned to add to a sense of energy to the excerpt.

## Melody

- Varied phrase lengths worked to render the piece unpredictable, particularly in the scat sections.
- There was a judicious use of vocal range – initially limited, later spanning higher as the piece grew in intensity.

## Section B

Section B consisted of three questions and was worth 32 marks. The questions were linked to the works students had studied in Units 3 and 4 and primarily addressed issues of context and compositional design (in other words, the use of elements and compositional devices). One work in Unit 3 needed to be an Australian composition and one work in Unit 4 needed to have been composed/created since 1910.

Teachers are again advised to be careful in selecting works for study in Units 3 and 4. The works chosen must give students the scope to deal with all aspects of the key knowledge and key skills, including the treatment of elements, the use of compositional devices, aspects of style and contextual issues. The 2009 cohort chose a narrower range of works,

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with the music of Peter Sculthorpe dominating the 'Australian work' category. Works chosen in Section B included but were not limited to the following.

## Australian works

- Peter Sculthorpe: *Earth Cry*
- Peter Sculthorpe: *Kakadu*
- Peter Sculthorpe: *Port Essington*
- Peter Sculthorpe: *Small Town*
- Peter Sculthorpe: *Sun Music I*
- Nigel Westlake: *Antarctica*

## Works composed since 1910

- Miles Davis: *Flamenco Sketches*
- Philip Glass: *Koyaanisquatis*
- Philip Glass: *Metamorphosis 4*
- Igor Stravinsky: *Rite of Spring*

Many students demonstrated a good ability to employ musical examples and respond directly to the music. Responses that were overly generic or lacked the ability to employ appropriate terminology did not score as well as responses that demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the chosen work.

### Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	3	8	10	9	18	15	14	13	6.4

The cohort was, for the most part, well prepared to describe two contextual issues related to the Australian work. The best responses made a link between the contextual issues and the creation of the work. Mid- to low-order responses presented information regarding contextual issues that was either inaccurate or only partially relevant. In order to achieve full marks, students needed to describe issues accurately. This was a problem for some students who studied works by Sculthorpe; many responses contained errors of fact (Sculthorpe did not, for example, grow up in New Zealand). Students and teachers are advised to cross-reference contextual and biographical information against recognised scholarly material; Internet sources such as Wikipedia are often unreliable as sources of information.

### Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	4	1	4	9	10	8	19	11	18	11	6.1

While a variety of works was used to answer this question, many students studied the first movement of a symphony, with popular choices being Beethoven's 5th or Mozart's 40th Symphony. These students used a description of sonata form as the vehicle for explaining how two of the listed elements interacted with a compositional device. While this was a good approach to the question, students who presented a generic description of sonata form did not gain as many marks as students who had a clear command of how sonata form operated in their specific piece. High-scoring responses included information about key schemes, the operation of motivic material in primary themes and bridge passages, and processes employed in the development section.

The discriminator for this question was the extent to which students were able to link the two elements selected to a compositional device. Responses that simply described two elements and a compositional device in isolation were not able to score full marks as the requirement to 'explain' was not met.

### Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	2	2	4	6	5	4	8	11	13	20	13	8	4	7.4

This question gave students the scope to discuss the two works they had studied in Unit 4 through either the treatment of the elements of music or through the use of compositional devices or, in some cases, through a combination of the two. The question included a prompt about the development of an idea working to sustaining interest in a piece of music. Some students elected to discuss this quote through a comparison of the use of repetition and variation in the selected works, while others discussed the quote through a consideration of the two works in isolation. Both approaches were capable of scoring full marks provided the student crafted a response that interacted with the prompt in the question. Mid-order responses were characterised by pre-prepared answers that did not respond directly to the question.



prompt and low-order responses demonstrated a lack of insight or detailed knowledge of one or both of the works studied.

## Section C

Section C consisted of one question in four parts and was worth 23 marks. This section required students to account for a composition/arrangement/improvisation completed in Unit 4 by explaining various aspects of the creative process they undertook to complete the work. Student responses to this question demonstrated that, like previous years, this cohort continued to produce an impressive array of music characterised by diversity and creativity.

The structure of Section C gave students the opportunity to briefly describe and explain how they used an element of music, a compositional device and the system they used to preserve a record of the music. The question also allowed them to show how they would employ a creative process(es) to create music for a specific context.

### Question 9a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	6	22	34	38	3

Full marks were awarded to students who were able to provide an insightful description of how they used either melody, rhythm or tone colour in their piece. High-scoring descriptions typically included examples (either as prose or in the form of notation or a diagram) and demonstrated a reasonable degree of detail. Lower marks were awarded to students whose responses were overly generic and lacked examples and sufficient detail.

### Question 9b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	0	21	47	31	2.1

Most students handled this question well. Lower-order responses tended to briefly mention music notation software or a notation/recording process. Good responses outlined **how**, for example, the music notation software was used.

### Question 9c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	4	14	16	29	19	17	4

Some students struggled with the requirement to 'explain' for this question and instead described a generic compositional device. High-order responses showed how the compositional device in question related to their composition instead of merely presenting a generic description of a device.

### Question 9d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	5	6	13	14	13	13	13	10	10	6.2

This question was reasonably well answered, with many insightful and creative responses crafted around the scenario presented by the question. Students were free either to base their response around an expansion or re-imagining of the work they composed in Unit 4, or to discuss creative processes independent of any pre-existing composition. The best responses were discussions that linked creative process with the evocation of emotion, contained a degree of detail and gave examples of specific strategies to deploy a creative process. Lower-order responses tended to lack examples and were instead focussed on instrumentation and practical issues affecting performance rather than a creative process.