



**2005** **Music Styles GA 3: Aural and written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

The 2005 examination was the last paper to appear under the 2001 Study Design. Students' responses to the paper indicated that there was, on the whole, a good understanding of the requirements of most Areas of Study, particularly in relation to Section A. However, it is again necessary to reinforce comments made in previous years' Assessment Reports relating to the need to read the questions carefully and take into account the marks available. Students are advised against using prepared answers and need to be quite clear about the works they have studied and how they fit into each semester's program. When preparing for the 2006 examination, students and teachers must refer to the 2006 Study Design and the assessment advice published for 2006, as there will be some changes to both the content and organisation of the examination.

The 2005 paper was comprised of a total of 98 marks over three sections. All sections of the paper were compulsory, and most students answered the questions in each section as directed. Students should use the number of marks allocated to each question as a guide when planning their use of time during the examination.

The assessment criteria for the 2005 examination were published on the VCAA website ([www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au)) and the examination format followed the published description. Questions addressed all the published criteria. Students and teachers should be familiar with the examination criteria when preparing for the examination. Teachers could also consider the new criteria and the structure of the new examination (taking note of the new sample paper) when developing School-assessed Coursework assessment tasks. 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, misspelling of composers' names and the titles of music works studied, and poor musical terminology were all noted by assessors again this year.

The works chosen for study in Units 3 and 4 are very important. The *Music Styles VCE Study Design* should always be checked carefully for advice on selecting works for study. For the 2005 study, Unit 3 required students to study two major works (or collections of minor works) in two different musical styles. Where there were substantial differences between the two selected styles, students were more able to respond confidently to examination questions and demonstrate a real understanding of these differences. Unit 4 required the selection of two major works (or collections of minor works) from the same style, from one of the prescribed Areas of Study for Unit 4. Teachers should note the key knowledge and key skills specified for the outcomes in each unit, and ensure that the selected works provide the necessary material. The chosen works or movements do not need to be excessively long. It was pleasing to see that teachers had taken note of the advice from past years and, in many cases, elected to study just one substantial movement of a work, rather than attempting to study a whole, large, multi-movement work in detail. If one movement was studied, it was still important for the student to be aware of the significance of that movement within the whole work.

The works chosen for study in Unit 3 should not have been used to answer questions in Section C. Students should be aware of exactly what works are required for each section of the study, and each section of the exam. They should also be able to provide accurate titles and names of composers in order to clearly identify the works studied. Key musical terms and composers' names should be spelt correctly; however, titles of works may be abbreviated when responding to questions, providing the abbreviation still allows the work to be identified clearly.

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, though bullet point responses in Section A were often the most useful and efficient. A number of students used bullet points in Section A as a way of remembering what they heard. This can be a useful starting point, but even a long list does not necessarily answer a specific question. Bullet points can also be used successfully in more extended responses, as a number of students demonstrated, but some excellent prose responses enabled students to demonstrate an even deeper understanding of concepts and to 'discuss' issues, which was required by some questions.

Highlighter pens were used to great advantage by a number of students, who are able to write prose style responses and demonstrate links between the discussion and specific parts of the question. However, there is no point in using highlighters if it is just to appear to be organised.

It was also more frequent to see tables of points in responses, although, while they can be most useful, such usefulness does not extend automatically to completely answering a question. The eloquent prose of some prepared answers did not often constitute a 'discussion', as the specific purpose of the question itself was not necessarily 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

Section A had four questions worth a total of 30 marks and was based on a series of musical excerpts provided on audio CD. In this section, the time students had to respond was determined by the time allowed on the recording. The total time of this section was 25 minutes, which was shorter than the previous year because the musical excerpts were shorter.

A good understanding of the elements of music, as identified in the appendix of the Study Design, was essential for students to demonstrate their capacity for critical response. Most students were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the individual elements, although many continued to provide long lists in a ‘scattergun’ approach to listening to the excerpts. Some students still struggled to use the elements to illustrate their understanding, or to answer the specific questions where they were asked to provide more depth in a description or a discussion. Nearly all students attempted to answer every question in Section A. Again it was clear that, although some students were clearly uncomfortable with Sections B and C, they were still able to make a very good attempt at Section A, indicating a knowledge and some understanding of elements of music and compositional devices.

#### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	0	1	2	18	23	31	25	4.6

This question was generally handled well, although some assumptions were made about non-western music and its relation to this work, and some really obvious characteristics, such as silence, were overlooked. Musical terminology often assists students to make clear comments; for example, repetition, variation, etc.

Possible answers included:

- calling of repeated patterns
- variation and elaboration of patterns
- overlapping of patterns
- silences between phrases
- use of held notes
- high voices – ‘head’ voice vocal production
- lack of vibrato
- clear sound – emphasis on vowels
- melodic shapes, and use of triads and dominant 7ths
- reinforcement of overtones between singers
- rhythmic bursts in short phrases
- free rhythm – no ongoing metric feel
- the intensity of production increases rather than decreases during the duration of notes.

#### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	5	10	22	22	20	11	8	5.1

Many students struggled with this question and wrote what they thought was characteristic treatment of elements in a jazz style rather than treatment of elements in **this** excerpt. The best answers critiqued the treatment of the elements that they heard. Melody, in particular, was not well handled, with most students describing it in terms of what instrument played it, rather than referring to the construction of the melody itself.

Possible answers included:

- melodic sequencing
- thematic variation
- embellishment of motivic cells
- phrase repetition, but with altered contours

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- sequences
- extended rhythmic variation
- fragmentary rhythmic variation
- syncopations/cross metre orientations/agogic accents
- out of key figures used to create tension/release approach
- harmonic substitutions from piano and guitar
- acceleration/deceleration as an organisational consideration
- improvised flute solo in second time through.

## Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	2	4	11	17	17	24	15	7	<b>5.0</b>

Most students referred accurately to the overall structure/form of the work, and many identified the repeat of Section A at the beginning. In order to gain full marks for this question, it was necessary to describe the essence of each of the three sections as well as identify the structure – few students received that final mark. Students could have used many ways to indicate the structure, such as through simple diagrams, letters, numbers, etc., in addition to the term rondo. Marks were awarded if the descriptions were clear, whatever method was used to describe them.

Possible responses included reference to:

- AABACA (this could have been illustrated or labelled in a variety of ways)
- rondo
- role of left hand and right hand in specific music content
- reversal of roles of treble and bass in section C
- equal lengths of sections
- similar chord structures
- A and C sections minor tonality
- B section in relative major, modulating to the dominant.

## Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	0	1	3	18	19	26	18	14	<b>5.8</b>

This dramatic scenario gave students the opportunity to link the music they heard with some sort of dramatic effect. Some excellent responses made good use of adjectives to describe the effect of instrumentation and tone colour in particular. A listening diary approach worked well, and the best responses related the observations to the drama which was unfolding. Some responses did not adequately tackle **two** elements.

Possible answers included:

- dynamics from ppp – ff
- sense of foreboding
- sparse texture at the start of the passage
- tension builds with dynamics/orchestration
- rising phrases built on 3rds
- soprano voice in panic
- bass voice in anger
- dark colours/contrasts
- heartbeat drum, increasing in volume and added density of texture/moving parts as heartbeat stops with tension (tempo remains constant but volume increases)
- stopping, as in death
- eerie ending of the passage with long held flute ‘flatling’ and harps
- open 5ths at the end
- all over so quickly.

## Section B

Section B had four questions worth a total of 48 marks; it required students to provide short, but detailed, answers to questions about the major works (or collections of minor works) in different styles they had studied in Unit 3. From Section B onwards students control the amount of time they spend on each question. Once again some students could

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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 with writing. The lines were provided to allow for all sizes of writing, therefore a better indication of how much to write was apparent from reading the question and noting how many points were asked for, and whether a description or a discussion was required. A question that asks the student to ‘discuss’ would generally indicate that a fuller response was required.

## Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	2	5	11	17	17	18	29	6.1

Although the concept of compositional devices was, on the whole, well understood, many answers had been obviously prepared, and were just rattled off with minimum adaptation to the specific aspects of the question. The layout of the question certainly assisted students to plan their responses clearly and evenly.

## Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	6	4	11	15	22	17	12	12	4.1

This part of the question was not handled well by many students, who were clearly confused about notation systems and their role in the compositional process. The best responses referred to the process of composition and related this to the notation system used, for instance the arrangement of a work for a class group of piano, trumpet, cello and guitar, where the student needed a score and parts for the performers in correct clefs and keys. The issues then concerned the need to deal with the transposition of the trumpet part, and the fact that the guitarist only read chords or tablature. Many students referred to a notation program rather than a notation system, and there were many interesting spellings of ‘Sibelius’.

Assessors did accept responses focussing on the use of a notation program, and students who described it well and discussed the issues (positive or negative) were able to be awarded full marks. A number of students either omitted the ‘issues’ altogether, or just wrote a couple of words on this area.

## Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	2	7	12	12	17	19	17	12	5.1

As has been suggested in past years, the notion of ‘tone colour’ is perhaps the least understood element of music. Many students used the terms ‘instrumentation’ and ‘tone colour’ interchangeably. The best answers made the important connection between ‘musical effect’, ‘instrumentation’ and ‘tone colour’, clearly referring to places in the music they had studied, and bringing the sound to life. When dealing with musical effect, it may be helpful for students to imagine hearing the work they had studied. For some students, there appeared to be a difference in the quality of responses in Section A, where they were listening to the music and responding, and the later questions. The best responses were those where the student was able to express the musical effect and link this to the instrumentation and tone colour.

## Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	0	1	4	4	6	6	4	8	7	11	10	13	11	6	7	9.7

It was sometimes not clear just what contextual influences students had selected to discuss – these should be clearly identified so that assessors are more easily able to follow the student’s response. The best responses clearly selected two influences and specifically referred to the music when describing the influences’ role in the composition of the work.

The best students organised their responses with headings or tables, or used highlighter pens to link the two chosen influences to aspects of the musical composition. They used examples from several parts of the studied work(s) rather than just mentioning, for example, one song out of a group of songs studied.

## Question 8

### Work 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	12	15	22	23	22	3.1

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## Work 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	9	12	17	18	24	20	<b>3.0</b>

Again, it was important that students clearly identified the compositional device, and that they were consistent with what they named as 'Work 1' and 'Work 2'. There was a very broad representation of compositional devices among the responses, and students generally appeared to understand and apply the concepts very effectively. The best responses were again very well organised, and made reference to the whole work/group of works studied, rather than a brief mention of one section or song.

## Section C

Question chosen	9	10
%	44	56

### Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	2	7	15	27	23	26	<b>4.4</b>

### Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	3	2	2	4	3	6	4	6	4	8	10	12	9	7	19	<b>9.5</b>

Section C required students to write a more extended response on the two works studied in Unit 4, and a total of 20 marks was available. There was a choice of two questions in this section, and students were required to identify their choice by ticking a box.

In spite of many references to this problem in the Assessment Reports of previous years, some students still did not allow enough time to complete Section C and some otherwise promising responses were clearly incomplete. Again there were some very obviously prepared answers in this section. Many students clearly had a great deal of information which they were intent on presenting, regardless of the fact that both questions had quite specific requirements. Students must realise that the chief requirement is to answer the question, and that marks are not awarded solely for demonstrating knowledge that may not be relevant to the question.

### Question 9

Some students were very comfortable with this question, and referred very effectively to music examples from both works in support of their discussion about contextual influences. Most students gave a clear description of the audience and performance context. Some students did not heed the mark allocation or the space given for responses and gave a very long introduction to the style, using up much more space than was provided for Question 9a., and then writing little for Question 9b. Others gave clear and succinct responses to 9a., and then wrote extensively in 9b. about the various influences, but barely mentioned the music works.

### Question 10

There were some excellent responses to Question 10, but again there were also some clearly pre-prepared answers that demonstrated good information but lacked relevance to the question. A number of students used complex tables that showed the typical characteristics of the style, but did not then discuss the treatment of elements of music in both works used to achieve the characteristics of style. It appears that, on the whole, work from semester 2 was better known than that studied in semester 1. Teachers could consider this in planning the year and allow adequate time for revision.