



2006 Music Solo performance GA 3: Aural and Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the paper was consistent with the guidelines in the sample examination material (available on the VCAA website, www.vcaa.vic.edu.au), and was comprised of a total of 118 marks apportioned across three sections.

Most students completed the various tasks with a degree of skill and appeared to possess a reasonable understanding of the necessary procedures for answering each of the questions. Some students, however, experienced a range of difficulties, many of which were the same as, or similar to, those referred to in previous Assessment Reports for this study.

Below are some general observations regarding students' performance on the 2006 Music Solo performance examination.

- Students should use the reading time to read the questions carefully and ensure that they thoroughly understand the requirements of each question. They need to be familiar with the characteristics, requirements and components of different response formats; for example, the differences between identify, describe, explain and discuss.
- Students need to ensure that they have responded to all elements, issues and/or considerations in their answers and that their prose responses are clearly organised.
- Poor legibility, grammar and spelling continued to be a major issue for many students. Students must ensure that their responses are clear, particularly if any shorthand, symbols and/or vernacular jargon are used; assessors cannot award marks if they cannot read a response.
- It is advisable to use pencil in Section A so that changes and corrections can be made easily. However, students should ensure that their pencil is sharp and their responses are easy to read.
- Students should avoid presenting responses that are obviously prepared beforehand or that are more appropriate as answers to questions from previous examinations.
- Some students appeared to have run out of time when answering the last question, which was worth 14 marks. After the recorded works have ended, students might consider first addressing the questions in Section C that are worth the most marks, especially any that require a discussion and/or an integrated, extended response. As preparation for this examination, students should practise writing under timed exam conditions

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

Students are reminded that the Theory and aural comprehension section is worth almost 50 per cent of the examination and they should aim to develop required knowledge and skills to the highest possible levels.

In general, the level of music literacy and correct use of music notation conventions demonstrated by students seemed to have improved from previous years. Issues that continued to demand particular attention included the need for students to:

- become even more familiar with music theory concepts prescribed for study
- apply their knowledge in order to predict probable and/or eliminate improbable responses in transcription tasks
- learn to use effectively the three given parts of the melodic transcription question, (for example, by learning to read bass clef) and to differentiate consonant and dissonant intervals, particularly between the given parts and their own transcription of the melody
- develop skills in notating pitch and rhythm more accurately. In addition, stems and bars on notes should be written so that they are easy to discern
- refrain from altering given information; for example, the number of bars in a transcription task
- refrain from altering the given notes in theory tasks (see Question 1, for example)
- focus on the full range of scales in the tonalities prescribed for study
- be certain of the tonic/root note and character/quality/type of all diatonic chords (including 7 chords) of the major and harmonic minor tonalities prescribed for study.



Part 1: Intervals, scales and melody

Question 1 – Music theory – Intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	9	12	13	11	11	11	14	16	4.6

- 'D' above
- 'G-sharp' below
- 'F-sharp' above
- 'E-sharp' below
- 'B-sharp' below
- 'C-flat' above
- 'C-sharp' below
- 'A-sharp' above

A number of students experienced difficulty with this task. Several issues were problematic.

- Intervals where the note to be written was below the given note were often incorrect because students did not derive the interval distance from the lower note. Students need to understand that intervals are always derived from the lower note, even when this is the one to be written, not from the given note.
- A surprisingly large number of students added sharps and flats to the given note. Although this procedure often resulted in the correct interval, it was not the right answer. The given note is exactly that and students should not change the question to suit the answer.
- Many students seemed unable to complete the question parts using bass clef. The study design states that students must be able write intervals on a pitch staff with treble **and** bass clefs (see pages 83 and 93).

Question 2 – Music theory – scales and modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	24	0	0	23	0	0	24	0	0	29	4.7

- Lydian dominant, descending: 'Bb' (given), 'Ab', 'G', 'F', 'E(-natural)', 'D', 'C', 'Bb' (optional)
- Whole tone, ascending: 'D' (given), 'E', 'F#/Gb', 'G#/Ab', 'A#/Bb', 'C', 'D'
- Minor (La) pentatonic, descending: 'C' (given), 'Bb', 'G', 'F', 'Eb', 'C'.

Many students wrote only consecutive notes without any accidentals for all three scales (even for the minor pentatonic and whole tone scales), presumably in the belief that some of the notes had to be right. This approach was not appropriate as it demonstrated limited (or no) understanding of the scale as a specific 'set'.

Numerous students could not write descending scales. This was observed via a range of anomalies, including the 'flattening' of the 'C' (supertonic) of the B-flat lydian dominant scale, presumably because these students believed that the seventh note of the scale was lowered, whether ascending or descending.

It was clear that many students did not understand how the various scales prescribed for study are derived, how they are named and what their characteristics are. For example:

- the minor pentatonic form is so named because it features a minor third above the tonic note
- the 'lydian dominant' scale features a 'lydian' lower tetrachord (major third/augmented 4th) and an upper tetrachord from the 'dominant' scale (also known as the 'mixolydian' mode)
- whole tone scales feature exactly that – whole tones. Students need to know what the scale is and how it gets its name.

Very few of the few students who chose to present these scales in guitar tablature wrote them correctly.

Question 3 – Aural comprehension – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	4	6	8	9	10	10	9	9	7	7	5	4	4	7	1	7.2



A musical score for four instruments: Flute, Oboe, Violoncello, and Tuba. The score is in 4/4 time and G minor. The Flute part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Oboe part also has a treble clef and one flat. The Violoncello and Tuba parts have bass clefs and one flat. The Flute part features a triplet in the final measure. The Oboe part has a sharp sign in the second measure. The Violoncello part has a triplet in the first measure. The Tuba part has a triplet in the final measure.

It was pleasing to note that most students attempted the whole transcription. Many students either kept the transcription in its correct key (G minor) or its relative major. A large number of students were quite successful at notating the rhythm with a feasible melodic contour, thus achieving at least 50 per cent of marks.

Although most students fared acceptably well with the general melodic contour, the three 'leaps' (the perfect 4th in bar one, the perfect octave in bar three and the minor 3rd in bar three) seemed to be problematic for many, often resulting in notation that was not logical, especially when compared to the other (printed and sounded) parts in the excerpt.

Rhythmically, the excerpt was reasonably sophisticated. Preparation for this question requires ongoing attention to the development of rhythmic skills in aural environments during the teaching and learning processes.

Some students seemed unsure of how to approach this task, whether logically, intuitively or systematically. There are many methods for teaching and learning the basic skills necessary to undertake melodic transcriptions. One approach is for students to learn melodic material that they hear regularly (perhaps starting with the music for simple radio and television ads or pop songs and increasing the sophistication from there), using either numbers and/or 'sol-fa' syllables to distinguish scale degrees. At first this may require checking/confirmation using an instrument, but fairly quickly the necessary skills should begin to develop. Once the aural elements are pretty well in hand, attempts at notation (probably starting with rhythm) can begin to be incorporated.

A number of students would benefit from developing the ability to memorise the melody in order to be able to break up the more difficult sections into manageable units. In addition, once the melody is memorised it becomes possible to sing/hum the notes of any leaps (**internally**, not aloud as this could disturb others) in order to check the intervals. Many students would be helped immeasurably by paying attention to the other printed and sounded parts of the excerpt and by learning to read the notes of the bass clef parts. By so doing, the accompaniment can be of optimal use. Students should also have an awareness of some of the fundamentals of harmony and harmonic progressions.



The following is a list of observations and common problems regarding the transcription of this melody.

Bar one

- The rhythm of this bar was almost always totally correct.
- Incorrect contour was a problem – it was sometimes reversed (that is, the interval direction was downward but the note was written upward).
- The 'G' (second half of beat two) was often followed by crotchet 'F' on beat three (instead of an 'A') and then the leap up to the crotchet on beat four was usually to the wrong note (and often not a perfect 4th).
- The crotchet on beat four was sometimes written as a 'C' (or 'C#') and sometimes as an 'E' (or 'F' or 'E-flat'), even when the preceding 'A' of beat three was correct.
- The 'B-flat' on beat one was sometimes followed by a note that was more than a minor 2nd below it. Commonly this error affected the pitches in the rest of the dictation. Some students tried to make harmonic sense from this error thus creating odd contours here and there which often ended up on a 'D' for the final note.

Bar two

- Generally, the pitch contour was recognised, although sometimes it was placed incorrectly on the stave.
- The rhythm of the bar was usually correct.
- There were numerous instances of two quavers (not tied), rather than a single crotchet, on beat one.
- The 'B' in the triplet of beat two often failed to include the flat (despite the flat of the first note of the excerpt – the same note).
- The rhythm of the triplet was sometimes presented as a 'syn-co-pa' (semiquaver, quaver, semiquaver), sometimes as a 'tika-ti' (two semiquavers and a quaver) and sometimes as a 'ti-tika' (a quaver and two semiquavers). Semiquaver (not quaver) triplets and crotchet triplets also appeared occasionally. (The inclusion of crotchet triplets frequently resulted in adding a bar to the flute part.)
- The minim on beat three sometimes appeared as a crotchet that was usually not followed by a crotchet rest.

Bar three

- The octave leap from beat one to beat two was written as anything from a 3rd to a 7th; most often it was a 5th (a 'D', assuming that the crotchet on beat one was correctly written as a 'G' – the note in unison with the oboe's dotted crotchet).
- The 'syn-co-pa' (semiquaver, quaver, semiquaver) pattern of beat three sometimes appeared as a 'tika-ti' (two semiquavers and a quaver) or a triplet.
- The dotted quaver-semiquaver pattern on beat four was usually correct, although it sometimes appeared in augmentation (dotted crotchet-quaver), often resulting in a five-beat bar or impacting upon bar four.
- When the figures of beats three and four were (sonically) placed correctly, a pleasing number of students added sharp(s) for the 'F'(s), although many did not.
- In some cases, a flat was added to the 'E' on the last semiquaver of beat three (as well as the F#), presumably because of the 'E-flat' in the tuba part on beat one of the bar. This was surprising because the augmented 2nd sound is so distinctive and the underlying harmony at this point would not logically include an 'E-flat' as it would create a compound minor 2nd against the 'D's in the 'cello and tuba parts and a diminished 5th against the oboe's 'A'. Presumably students who wrote an 'E-flat' believed that the melody was from the harmonic minor, a scale form which is not examinable in this context – see pages 82 and 92 of the study design.

Bar four

- The pitch contour was generally recognised, even if placed on an incorrect part of the stave.
- The flat for the 'B' of the downbeat was often omitted (assuming a 'B' was written).
- The triplet was often replaced by a 'syn-co-pa'.
- The tie was often omitted (or no rest was written for the first semiquaver of beat two).
- The semiquaver pattern was usually recognised; there were several instances of augmentation to quavers but, in such instances, the pitch contour was usually correct nevertheless.
- The sharp for the 'F' was frequently omitted.
- The final bar was sometimes written in the lower octave (and preceded by some very interesting melodic processes at various stages of bar three).



Part 2: Harmony

Question 4 – Music theory – Individual chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	8	11	14	19	20	22	3.8

- F7 (Dom 7): 'F'–'A'–'C'–'Eb'
- B dim 7: 'B'–'D'–'F'–'Ab'
- Bb Major: 'Bb'–'D'–'F'
- G minor 7: 'G'–'Bb'–'D'–'F(-natural)'
- D Major 7: 'D'–'F#'–'A'–'C#'
- Eb minor: 'Eb'–'Gb'–'Bb'

This question was answered fairly well, with most students able to write at least four of the chords correctly. Nevertheless, some students did not seem to know how to construct chords with the correct intervallic structure.

The following list of points highlights the majority of problems that were experienced by students.

- 'F7 (Dom 7)': frequently the flat for the 'E' was not written, hence the chord written was not a 'dominant 7' but rather a 'Major 7' sonority; sometimes the 'E' was omitted altogether, making the chord a simple 'Major' triad.
- 'B dim 7': frequently the 7th of this chord was an 'A', hence the sonority written was in fact 'half diminished' or 'minor 7/flat 5'; other reasonably common errors included the 'minor 7' sonority (spelt 'B'–'D'–'F#'–'A') and the '(Dominant) 7/flat 5' sonority (spelt 'B'–'D#'–'F'–'A'), a chord not prescribed for study.
- 'Bb Major': the most common error was the addition of another (4th) note (usually an 'A') making it a four-note, 'Major 7' chord; sometimes the 'F' was sharpened, creating a 'Bb augmented' sonority.
- 'G minor 7': fairly often the 'B' had no flat (thus a 'G7' chord); sometimes the flat was replaced with a sharp (a confused kind of 'suspended 4' chord); sometimes a sharp was added to the F (making it a 'G minor/Major 7' chord); some students added a sharp to the 'D' while omitting the flat from the 'B' (creating an 'augmented 7' chord – also not prescribed for study) while several students flatted the 'F'; a couple of students spelt the chord 'G'–'B'–'D#'–'F-flat'.
- 'D Major 7': often the 'C' did not have a sharp, so the chord written was a 'dominant 7' sonority; sometimes no 'C' was written.
- 'Eb minor': most often the flat was omitted from the 'G' (hence, 'Eb Major'); sometimes neither the 'G' nor the 'B' had flats (hence, 'Eb-flat Augmented').

It was common for the note of the upper octave to be added. This is not necessary and, unfortunately, it was also common for this note to be wrong, especially with respect to the 'B-flat Major' and 'E-flat minor' chords where the upper tonic note did not include its flat.

Question 5 – Music theory – Diatonic chords

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	33	17	18	17	16	1.7

- Submediant – C harmonic minor: 'Ab'–'C'–'Eb'
- Leading note 7 – Bb Major: 'A'–'C'–'Eb'–'G'
- Dominant 7 – D harmonic minor: 'A'–'C#'–'E'–'G'
- Mediant – Bb harmonic minor: 'Db'–'F'–'A'

Although about 16 per cent of students wrote all four chords correctly, half of the students scored zero or one mark for this question. Many students appeared not to know the names of the scale degrees and many of them simply wrote the tonic chord of the given tonality. The study design states clearly that students should be able to 'write individual chords... as root position diatonic triads and 7ths built on tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant and leading note' scale degrees. Some students simply wrote in the key signatures and then stacked 3rds above the required scale degree. With particular respect to the last two chords, this approach frequently resulted in incorrect answers: many students wrote in the 'B-flat' for the key signature of D harmonic minor but failed to add the sharp to the 'C' to create the 'dominant 7' sonority of the fifth scale degree; many students wrote in the key signature for 'B-flat' harmonic minor (five flats), but failed to add the 'natural' to the 'A' (the 'raised' subtonic or leading note of



the harmonic minor) to create the ‘augmented’ triad that is the ‘mediant’ sonority of scale degree 3. To avoid such errors, students are advised to use only accidentals, not key signatures, when answering these types of questions.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	49	15	13	12	11	1.2

- 1. A-flat (Major)
- 2. A half diminished (A^ø – Am7/b5)
- 3. A (Dominant) 7
- 4. D-flat Augmented (Db+)

As preparation for the ‘Recognition of chord progression’ question that followed (Question 6), it was crucial that students know the chord types (see pages 84 and 94 of the study design), and harmonic minor tonalities of B-flat, C and D (indeed, for tonalities of all major and harmonic minor scale forms, given that the chord qualities are the same for each scale degree, regardless of the tonic).

Very few of the few students who chose to write their answers in guitar tablature for Questions 4 and 5 did much of it correctly. Many answers included notes above the fifth fret of the instrument, hence these chord shapes were incorrect, and/or many answers had more than one note on the same string, therefore they were not ‘playable’ – see instructions on the paper.

Question 6 – Aural comprehension: Recognition of a chord progression

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	1	3	6	10	12	13	10	9	7	5	4	5	5	5	4	7.6

1. *C Major* 2. E minor 7 3. A minor 7 4. D minor 7 5. G (Major) 6. F (Major)

or

1. *C Major* 2. Emin7 / Em7 / E-7 3. Amin7 / Am7 / A-7 4. Dmin7 / Dm7 / D-7 5. G (Major) 6. F (Major)

or

1. *C Major* 2. iii7 / III min 7 3. vi 7 / VI min 7 4. ii 7 / II min 7 5. V 6. IV

or

Harmonic Grid 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

Bass Note	C	E	A	D	G	F
Character/ Quality/Type	<i>Major</i>	minor 7	minor 7	minor 7	Major	Major

A number of students identified chords that are not of the C major ‘chord scale’, that is, non-diatonic chords. Such chords are not prescribed for study. Students need to have an understanding of diatonic harmony to answer questions such as this. One way students can develop this knowledge is to analyse chord progressions in music they commonly listen to and perform.

Students who took a methodical approach to answering this question (which was evident in their rough workings) often did quite well, even when their understanding was not complete. The majority of students who used the harmonic grid demonstrated some level of systematic ‘working out’ of the various components of the chords in the progression. Correct identification of the bass line was pleasingly common, but many students had trouble with the three consecutive minor 7 chords.

The following is a list of observations and common problems.

- Inappropriate or confused musical grammar was used frequently.
- Many students identified incorrect (often non-diatonic) bass notes, commonly leading on to the labelling of non-diatonic sonorities (‘Bb Major’ or ‘Bb minor’).
- The diatonic chord qualities were confused by many; for example, ‘E Major (7)’, ‘A Major (7)’, ‘D Major (7)’ and ‘F minor (7)’, none of which are diatonic to ‘C Major’.
- Often the last two chords were reversed, as if students for some reason expected a ‘common’ imperfect cadence formula (although V to IV is indeed a standard (‘interrupted’, ‘half’, ‘deceptive’) cadence type – even if not particularly common).



- Some students who used the harmonic grid named all (or a few) of the bass notes correctly but did not write anything or gave incorrect answers for the character/quality/type of each chord. When using the harmonic grid, students should complete all of the boxes so that nothing of importance is overlooked.
- Many students wrote inverted chords. Almost all these responses were not written on the harmonic grid. The study design clearly states that only root progression chords will be examined (see pages 83 and 93).
- A number of students identified the last two chords as ‘minor 7’, ‘Dominant 7’, or ‘Major 7’ (or any two in combination – see below) despite neither of them having 7ths.
- A small percentage of students used upper case Roman numerals exclusively. This is acceptable, providing the character/quality/type of the particular chord is indicated – but often it was not.
- Several students used Arabic numbers for both diatonic position and quality – for example, ‘2/7’, presumably indicating the supertonic 7 chord (ii7 – Dm7). The use of Arabic numbers exclusively provides no indication that the student knows the character/quality/type of the particular chord. Although there are some very rare examples of this style of nomenclature, students are requested to use ‘standard’ figured notation (featuring Roman numbers for the diatonic position of the chord) when writing their answers for this examination. Students who are not confident users of figured notation are advised to use the harmonic grid and it is suggested that students who use the grid avoid using figured notation (in the bottom boxes, for example) unless they are very confident in both styles.

Some students answered using both methods (the lines and the harmonic grid), often giving contradictory answers. Students should use the blank manuscript paper provided in the examination booklet for their rough working out and then transfer their answers to their preferred and/or most appropriate method of response – the lines **or** the grid – **not both**.

As in previous years, the harmonic grid was used in the majority of the higher scoring answers. Some of the students who used it, however, demonstrated some serious misunderstandings about diatonic harmony. As an example, the following response from one student demonstrates the levels of confusion that some students seem to experience regarding diatonic chord progressions as well as the nature of chords with 7ths.

<i>Harmonic Grid</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Bass Note	C	E	A	D	G	F
Character/ Quality/Type	Major	minor	Major	Major 7	Dominant 7	Dm / F

- Chord 2: correct base note; correct triadic quality; 7th omitted
- Chord 3: correct base note; incorrect quality (wrong primary chord type and 7th omitted)
- Chord 4: correct base note; incorrect quality (wrong primary chord type and wrong type of 7th)
- Chord 5: correct base note; correct triadic quality; 7th added that was not sounded
- Chord 6: correct base note; wrong triadic quality (inverted chords are no longer examined in this study design)

In order to deal successfully with diatonic chord progressions, it is essential that students know and understand all of the material examinable for Questions 5a. and b. and can apply this knowledge **aurally** to tasks involving the recognition of chord progressions. In preparing for Question 6, students are advised to sing and play both the major and harmonic minor scales and then sing and play the triads and seventh chords that can be constructed above each scale degree (using only the notes from the particular major and harmonic scale, which, for the purposes of this study design need only be in the tonalities of B-flat, C and D).

Section B – Analysis of excerpts of previously unheard music

Students need to be able to identify instruments more accurately in aurally-based contexts, whether by name or by sound quality (for example, high stringed-instrument sound). Writing about the textures and nuances of musical excerpts is difficult if the student cannot recognise (even in a very broad sense) which instruments are playing and how they are related to one another.

Music terminology was often a problem in Section B. Students need to develop and practise skills in using appropriate terminology to describe music they hear.



Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	3	6	14	19	20	20	12	6	4.9

Essentially the rhythmic differences related to the stylistic differences. The Broadway Revival version featured ‘straight’ rhythms within ‘neo-Romantic’ scoring. There were points of minor ‘bending’ of the ‘four-square’ nature of the rhythms, but this was primarily interpretative by the vocalist.

The Shepp version featured a fairly ‘straight’ (nevertheless, jazz) rhythm section, delivering a fairly standard ballad interpretation. It did ‘swing’, but this was more implied than really at the forefront. The vast majority of the overt swinging was from the soloist. The approach featured rhythmic and melodic embellishment/ornamentation of the principal line, much (but not all) of which was declamatory and/or interjectory. Terms which appeared in better answers included ‘runs, ‘inserts’, ‘rhythmically extended’, ‘flow on’, ‘rhythmic expansion’ and ‘rhythmic embellishment’.

Students needed to have an understanding of what rhythm really is in order to answer this question. Most students were able to write reasonably coherent responses. Many of the stronger answers featured dot points and/or columns to show the way that rhythm was treated differently in each version. Responses of average standard and above made mention of the different interpretations of the melodic material – one straight, one improvised – with more sophisticated responses going on to observe that the improvisation process of the jazz version was essentially melodic ‘embellishment’ and then describing more specific rhythmic aspects of the approach.

In a very high percentage of responses, unfortunately, the most correct and appropriate comment was simply that one version featured ‘swing’ and the other did not (sometimes this was essentially the whole of the response). Many students stated that the time signatures/meters were different, because of the view that the Broadway Revival version was a ‘waltz’ and the jazz version was ‘in 4’.

Comparisons of tempi occurred far too often, with such responses commonly devoid of any description of, or even implied reference to, genuine rhythmic elements or concepts. A large number of students mentioned **volume** in their response, frequently commenting, for example, that the rhythm in one version was louder than the other. Many students confused ‘rhythm’ with ‘drum part’, sometimes commenting, for example, that because the Broadway Revival version had no drummer (even though it does – it’s just soft), the excerpt doesn’t **have any** rhythm. Some students even implied that the question was somehow unfair because one version had a drummer and the other one did not, hence an in-depth comparison of the rhythmic treatments was not possible.

The following is an example of a high-level response to Question 7a.

Whereas the singer (of the Broadway Revival version) is using largely simple and straight rhythms, the jazz band (particularly the saxophonist) uses various syncopations and improvisations.

The Rodgers and Hart interpretation is from the musical – it is more classically oriented. Further, as it is obviously necessary to sing the words as well as the melody, the singer had to largely keep the rhythm ‘on the page’ (straight). However, as there was only simple backing, she was able to use rubato and rits. [ritenutos], especially at the ends of phrases, giving the ‘swooning’ effect of a love song.

The Shepp interpretation is in the style of jazz. This in itself provides great opportunities for rhythmic differences. The saxophonist obviously has no words to sing, and is free to make many improvisations. He varies note values from short, within faster passages, to more extended notes. The simple, swing groove of the drum kit and bass allows him to syncopate and move around the time. The piano, characteristically in this style of music, is playing syncopated chords.

Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	3	9	19	23	23	16	6	5.2

- Instrumentation: pit orchestra versus a jazz quartet
- Phrasing: straight versus embellished/ornamented (although these concepts needed to be expanded upon – simply labelling the style or approaches was not sufficient)
- Dynamics: issues of relative balance of volumes, both between the versions and perhaps within the versions
- Melody: ‘straight’ versus embellished/ornamented or elaborated (the original version included countermelody and involved expansion of melodic lines outside of the principal melody from the vocalist; the Shepp version was essentially the original melody plus embellishments of equal significance)



The majority of students chose to write about instrumentation and melody. Most students correctly identified some of the instruments in each version, although a few students thought that the soloist in the jazz (Archie Shepp) version is a trumpet. Strong answers often included a list of orchestral instruments, highlighted the roles of each of the instruments, and correctly identified the dynamic contrasts in each of the works. The best answers about melody used terms such as scale-like runs, large range, repetitive melody, elaboration and embellishment, and several students attempted (and often correctly) to identify the types of scales used in Shepp’s improvisation.

Students who wrote about phrasing often failed to answer the question with very much depth or perception. Comments such ‘there were not many dynamics’ or ‘the melody of one version was sung while the other was played on a trumpet’ were not uncommon. Although these might serve as initial statements, they were not viewed as sufficient answers with respect to the elements of dynamics and melody.

Very few students wrote about issues related to dynamics. Some of those who did attempted to describe issues of comparative levels of energy or ‘dynamism’, not matters related to relative volume levels, or even how the relative volume levels (dynamics) might affect dynamism or levels of energy.

Many students focused too much upon a first difference and then failed to address a second significant difference. Where a question requires a description of two differences, both recorded versions need to be covered adequately. Some students wrote about all four of the elements, but such responses rarely featured sufficient depth or breadth regarding any of them.

Although students were able to focus upon rhythm as one of the significant differences between the two interpretations in performance (because ‘... in your response you **may** refer to ...’ meant that aspects other than the four listed **may** have constituted the basis for the responses about one of the two differences), such answers needed to avoid restating the material used to answer Question 7a. Students who used rhythm again for Question 7b., however, almost always presented a ‘re-hash’ of the response for Question 7a.

Following are high-scoring responses taken from two papers, one featuring melody and phrasing and the other, instrumentation.

Example 1

The melody of the 1989 Broadway version is very simple, is strongly integrated within the accompaniment and, in typical Broadway style, is sung. The rhythm of the melody, therefore, is strongly shaped around the syllables of the words [that are] broken into clear, 4-bar phrases made up of 2 + 2 bars – ‘My funny valentine, sweet funny valentine’, for example – which are easily distinguishable.

Archie Shepp approaches the melody differently when improvising around the chord structure of the piece. Without the use of lyrics to shape each phrase, he is able to alter and create new phrases based around the original melody. He uses a variety of phrase lengths – often long, fast passages that begin and end in the middle of the Broadway version’s original phrase.

As he performs on a saxophone, Archie Shepp has greater improvisatory licence, which creates an entirely different feel to the melody.

Example 2

Instrumentation: the first recording used instrumentation very typical of a showtune: lead vocals, strings, a strong, steady bass line and various other woodwinds, brass and percussion. This version makes full use of all of the pit orchestra to create a love ‘mood’ – layered strings dominating over other instruments and the vocals rising above.

The 2nd interpretation was a jazz version of the original piece, [with] saxophone as the lead voice, held together by a walking bass line, syncopated piano and a soft, brushed drum kit. The simplicity of the instrumentation gives the sax more licence to cut loose with its improvisation (doesn’t have to stay with the backing instruments) and the bass and drum kit can also move the time around a bit.

Question 7c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	4	7	14	20	21	17	10	4	5.5

Broadway Revival

- Melody: ‘straight’, as per the original scoring. There is very little embellishment/ornamentation, and it is presented mainly without melismatic embellishments. There are some rubati and changes of nuance and intensity, both with respect to the melodic line and individual notes/syllables.



- Dynamics: there are some fluctuations in dynamics. Much of the accompaniment is dependent upon the instrumental density and/or rhythmic/melodic intensity/activity. This is often governed by the mood or image of the lyrics. Most of the dynamic contrast from the vocalist relates to the text (especially with respect to the mood or image of the lyrics at the time).
- Tone colour: the accompaniment is provided by a fairly extensive pit orchestra (harp, vibraphone, etc.). A range of tonal colours is explored – in particular, exposed woodwinds (flute), both lush and restrained strings, short melodic doubling as well as short countermelodies and variations, all of which are from a fairly standard, post-Romantic approach to orchestration.
- Articulation: the vocalist features a broad range, moving from clearly (and purposefully) legato passages to clearly and purposeful ‘clipped’ passages. Virtually all of this is related to issues of diction and the significance of the piece as a vehicle within the story line (essentially it is a ‘recitative’, although there are some aria-like characteristics). The orchestra presents a range of articulations – mostly the articulations are smooth and fairly sustained.

Shepp

- Melody: quite ‘florid’. There are scalar/modal extensions of melodic framework that could be viewed as melismatic extensions.
- Dynamics: there is some dynamic contrasting from the ensemble, although much of it is in response to the rhythmic and/or melodic intensity of the solo. Much of the dynamic variation in the solo is governed by register and/or rhythmic intensity.
- Tone colour: fairly ‘static’, typical of such ensembles (a piano trio with sax soloist). There are colourations in the keyboard voicings and some minor alterations in the ‘colour’ (timbre) of the tonal characteristics of the soloist. Much of this seems to be focused on the notion of presenting a ‘vocalistic’ solo.
- Articulation: much of the articulation is separated. The soloist tends not to use a lot of tongue; the improvisation is not overtly staccato. This approach to the ballad ‘standard’ is fairly typical of the style – although there are lots of notes, most of them do not feature the use of a ‘hard’ tongue. Hence, as a jazz work, the delivery is fairly ‘smooth’. Much of the ‘groove’ relies upon the rhythmic interplay of the instruments such that there is a first principles need for much of the material (especially the accompaniment) to be comparatively separated (not necessarily short or sharp, however).

The key element of this question was how the elements were used to give meaning to the interpretation. The more sophisticated answers addressed meaning very effectively. Discussion of the effect of changes of tone colour or articulation, for example, often resulted in particularly fine, highly detailed responses. This matter was also addressed effectively where, for example, comparisons of nuances in the melodies and dynamics were the focus of the response.

Approximately equal numbers of students chose each interpretation, and neither one seemed better treated than the other. However, some students incorrectly compared and/or contrasted the two interpretations – only one should have been discussed (as per the second sentence of the question). Many students were able to address meaning with relation to one or two of the musical considerations, but often not three.

Many students did not make clear which of the three elements they were writing about. Such answers often discussed a range of things (elements, considerations, issues, etc.) without focusing upon three, or sometimes any, of the four elements in the question, or indeed the question itself. It often seemed that these students were presenting responses that had been prepared beforehand – clearly a bad idea. Some students essentially (sometimes literally) rewrote their answers regarding ‘melody’ and ‘dynamics’ from Question 7b.

Following are some general observations focusing on specific elements of music.

- Melody and dynamics were handled well, although many students discussed melody in regards to which instrument was performing it rather than the characteristics of the melody itself. It was reasonably common for discussions about dynamics to be the reverse of what was occurring in the versions played.
- Tone colour and articulation were not handled well. (See the Appendix of the study design, pages 101–2, for a discussion of ‘texture’.)
- Articulation was frequently addressed as if it were tone colour. Many students had a very low level of understanding of what articulation truly means, whether regarding the human voice or instruments. For example, it was fairly common for articulation to be interpreted as (presumably) relating exclusively to ‘diction’. Hence, some answers stated, for example, that articulation was ‘irrelevant in the Shepp version as there is no vocalist’.



Following are high-scoring responses taken from two papers, one featuring the *1989 Broadway Revival Cast* recording and the other, the *Archie Shepp* recording.

Example 1

1989 Broadway Revival Cast

Melody: The melody line is from a vocalist. It is very clear with very little syncopation. It features steps, some small leaps and a few larger leaps. The melodic 'theme' is repeated many times throughout the piece, played by the orchestra as well as repeated by the singer within the melody. There are also counter-melody lines from the orchestra, often in response to the main melody from the singer. These smaller lines are sometimes sequenced. The singer highlights many of the important words of the lyrics by how they are expressed. The melody also highlights the important words as they are often held for longer or are higher (in pitch).

Dynamics: The vocals, teamed with the backing strings, give the work great dynamic range. They [the strings] swell in the middle of phrases, and fade at the end, together – not against one another – which accentuates the dynamics. The woodwind and soft brass parts often crescendo [through] the fading string and vocal parts, which brings out an important counter melody line.

Articulation: The voice, although pronounced, is quite legato, which allows the also-legato strings to blend with and move with the voice. Both of these parts hold pretty much the same types of articulation throughout the whole work. The bass line (double bass) is pizzicatoed, and the celli use soft bows, adding to the cloudy, almost muted sound. The woodwind and soft brass are also fairly soft and legato. In contrast, the glockenspiel in the percussion section rings out with a sharp, bright sound. This sharp articulation is used to add a 'silver lining' to the soft, cloudy piece.

Example 2

Archie Shepp

Melody: The melody in the Archie Shepp version is mostly improvised. Improvisation is a compositional device, often used in jazz, which allows a soloist or group to exhibit a showcase of spontaneity and melodic/rhythmic skill. This type of (spontaneous and virtuosic) feel appears to be what the saxophonist is going for in the interpretation of the melody. It gives images of a late-night jazz club where this particular interpretation may be played.

Tone Colour: The combination of instruments is typical of small jazz groups. It is basically a piano trio with an instrumental soloist. The version is quite smooth, with an airy saxophone, a delicate piano and brushed drums – again, evoking images of a jazz night club where people come to relax and enjoy a few drinks. The airy saxophone almost makes one think of the 'valentine', mentioned in the lyrics of the piece, as being sensual and breathtaking in their figure.

Articulation: The articulation, involving some staccato syncopation from the piano line, gives the piece some of its jazzy feel, as the use of both long and short notes allows the phrases to 'swing'. The drums sometimes interject offbeat punches, helping to highlight the accented, staccato notes from the piano and some of the phrases from the soloist.

Section C – Analysis of works from the Prescribed List of Ensemble Works

It is critical that students are highly familiar with both of the prescribed works selected for study as interpretations in performance through the study of the **prescribed** versions. Students should also be well-prepared to answer questions about two versions of two prescribed ensemble works (a total of four **specific** recordings). The list of prescribed ensemble works and versions is available on the VCAA website (www.vcaa.vic.gov.au). An unacceptably high percentage of students wrote on non-prescribed versions of prescribed works, only one prescribed ensemble work (sometimes only one version of the work, not two as required) or non-prescribed works (such as '(Somewhere) Over the Rainbow' from *The Wizard of Oz* rather than 'Somewhere (There's a Place for Us)' from *West Side Story*).

Students need to be aware that their responses for each question must be focused entirely on one of the set works only. For example, it is not acceptable to compare the performance standard of the playing of one instrument in one version of a prescribed ensemble work to the performance standard of the playing of the same instrument in one version of a **different** prescribed ensemble work. Although this may be a valid learning task, it is not what the study design requires.

Students should consider carefully which of the works they have studied is best suited for each question (for example, Question 8 or Question 9). Reading time can be used to establish which of the student's prescribed ensemble works best 'fit' specific questions in Section C.

Students must be able to write about music – in the language of music – with some degree of insight. They need to be conversant with the appendix to the study design (pages 99–102) so as to ensure that they can demonstrate understanding of the meanings and ramifications of musical terms that could be used in the examination. In addition, they should become highly familiar with the meanings of specific terms and musical concepts such as rhythm, melody,



dynamics, articulation, tone colour and interpretation. This is perhaps most efficiently accomplished with the use of high-quality reference materials such as compendiums and dictionaries and with ongoing practice.

Many students disregarded the instruction to identify clearly the issues to which they were referring. The inclusion of this advice on the examination paper is primarily to help students write a relevant, focused and cogent response. A ‘stream-of-consciousness’ approach to writing in this setting is usually not well-focused, often difficult to follow and rarely convincing.

Question 8a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	3	6	12	17	19	19	13	7	4.7

Students needed to have thorough knowledge of the work in order to address this question in sufficient depth. The best responses demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the music with reference to specific points and characteristics of the music. Dot point-style answers that clearly detailed two musical considerations and described the function of the instrument within the ensemble generally worked quite well, provided a reasonably detailed description was presented. Most of the very best answers featured an instrument that presented the main melody, giving an excellent description of the features/characteristics of the melody and how it was interwoven with the other parts. These responses commonly included a description (often notated) of the rhythmic features of the melody and its relationship(s) to other parts/lines/voices/instruments within the music at the time (which was often identified specifically, even using bar numbers). When studying the works, it is vital that the roles of the instruments used individually and in combination are discussed in detail and well understood.

Weaker responses presented very basic descriptions of the role of the chosen instrument which rarely demonstrated sufficient insight or understanding with respect to two of the dot points to be addressed. A simple outline of the features of melody, duration and dynamics did not address the question adequately as a link needed to be made between the role of the instrument (including voice) in **creating** the musical texture (see the appendix on pages 101–2 of the study design for the prescribed definition/discussion of ‘texture’).

The most important consideration in answering this question was exactly how (perhaps where and/or when) the chosen instrument **combined** with other instruments to create musical textures, with respect to at least two of the dot points. In order to achieve high marks, responses needed to demonstrate a good understanding of issues of ‘interrelatedness’. The role of the instrument (or voice) included: melodic outline, harmonic support, rhythmic support, pulse reinforcement, counter-melodic statement, doubling, backing, etc. Outstanding answers generally recognised how instruments contributed to the creation of different overall sonic or relational characteristics within a composition or arrangement (for example, homophony, polyphony, heterophony, etc.). Other factors that could be considered were motion between combinations of instruments and the level of activity of the instruments and voices used when in combination. The choice of particular tone colours and blends of tone colours, voicing and balance of chords and rhythms and layers of rhythms were factors that might also have been addressed.

Below are some of the problems that were encountered when answering this question.

- Many students did not deal particularly well with the notion of instruments being used in combination to create texture. Indeed, many students made little, if any, reference to other instruments. Some students appeared uncertain about the meanings of texture, with ‘mood’ frequently being a perceived synonym for texture.
- Some students found it difficult to address two of the selected musical considerations; consequently, in many answers there was a heavy focus on one element and only a brief sentence (or nothing) about a second element.
- This was not a comparison question of interpretations, yet many students apparently thought it was, despite the clear instruction to select **one** of the works. The question made no reference at all to two interpretations in performance. Nevertheless, students who presented a description of a common instrument in both interpretations were still able to achieve a reasonable mark for this question.
- Duration was commonly interpreted as the tempo and/or the length of work, despite ‘(beat, rhythm, metre)’ having been included as part of the dot point.
- Many students who wrote about songs (works with lyrics) presented lists of attributes in the text (sometimes just the lyrics themselves) without any description or discussion about role (except, for example, ‘the singer sings the words’) and/or texture (except, for example, ‘the sound of his voice is really thick and husky’).
- Many students did not list two interpretations in the performance of work 1, identify a significant instrument and/or indicate which interpretation of the work their response was focused upon. Some students alternated



between the two interpretations, often without notice or clarification, despite the specific instructions in the preamble to refer to **one** work, **a** (one) significant instrument and **one** interpretation of the work.

- Some students did not choose a particular instrument but rather wrote about how all of the instruments related to each other – an exceedingly difficult task within the time available.
- Quite a few answers were very brief descriptions of how the identified instrument combined with the other instruments. Some students wrote about what was played by the chosen significant instrument but did not relate this to the rest of the ensemble in any manner.
- Some students presented a comparison of the two interpretations that was clearly a prepared response; others gave a response that was obviously better suited to answering the 2005 question regarding how three musical features are used to make a unified whole in the prescribed ensemble work. It is vital that students read the questions carefully to ascertain exactly what is being asked of them and how best to deliver this. Given that a revised study design was introduced in 2006, pre-prepared responses almost always failed to answer the question, even with respect to only one of the interpretations.
- Reference to specific examples from within the chosen interpretation of the work did occur, but not very often.
- Many students chose an instrument (possibly the one that they played) that was not sufficiently dominant in the particular work being addressed. This approach almost without exception made the question fairly challenging to answer.
- Some students dealt with non-prescribed versions or non-prescribed **works**. A large number wrote about non-prescribed recordings, especially with respect to the symphonic works of the prescribed list.
- A number of students did not seem to know the name of the two works that they had studied and/or who wrote them.

The following high-level responses are about the Tom Waits version of ‘Somewhere’ (from *West Side Story*) and the original cast recording of ‘Somewhere (There’s a Place for Us)’.

Example 1

Melody: In the Tom Waits interpretation of ‘Somewhere’ the voice carries the main melody. He is a solo vocalist so the texture created by him when he sings alone is almost monophonic; however, when it is combined with the other instrumentation the overall texture becomes homophonic and, in a way, polyphonic. Tom Waits uses quite a lot of rubato in his delivery of the melody, giving the piece a sense of intimacy and hope. The vocalist also adds a ‘gravelly’ texture to the melody, giving it a kind of ‘down to earth’ feeling. Tom Waits also plays around with the original melody, placing accents on the more important words in the melody, while often skimming over the prepositions, which gives the melody a bit of a freer rhythm.

Example 2

Dynamics: As the voice crescendos, so do the instruments of the orchestra. As a crescendo takes place, the instruments already playing rise in volume and those that are not join in, one after the other, giving a swelling effect, that supports the intensity of the voice. As a decrescendo takes place, the opposite occurs: one by one the woodwind and brass instruments drop away, leaving the voice backed only by the soft strings. The role of the voice is to move the orchestra with it, almost ‘challenging’ the orchestra to rise with its dynamic level. In many ways the voice directs the orchestra, but as the group moves with the lead voice, the two combine and blend perfectly together: not so that you can no longer hear the voice, but as a perfect mix. The dynamics of the orchestra and the voice are symmetrical, allowing them to combine to make a full musical texture, full of longing and passion.

Question 8b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	2	4	6	10	15	18	15	12	7	3	5.5

Factors that could be discussed included: timbral issues; relative volume/dynamics or ‘mix-based’; register-based; text-based; issues of rhythmic complexity and relationship; relationship to thematic content; use of idiomatic approach(es); changes of arrangement; different instruments; differences of ‘feel’ or ‘groove’; and melodic characteristics (embellished versus ‘straight’).

It was important to deal with issues that were fairly significant or prominent; however, something could be significant without necessarily being (the most) prominent. At least two factors needed to be discussed, not merely described or simply mentioned.

Most students were comfortable writing about the differences between the interpretations that they had studied, and there were elements of genuine discussion evident in many responses. Fairly extensive knowledge of the background of the work was required to address this question at a high level and issues of relevant performance conventions and/or issues of interpretation were consistent features in the most successful responses.



A high percentage of students seemed to enjoy the comparison questions, perhaps because they are reasonably straightforward and (perhaps) fairly well-aligned to the students' learning experiences. Unfortunately, questions of this type appear to encourage a significant proportion of students to present responses that obviously had been prepared beforehand and are clearly based upon some degree of 'second-guessing' as to the content and/or focus of the question. Such responses often resulted in answers that hardly dealt at all with the notion of 'interpretations in performance', which was both the point of the question and one of the purposes of the component of the area of study and outcome ('Analysis of work selected from the *Prescribed List of Ensemble Works*'). Students should be wary of giving responses that list only the similarities and differences between the two works. This knowledge is certainly useful as a point of departure, but students must read the question carefully to ascertain exactly what is being asked of them. In this instance, a link between the factors and the differences in the two interpretations was essential to achieve high marks.

Assessors observed that:

- many students wrote very brief answers that often did not refer to the differences in/between the interpretations in performance
- a significant percentage of students used classroom jargon to identify their works. For example, 'Orchassion', 'Bo Rap' ('Bohemian Rhapsody') and so forth. Students must demonstrate clearly and completely that they know exactly what they have studied
- some students failed to refer to both interpretations of the prescribed work
- many students provided the same table format as in previous years with long columns of straight comparisons of facts, presumably assuming that the question was the same as some in previous years
- many students listed differences between the two interpretations without referring to the factors that led to the differences. For example, if a version of the work was a live recording as opposed to a studio recording, this could have resulted in differences in the interpretations
- several students discussed *My Funny Valentine* (see Question 7) instead of a prescribed ensemble work
- many students discussed recording technology, even if it was not the best path to choose for their prescribed work, particularly with respect to the fundamental requirements of the question. Although such technology-based discussions were possible, many students who adopted this approach delivered a prepared response that commonly focused fairly specifically upon comparisons of technologies. These comparisons included technologies available at the time of the recordings; the use of audio processing devices, effects and/or recording techniques in more contemporary recordings/arrangements (or the absence of such usage); and dimensions and/or acoustic properties of the venues of the performances. Generally, the approach was tenuously relevant (at best) to interpretations **in performance**, being almost invariably devoid of any links to the effect(s) that these technological considerations might have had on the interpretations (if any).

The two high-scoring responses below compare The Beatles' version of 'Strawberry Fields Forever' to that of Ben Harper; and the two prescribed versions (1991 and 1947) of 'Petrushka's Room' from Igor Stravinsky's 'Petrushka'.

Example 1

Firstly, there is a big difference regarding personal interpretation. The Beatles' interpretation was very much controlled by composer and singer John Lennon. Lennon's closeness to the piece is evident as their [The Beatles'] interpretation evokes a greater feeling of pain, through its dislocation of the voice, syncopated and displaced durations and the raw, almost childlike timbre of Lennon's voice. He wrote the song about his childhood, where his isolation from a negligent mother and a misunderstanding society reduced him to dreaming [whereby] he could only find freedom in the strawberry fields. Ben Harper also sings about the pain of being different, but his interpretation was recorded for a movie, not for himself or about himself, so it's not as personal and hurtful to him – his interpretation is less emotionally involved.

Example 2

Context: The 1911 score used by Stravinsky himself was specifically written for a ballet, whereas Rattle's 1947 score is more of an orchestral suite. This meant, in particular, that the durational aspects of Rattle's version were more refined, and so was much of the articulation, as it had to provide more interest to an audience listening to it carefully and specifically. Example: At around [rehearsal] figure 114 in the 1947 score, each bar, for four bars, has a different time signature. This is strongly emphasised by Rattle in order to create great rhythmic interest. Also, the bar before (rehearsal) figure 94 makes use of off-beat accents, also furthering differences in articulations between the versions.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	9	2	3	4	6	8	8	10	11	10	9	8	6	4	3	7.2

There were some excellent responses to this question, most of which demonstrated considerable insight about a range of issues associated with interpretations in performance. Students who wrote very high-level responses showed



extensive knowledge and understanding of the chosen works while maintaining focus upon the question throughout. The best responses explained clearly ways in which the differences in background influenced the music; stated issues which related to style and performance conventions current to the recording; noted individual preferences (for example, between conductors) and personal acquaintances (where relevant); and provided detailed descriptions of the similarities and differences between the works. Almost without exception, high-level responses referred continually to examples from the music, and sometimes these were notated. It was especially pleasing to note that students who wrote about contemporary works were much more successful than in previous years.

In order to achieve very high marks, students needed to provide a discussion that demonstrated knowledge of chosen consideration(s) via the delivery of an argument or reasoned point of view. The discussion of just one consideration was acceptable, although the level of sophistication of the response needed to be considerable in such instances.

Assessors highlighted a range of problems, observing that

- most students wrote about both interpretations of this work (as required) but a disturbingly high number of students wrote about non-prescribed versions or (more disturbingly) non-prescribed **works**
- many students did not appear to be aware of what contextual issues are
- when historical/background information was presented, it was generally gossip-style history. In addition, students who wrote knowledgeably and verifiably about relevant background differences often failed to make the link back to the effect that the differences had on the interpretations in performance
- many students' answers were obviously prepared beforehand and little thought had been given to addressing the question
- many students wrote good comparative **descriptions** (especially apropos instrumentation of the performances), but very few students managed to use this information to mount a **discussion** (to demonstrate understanding) about 'how the background and/or contextual issues associated with (the) work have influenced the two interpretations in performance'
- many answers were very general and featured little or no specific supporting evidence from the work
- a noticeably high number of students placed question marks (often in brackets) after words and/or at the end of sentences, perhaps suggesting that either they were not sure or were guessing about what they had written
- many responses were so brief that even a basic description was not established
- many students had difficulty demonstrating much understanding about the works. These students were almost always lacking in sufficient music language abilities
- many students had a basic understanding of the works but were unable to develop this understanding in order to answer the question
- straight comparisons of the similarities and differences of instruments and thematic material were very common, but very few of these responses presented a discussion that was in any way linked to the question
- many responses regarding particular works (especially more contemporary or jazz material) focused largely on the performance environment and the recording limitations of the time and improvements to these over time. Although these factors influence interpretation, students also needed to address performance styles, improvisation techniques, instrumentation and playing techniques, and so forth
- a fair number of students gave detailed lists of very subtle differences between the two interpretations instead of focusing on and answering the question itself
- a high number of the prepared answers seemed to have been based on the salient aspects of the previous study design – simply listing the similarities and differences of the works without drawing any conclusions or explaining why – especially with respect to issues of context.

The following is an example of a high-level response with respect to the two prescribed versions of 'Bohemian Rhapsody'.

The two interpretations of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' are very different from each other, even despite similar styles of interpretation. The second interpretation, from 'A Party at the Palace', was recorded after Freddie Mercury's death and therefore a different lead vocalist was needed to fulfil the role. Tony Vincent, and the cast of 'We Will Rock You' (a work of musical theatre) thus alter the arrangement of the piece to suit the addition of a full female choir and several lead vocalists. Tony Vincent, in taking on the principal lead singing role, does not have the same depth or the harsher tones in his voice as does Mercury. For example, when Mercury descends on the lyrics '... thrown it all away...' and '... face the truth...', he uses a harsh tone that is filtered into the usually smooth, rounded and warm tones of his voice, as he pushes out the notes – to express the anguish in the lyric. Tony Vincent does not employ this technique of word painting. Instead, he alters the contour of the melody, often rising when Freddie falls and experimenting with some notes in order to convey the message of the song.

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The addition of 2 female lead vocalists and a choir, so that a live performance is possible, also add a new dimension to the piece. This is most evident in the operatic section where, originally, the more shrill timbres of male voices occupying the higher vocal line are replaced by the more natural soprano sound of the female voices. The choir also adds greater depth and fullness of texture to this section, despite the use of layered tracks on the original recording. The more natural sounding vocals from the choir are because of the more natural dissonances and harmonics there, these due to the natural margins of error in each person.

The 'rock section' of the work is also subjected to alterations of timbre, primarily because the main melody singer has to fight to be heard. In part of this section, a new female vocalist 'scats' over the choir as a male vocalist, at times almost overpowering the melody, accentuates the violent lyric and its defiance.

Ultimately due to the live performance and the need for the use of more vocalists, the texture of version two is significantly thicker, even despite Mercury's layering of sound using multiple tracks.