

Music Performance: Group GA 3: Aural and Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the paper matched the 2001 examination paper and comprised a total of 118 marks. There were a total of nine questions, eight of which were to be answered, students having the option of responding to either Question 7 (part-writing) or Question 8 (improvisation).

In general, the results for this examination were the highest for this or the corresponding examination of previous years (prior to 2001). Nevertheless, in Section A (Aural comprehension), many students were not able to achieve equal results across the four areas of focus (melody, harmony, rhythm and characteristics of a pre-recorded work), despite overall results having demonstrated steady improvement from previous years in some domains. Basic notational skills remain the most serious weakness for many students who demonstrated little knowledge of rudimentary components of music notation.

The most common areas of weakness were:

- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding interval names, chord names, and the meaning and significance of the term 'diatonic'. Responses where this knowledge was not evident were also characterised by an inability to recognise notated rhythmic figures
- failure to apply consistent musical grammar
- confusion of terminology
- confused nomenclature, particularly intervallic versus and/or intermingled with harmonic labels
- difficulty identifying intervals when in context (both within melodies and as bass or root progressions) and tonalities (scale forms)
- lack of understanding of each section of the paper and/or exactly what each question required.

Other concerns included:

- many students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Part A of the examination (aural comprehension). Students are advised to attempt every question (except one of the optional questions in Section B) and to practise under examination conditions with papers from previous years
- whilst some highly insightful prose responses for Questions 6 to 9 demonstrated high levels of understanding of specific stylistic differences in contemporary popular music genres, other prose answers were often hard to decipher because students wrote illegibly and/or with blunt pencils
- some of the written questions were answered in the same way two or three times. Students should analyse questions in order to understand the real nature of each question type. Many students did not differentiate between the requirements of 'discuss', 'describe', and 'identify'. For example, 'discuss' does not mean 'identify' or simply make a 'list'. The relative marks available for each response type should provide an indication of the level of depth and/or breadth necessary
- confusion about or lack of awareness about the meanings of terms arose frequently, especially regarding tone colour, texture, articulations, contrast, and variation, while 'rhyming relationships' was sometimes confused with rhythmic relationships – such concepts need to be used regularly in teaching and learning programs
- although less common than in 2001, some students included value judgments about the works that they studied and/or made excessive comments regarding the standards of their own performance and/or improvisation skills or part-writing/harmonisation capabilities, without providing critical evidence to support such statements.

Some suggestions are:

- students must use the 15 minutes of reading time prior to the commencement of the examination productively. A significant number of responses indicated that students had not read the given question carefully. Prose-based answers (in particular) frequently lacked organisation and cohesion
- students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. Notes should be either on a line or in a space – not both
- students should use a pencil rather than a pen when notating music
- where appropriate, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music 'sequencer', especially to programme rhythms and progressions.

Section A – Aural comprehension

Part 1 – Intervals and melody

Question 1

Recognition of intervals

a. (Average mark 1.54/Available marks 4)

Identification of interval distance (quality and number)

1. Perfect 5th
2. Minor 2nd (semitone)
3. Perfect 4th
4. Minor 2nd (semitone)

Most students did not identify correctly more than one of the intervals. Students should practise identifying intervals within melodic contexts in preparation for this question. Many students labelled interval 1 as a ‘Major 5th’, while ‘Minor 4th’ and ‘Major 4th’ were also common responses for interval 3. Many students wrote: only ‘ascending’ or ‘descending’ (or only arrows pointing up or down); ‘major’, ‘minor’, ‘augmented’, ‘diminished’, ‘sharp’ or ‘flat’ (but without numbers); or numbers only. Half marks are not available for this question and the identification of the interval direction (up or down) is not required (see bullet point 2 of part a. of the question). Many students are writing ‘M’s that appear to be deliberately ambiguous. Students are advised strongly *not* to use ‘M’ or ‘m’ when identifying an interval’s quality – instead students should write ‘Major’/‘Maj’/‘Ma’ or ‘Minor’/‘Min’/‘Mi’. A significant number of students did not attempt this question.

Generally speaking, high standards for this question tended to indicate high standards for most of the remainder of the aural comprehension section of the paper.

b. (1.36/2)

Tonality of the excerpt

MELODIC MINOR

Most students identified the tonality of the melody correctly and almost all students indicated that it was a minor tonality (whether melodic or harmonic).

Question 2 (4.24/11)

Melodic transcription

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Flute, the second for Vibraphone, the third for El. Piano, and the bottom for Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The El. Piano part includes the following chords: G, D, Em⁷, Cmaj⁷, Am, C, D, D⁷, G.

11 marks

Results for this question were better than those for the ‘transcription of a melody’ question from the aural and written examination of 2001. Nevertheless, there were many students who had difficulty with this task. A number of students did not indicate that the tune ended on the tonic, even though the flute and bass parts both ended on a ‘G’ and the last chord of the electric piano part was ‘G major’. A number of students wrote an ‘A’ as the first note of bar 1, even though this makes no sense musically (an ‘A’ over a G major chord on the downbeat). Many students tried to ‘force’ the melody to end on a ‘D’. Students who rated highly on this question effectively used information from the other parts in planning rough-working for their response. For example, some students identified melody notes consonant to the particular chord. Other students did not realise that the example was in *G Major*, even though the chords of the harmonic progression made this absolutely clear.

A large number of students had problems with the 3rds (especially descending) and few could identify the (only) fifth – beat 1 to beat 2 of bar 2. Fewer students than in previous years failed to indicate the length of the first note.

Some students did not make certain that the durational values of the notes in each bar added up to what was required by the ‘four-four’ time signature while some students wrote all crotchets, all minims, or notes indicating ‘four-two’ as the time signature. Many students notated only the rhythm of the melody. Some went on to draw its general contour as

a simple line graph across the staff, often without note heads. A few students crossed out the given 'D' (anacrusis note) and wrote in a different one.

Most problems demonstrated:

- limited understanding of the characteristics of keys – many students wrote accidental flats and sharps into their melodic transcription, even though the task is prescribed as being totally 'diatonic' to a fixed list of scales and modes. As such, accidentals can occur only in melodies set in the melodic or harmonic minor scales
- limited awareness of the characteristics of logical melodic structures and/or intervallic function in melodic contexts
- weak intervallic skills, especially when the melody is not moving by step
- limited awareness of the key knowledge relating to rhythm for this question as outlined in the study design (for example, not more than two subdivisions of the unit beat nor durations exceeding two unit beats in length are allowable)
- a lack of a systematic approach to the question, for example, perhaps by first notating the rhythm.

It is clear that students need more practise transcribing melodic transcriptions in 4-part contexts. A noticeable number of students did not attempt the question.

Part 2 – Chords and harmony

Recognition of chord progressions

Question 3 (3.16/8)

1. *D minor 7* 2. G minor 3. E half-diminished (m7/b5) 4. A (dominant) 7 5. D minor
OR

1. *D minor 7* 2. iv 3. ii^ø 4. V 7 5. i
OR

1. *D minor 7* 2. IV minor 3. II half-dim. (II m7/b5) 4. V 7 5. I minor
OR

Harmonic Grid

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Bass Note	<i>D</i>	G	E	A	D
Character/ Quality/ Type	<i>minor 7</i>	minor	half- diminished (m7/b5) (ø)	(dominant) 7	minor

Results for this question were not particularly strong. Teaching and learning activities focusing on this question type should develop students' familiarity with the structural characteristics and the sound quality ('feel') of each of the chords that are examinable in this study design. One method is to teach their relationship to a chord that either precedes or follows them – an awareness of issues of voice-leading and 'function' coupled with sound quality or 'feel'. Students also need to be aware of the chord types that are diatonic to each of the scale forms set for study.

A number of students inappropriately mixed together chords with sharps and flats, and added sevenths to every chord, while others identified sonorities that are not examinable in minor keys (refer to the guidelines for this examination).

Nevertheless, a greater number of students than ever before were able to identify correctly some of the bass notes and some of the chord qualities, clearly indicating that progress is being made in this area. A substantial number of students correctly identified the last two chords and many others identified the final chord of the question as the tonic (and without a seventh).

It is important that students note that the instructions for responses to this question call for **either/or**. Students should not write responses on the lines *and* the harmonic grid as this, more than anything, increases the likelihood of answers being contradictory.

Part 3 – Rhythm

Question 4 (3.71/8)

Transcription of rhythms

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a four-part ensemble: Pan Flute, Clarinet, Bass, and Hi-hats. The music is in 4/4 time and consists of two bars. The Pan Flute part features a melody of eighth notes. The Clarinet part has a similar eighth-note melody. The Bass part provides a harmonic accompaniment with quarter and eighth notes. The Hi-hats part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system shows a variation in the Pan Flute and Clarinet parts, with the Pan Flute playing a more complex eighth-note pattern and the Clarinet playing a simpler eighth-note melody. The Bass and Hi-hats parts remain consistent with the first system.

Most students managed this question slightly better than the melody and chord progression questions. Nevertheless, a series of problems were consistently evident:

- many students had other than a total of four crotchet beats in one or the other or both of the relevant two bars
- many students did not attempt to divide their response into two bars of four beats each
- many students were unable to notate syncopations accurately as they appeared to have heard the syncopated figure but had no idea how to write it down
- beats 3 and 4 of the second bar (the 'ti-tika' [quaver/two semi-quavers] followed by the 'tika-ti' [two semi-quavers/quaver] were very rarely notated entirely correctly.

Students generally disregarded vertical alignment in their responses. Although certainly not imperative, such a practice helps students overcome several of the problems identified. It seems clear that students need more practise with rhythms presented in four-part contexts. (Note that this question type required students to be able to recognise rhythms from notation as well as aurally.) Many students wrote nothing at all for this question.

Question 5 (3.66/8)

Recognition and transcription of rhythms

Notate altered rhythms on this staff

Results for this question were noticeably better than for the previous year. Nevertheless, although a fair number of students did very well, many others experienced considerable difficulty.

Issues common to many responses included:

- students who neglected to circle the rhythms that were different, as per the instructions
- students who seemingly did not notice that every rhythmic figure but one to be transcribed appeared within some part somewhere within the printed notation. The only notated rhythmic figure that did not appear somewhere was the semi-quaver/dotted-quaver ('syn-co') rhythm of the altered snare drum part (beat 4 of bar 2)
- students who appeared to be unfamiliar with the layout and details of this question type and some students who did not attempt the question at all.

Part 4 – Characteristics of a pre-recorded work

Question 6

An excerpt of music will be played three times. There will be silent working time after each playing.

First playing – 1 minute 30 seconds silence

Second playing – 2 minutes 20 seconds silence

Third playing – 3 minutes 20 seconds silence (recommended working time for completion of Question 6)

Excerpt: 'Highway' performed by **Oscarlima** on the CD *Desert Caravan* (2 minutes 10 seconds).

Many students presented excellent work for this section. However, some students wrote responses that did not seem to be based upon the excerpt, as if they were presenting answers prepared beforehand, commonly from an almost 'generic' perspective.

Note: The *italicised* entries following each segment of the question are a guide only to possible responses and the various aspects/issues presented are certainly not exhaustive. The list of possible responses or characteristics is an example of salient points and/or aspects of each of the considerations to be discussed regarding each of the question's discrete components. A brief discussion about student responses follows each segment.

a. (1.96/2)

Identify two instruments heard in the excerpt.

Electric bass guitar

Electric organ (or synthesiser)

(Distorted) guitar

Rhythm guitar

Solo guitar

Drum kit

Vocals – lead, harmony and interjections

This component of the question was generally well answered. Most students were able to identify two instruments, although a large number identified more than two (including instruments not present, such as a saxophone) and a few identified only one. As with last year's paper, some students spoke of 'percussion' as if it were an instrument rather

than a family of instruments. The different *types* of guitars were not easily recognised, barring the bass guitar. Many wrote ‘keyboard’ rather than ‘electric organ’ or ‘synthesiser’.

b. (4.35/6)

Describe the role of each of the instruments identified in part **a**.

Bass guitar – *underpins harmonies; supplies pitch-based rhythmic support, occasional ‘back beat’ fill or embellishment; ‘straighter-8’ feel in chorus; generates feel of the contrasting sections.*

Electric organ (or synthesiser) – *harmonised riff*

(Distorted) guitar – *reinforces riff; adds colour/power*

Rhythm guitar – *rhythmic contrast: call/response figures in verse, more of an interplay approach in the choruses; thickening of rhythmic and harmonic texture in the choruses*

Solo guitar – *improvised solo*

Drum kit – *basis of the rhythmic ‘groove’; some punctuation; ‘fills’ between sections; some ‘shuffle’ elements*

Vocals – *delivers the melody & lyrics; a small amount of improvisatory input; harmonised title (‘Highway’), presumably for emphasis. Interjections (conversational?) by second and third vocalists.*

Most students could provide adequate descriptions of the role of the instruments that they had identified in part **a**.

Those who identified the guitar however, generally did not differentiate between the rhythm, solo, and ‘distorted’ guitar parts. Few students mentioned the shuffle-based drum rhythm. ‘Call and response’ relationships formed the basis for many answers, perhaps as a result of this device being so prominent in the excerpt for Question 6 in the 2001 paper. Many students who used the term did so without discrimination or clear understanding of what the term implies, especially with respect to the role/s of the given instruments.

Clearly, some students wrote answers that were pre-prepared. These students did not listen carefully to what was being played by the instruments that they had identified, often to the degree that they made comments about what they were doing (or their role) which were not in fact evident within the excerpt. Students are strongly advised to write about what they hear, not what they think they should hear or what they believe a particular instrument should be doing in a given musical style.

c. (3.57/6)

Describe two stylistic influences of the excerpt. In your answer, refer to features of the music that reflect the stylistic influences you have described.

Stylistic influences in the excerpt could include:

- *syncopated (Latin) figure of organ riff (tah, tah, ti, tah, tah – 1, 2, 3, and – and) suggests both latin and soul influences*
- *guitar adds country-rock feel suggesting Californian-style heritage: Eagles, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young*
- *the general vocal style reminds one of Glenn Frey, Don Henley, David Crosby, Neil Young, Levon Helm*
- *predominant bass guitar and kick drum figure in the verse (tah, tah ... ti, ti, ti – 1, 2 – &-4-&) is basically a ‘funk’ groove. The chorus contrasts with this as it goes into a straight-8ths feel with the whole band – a genuine ‘release’ style of ‘bridge’ approach*
- *instrumentation is mostly from the soul tradition (especially regarding the use of the organ)*
- *genuinely improvised solo draws upon influences from Clapton, Eagles, 70s music*
- *blues-based harmonic construction – (non-standard) progression and standard (organ) riff*
- *60s country-rock/blues style – reminiscent of some of the rockier material of The Band (Levon Helm, Robbie Robertson, Garth Hudson) and ‘Creedence Clearwater Revival’*
- *the ‘groove’ itself is reminiscent of 60’s radio music – a ‘Hang on Sloopy’ (‘The McCoys’) kind of feel – simple and generally repetitive bass line in particular*
- *vocal style consistent with blues and rhythm and blues – very declamatory.*

A vast range of styles were identified, from disco to funk to pop to country/country-rock to jazz to rhythm and blues, with the given stylistic influence sometimes being described appropriately and correctly in relation to the excerpt itself (but often not). The ability to describe two stylistic influences required a fair degree of listening experience and some general musical knowledge with respect to various stylistic attributes. Those students able to recognise the (perhaps) more obvious stylistic influences of rhythm and blues, country-rock, and funk were able to answer the question most successfully. However, many students were able to identify two stylistic influences but failed to describe them with reference to features of the excerpt. Familiarity with a broad range of styles and genres as well as careful listening to the excerpt itself is required to address this type of question successfully.

It was common for only one stylistic influence to be identified and (sometimes) described. Occasionally, students referred to the descriptive nature of the music – that is ‘highway music’ – as a style in its own right. Unfortunately such students could not describe the common attributes of ‘highway music’ from a stylistic perspective.

d. (3.29/6)

Discuss the relationship between the instrumental solo and the other sections of the excerpt.

Possible responses included:

- *the guitar solo is clearly improvised*
- *it is over the changes of the length of half of the verse (8 bars rather than 16) – (perhaps) in a contrasting role*
- *the tonal characteristics of the solo guitar are similar to the texture of the vocalist*
- *rhythm of the solo is not consistent with either the underlying groove or the rhythmic nature of the vocal melody*
- *there seems not to be a conscious effort on the part of the soloist to imitate or vary the melody*
- *the solo features a pentatonic construction – the vocal melody is principally of the blues scale*
- *there are no vocals*
- *density of texture is varied in the accompaniment parts.*

Most students were aware of the musical significance of the solo, especially in providing contrast, and as a way of further emphasising the chorus. By and large, many good answers were presented for this question. However, many students presented answers that were obviously prepared beforehand. Such an approach often results in a response that does not address the question directly. A better plan is to listen carefully to the excerpt in relation to the question. For example, very few students who presented answers that read as if they were pre-prepared for a question of this type dealt with the issue of whether or not (or the degree to which) the music of the improvised solo was based upon (or referred to) the vocal melody. Many students seemed unaware of (or did not note) the significance of the improvisational aspects of the solo and the fact that it is pentatonic in nature, while the vocal melody is primarily blues-based.

Noticeable amounts of value judgements, particularly about the standard of the musicianship, were written for this question. Students are reminded that this is not an appropriate forum for comments about the relative quality of the playing, the singing and the drumming unless such value judgements are requested.

A significant number of students merely *described* what happened in the solo (as an account) rather than *discussing* its relationship to other sections of the excerpt (as the question required). Students are advised to learn the differences between the tasks of ‘identify’ (or ‘list’), ‘describe’ and ‘discuss’ as they are significant and indeed essential to writing successful answers to the prose-based questions of this examination (Questions 6 to 9).

Section B– Part-writing *or* Improvisation

Question 7

Part-writing

a (3.84/9)

During Unit 3 you harmonised a melodic excerpt to create an arrangement.

Describe decisions you made at any stage/s of creating an arrangement of the melodic excerpt.

In your response refer to at least three of the following:

- instrumental and/or vocal registers
- transposition
- use of instrument/s and/or voice/s in combination
- chord voicing
- rhythmic imitation.

Many students dealt with only one or two of the points listed. A significant number of students added points they wished to cover while failing to describe decisions made with respect to three of those listed.

More successful responses to this question were focused on decisions that were clearly relevant to the arrangement completed by the student. Less successful responses often included a general description of one of the bullet points, for example, rhythmic imitation, without any reference to their treatment of the melody that they had arranged. It was often not possible to gauge clearly how the melody had been treated with respect to the points listed. This may indicate that some students were furnished with melodies but were not expected to analyse and understand them within the range of broader musical contexts and arranging procedures.

Other students focused upon the performance of their piece, rather than the procedures of arrangement and harmonisation. Most students failed to provide useful details regarding the precise nature of their melody, the stylistic attributes of their arrangement, the instruments used, and hence it was very difficult for them to present a discussion about their harmonisation of the melodic excerpt.

b. (5.15/9)

Describe three arrangement techniques used by arrangers you also used in your harmonisation and/or arrangement.

Students might describe their use of a range of techniques including:

Chord selection

Issues related to implied harmonies. Selection of the given harmony via placement of the note as a member of the triad (as the root, 3rd or 5th) or as an extension of the harmony (as the 7th, 9th or 11th, for example).

Voicing

A description based upon the logic behind placement of pitches in relation to one another taking note of issues of register, range and tessitura.

Voice leading

Particularly with instrumental or vocal arrangements where voice leading is an issue, such responses should highlight some level of consideration being given to the use of 'non-traditional' consecutive intervals (particularly 5^{ths} and octaves). This did not mean, however, that the use of such consecutives was deemed as being somehow 'incorrect'. The notion of voice leading within the accompaniment might also be presented – for example, similar considerations regarding the parts of chording instruments, especially piano/keyboards and guitars.

Basic arranging characteristics:

- *using instrumental combinations to create different tone colours, densities and/or sonic effects*
- *issues related to instrumental 'doubling'*
- *use of contrary versus parallel motion between parts, both in the same register and in different registers; harmonic density (e.g. how many instruments should deliver the chords ... is there a point that might be reached where there are too many chording instruments involved?)*
- *the use of different inversions in the chording instruments in order to 'spread' the sonority across registers*
- *the 'groove', the role of rhythm and the 'rhythm section' (if used)*
- *general (and/or specific) interrelationships between melody, harmony and rhythm.*

Relationship between parts:

- *parallel harmonisation*
- *contrary motion*
- *conjunct versus disjunct motion*
- *polyphony*
- *direct imitation*
- *call and response*
- *homophony*
- *'free-part' style*
- *heterophony (e.g. simultaneous variation).*

Harmonic rhythm:

- *consistent/regular changes of harmonies*
- *chordal ostinati*
- *harmonic cycles created via the use of additive rhythms*
- *extended segments (phrases) with regular or irregular subdivisions*
- *multiple rhythmic strata aligned to harmonic 'macro events'.*

It was clear which students had studied basic arrangement techniques used by arrangers and which had not. Most students handled the question well if they could articulate the components and/or procedures of basic arrangement techniques.

Students who were not familiar with common arrangement techniques and those with only limited knowledge could not discuss them in relation to their own harmonisation and/or arrangement. Often there was little or no description of what had actually been done, particularly with reference to techniques used by arrangers. Many students could describe several arranging techniques and often identify an individual or studio that is famous for the given technique, but failed to demonstrate how (or even if) any of them were used in their own harmonisation and/or arrangement. As such, they did not answer the question as required. Students should be reminded that the questions in Section B of this examination relate to key knowledge and skills of Outcome 2 (part-writing).

c. (6.12/12)

Discuss how you completed the harmonisation of the melodic excerpt with respect to any **three** of the following:

- tone colour
- texture
- harmonic basis
- rhythmic relationships

- dynamics
- articulations
- use of digital technology.

Students were expected to select three points that were relevant to their harmonisation. More successful answers exhibited a fair understanding of issues relevant to the selected elements with respect to their impact and relevance to the student's harmonisation.

Students did little editing or reflection during the development of their harmonisation. The terms 'tone colour', 'texture', 'rhythmic relationships', and 'articulations' seemed not to be well-understood by many students. Students are advised that if they are uncertain of the meaning/s of a term/s, they should probably avoid discussing it within their answer – especially in this instance where a discussion of only three of seven elements was required. Often it was not possible to establish which three points were being addressed. Students could consider underlining such features if their response is not in a point-based style. Many students commented that having had access to digital technology for their harmonisation was very useful and helped them to learn a great deal more about the various processes than they might have expected otherwise.

Question 8

Improvisation

a. (4.3/9)

Describe decisions you made at any stage/s in preparing and/or performing an improvisation.

In your response refer to at least **three** of the following:

- tonal centres
- form
- rhythmic features
- chord extensions
- the style/s of the backing track
- the nature of the backing track, for example instrumentation, source material such as wave files.

Better answers focused on three points which were relevant to the student's own improvisation and highlighted decisions made at more than one stage of the process. These descriptions often referred to issues that were considered in making each decision.

Many students dealt with only one or two of the points listed. A significant number of students added their own points while failing to describe decisions made with respect to three of those listed. Many students appeared not to have read the question correctly and presented responses that failed to describe decisions that *they* made regarding *their* preparation for, or performance of, an improvisation. As such, some students wrote about chord extensions, for example, without any reference to the chords of the song itself. It was often not possible for assessors to gauge clearly very much at all about the nature of the improvisation, whether during a performance or when being prepared for a performance.

Note: responses should include details of the improvisation such as the title of the song, instrument used, nature of the backing track/accompaniment (as appropriate).

b. (4.7/9)

Describe three improvisation techniques used by musicians, which you used when preparing and/or performing your improvisation.

Responses for this question were highly context specific. It was expected that students exhibit a reasonable degree of understanding of issues relevant to the selected techniques with respect to their impact upon and relevance to **their own** improvisation.

A short list of relevant techniques includes:

- *call/response*
- *scalar approaches (pentatonics, blues scale, be-bop scales, modality, direct diatonic, non-western, hybrid, etc).*
- *imitation/variation*
- *long tones*
- *chromaticism*
- *rhythmic variation*
- *contour imitation*
- *thematic transformation*
- *variations, contrasts, etc. of dynamics*
- *instrument-specific techniques ('growls', 'pull-offs', 'tapping', 'vocalised interjection', slides and bends)*

- *textural issues (cymbal rolls, playing drums with hands, using instrument out of 'standard' context, e.g. buzzing mouthpiece without trumpet)*
- *augmentation*
- *diminution*
- *retrograde.*

This question required students to describe improvisation techniques they had used. However, only a few responses focused on techniques the students had actually used. Students should include details of the context they were working in as part of their response. For example, comments such as 'I varied the rhythm' should be accompanied by a statement regarding how or why.

Some responses described improvisational techniques used by musicians (and/or identified relevant musicians), but rarely were the components or characteristics of the techniques identified described in any level of detail. Most students based their description around improvisation in a blues style but presented very vague responses as if simply writing 'blues style' required no further level of elaboration or detail. Some students presented superficial rules such as, 'the scales used must complement and highlight the melody', but with no description about improvisational technique, how one might achieve what this 'rule' implies, how the particular improvisational technique operated – whether for the student or when used by (other) musicians, etc.

Some outstanding and very imaginative responses, often featuring very sophisticated and highly appropriate terminology demonstrated considerable understanding and obvious experience in the use and development of various improvisational techniques and skills.

Overall, responses displayed good knowledge of their chosen musical style and were able to refer enthusiastically to musicians of note who had influenced them and whose techniques they had adopted and/or adapted.

c. (6.14/12)

Discuss musical issues that you considered when preparing and/or performing your improvisation with respect to **three** of the following:

- scale forms/tonality
- rhythmic relationships
- harmonic progression/s
- influences
- articulations
- use of the instrument/s
- variation
- contrast.

This question was often answered with evident enthusiasm. Some students had developed their improvisational skills with understanding and flair. Scales and modes were frequently observed, as were 'influences' – many waxed lyrical about the jazz greats (sometimes at the expense of the other two issues that were to be discussed). Other responses lacked depth and insight. Some students listed components of or presented definitions for three (or more) of the points from the list but failed to relate the description directly to the music and/or to their preparation and/or performance of an improvisation specific to that piece of music. As such, many responses were not 'discussions' but rather descriptions and/or definitions of the points.

Of the elements listed, 'influences' and 'articulation' were those most successfully discussed with respect to their impact upon the performance of and/or preparation for the improvisation.

Section C – Aspects of performance

Question 9

a. (3.75/6)

Describe two technical considerations relating to sound production and/or sound reinforcement that assisted your group or ensemble when you performed the work.

A short list of technical considerations includes:

- *issues of acoustics*
- *placement of the instruments/players relative to each other (issues of being able to hear one another)*
- *structural materials*
- *seating capacity*
- *'fly-space' above a proscenium stage*
- *placement of monitors ('foldback speakers')*
- *use of graphic (or parametric) equalisation*
- *seating arrangements*
- *balance*
- *use and/or selection of microphones*

- *intonation and tuning*
- *instrument maintenance*
- *placement of the mixing desk*
- *use of acoustic baffles*
- *use of sound enhancement/effects/alteration devices (e.g. digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion, overdrive)*
- *placement of amplifiers.*

As part of their response students were asked to provide information about a work they had prepared for performance and/or performed; the line-up of their group or ensemble, the style of the group or ensemble and to identify a venue at which their group had presented a performance. A number of students did not provide this information. Others named their school hall or the exact performance venue even though they were instructed not to do so. Students are encouraged to provide this information as a way of providing a context to the response/s which follow.

Responses ranged from extremely good, showing excellent understanding of the technical considerations relevant to a successful performance in a certain type of venue, to somewhat vague and insignificant comments of a dubiously 'technical' nature. Some students described sound production/sound reinforcement as a stand-alone issue, overlooking the need to place the description within the context of their own group or ensemble. Some responses indicated that students were not sufficiently familiar with technical considerations relating to sound production and/or sound reinforcement. A significant number of answers did not focus upon technical considerations (or related this only to technological devices) and presented descriptions better suited to the equivalent question on the 2001 paper. Students are cautioned against prior preparation of responses and/or trying to guess the questions on the examination.

b. (3.1/6)

Describe two individual performance techniques that you used to make your performance representative of the music style of the work.

Responses could focus on a range of performance techniques including:

- *rhythmic interpretation*
- *articulations, ornaments and embellishments*
- *pitch and intonation issues*
- *phrasing*
- *dynamics and contrast*
- *bends, multi-phonic*
- *use of improvisation (if appropriate)*
- *use of effects (sound enhancement/alteration devices such digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion, overdrive, etc.)*
- *(planned) interaction with the audience ('working' the crowd)*
- *historical and/or conventional and personal interpretation of works within the context of the performance style/s*
- *extra-musical elements (e.g. choreography, acrobatics).*

Although there were some outstanding answers, many students failed to relate their responses to individual performance techniques that *they* used to make *their* performance *representative* of the music style of the work that *they* selected to write about. Often students did not refer to the realisation of the characteristics of the style of the work and/or talked about what everyone else in the group or ensemble should do – but not what they should do – in order to make the performance representative of the style. It was as if such students knew a list of stylistic characteristics but did not view any of these as being relevant to themselves and/or their instrument/s and/or voice. Other students were not sufficiently familiar with a range of stylistic elements, characteristics or components of works they had prepared for performance and/or performed so as to be able to deal with the requirements of this question.

c. (7.47/15)

Minimising potential performance problems is part of preparation for a successful performance. **Discuss three strategies** that you and/or your ensemble used to minimise performance problems.

Responses could focus on a range of strategies including:

- *positioning of instruments and/or performers, particularly regarding visual contact and ease of interaction*
- *use of mutes and other sound reduction devices (especially if appropriate balance cannot be attained)*
- *use of risers or similar devices*
- *alterations to the sonic focus of acoustic (especially wind) instruments*
- *placement of sound reinforcement equipment (e.g. PA, foldback)*
- *formal strategies to deal with 'performance anxiety'*
- *issues of preparation*
- *issues related to programming and flow*
- *need for flexibility if required*
- *formal strategies to identify balance problems and address perceived difficulties*
- *availability of suitable lighting (especially to read the music, if appropriate)*
- *temperature/humidity considerations*

- *warm ups*
- *sound check*
- *punctuality*
- *water*
- *appropriate rest periods/breaks.*

There were many excellent answers for this question most of which referred to strategies relating to tuning (both before and throughout the performance), a sound check, a warm up routine, a 'run through' without an audience, practising together and separately, having 'spares' (spare strings or reeds, for example), etc. More successful responses focused on techniques relating to music performance techniques, often combining this discussion with references to presentational techniques, for example, in discussing the use of microphones. The responses often demonstrated keen awareness of the importance of staying focused on the end result as part of the preparation process.

Many students did not *discuss* three strategies that they and/or their ensemble used in order to minimise performance problems. Several students wrote 'practise, practise, practise' as if three separate strategies were being identified.

Some students listed an array of random ideas with no discussion of the strategic processes used. Many ran out of time so it is recommended that students identify those questions that are worth the most marks during the 15 minutes of 'reading time' prior to the commencement of the examination and that they seek to complete those questions fully, for example, attempting such questions straight after the compact disc recording of Section A has finished.