



2007 Music Solo Performance GA 3: Aural and written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the 2007 Music Solo performance examination paper was consistent with the guidelines in the sample examination material, which is available on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>. It used the same format as the 2006 examination and comprised of a total of 106 marks apportioned across three sections.

Overall, the standard of results for this examination was higher than that for last year, with a mean score of almost 60%, compared to a mean score of less than 55% for the 2006 exam. Most students appeared to understand how to answer each of the questions. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of students experienced a range of difficulties, most of which were the same or similar to those referred to in previous assessment reports for this study.

Below are some general observations regarding students' performance on the 2007 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 each part of a question in their answers and that their prose responses are clearly organised.
- Poor legibility 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. Accurate grammar and spelling assist assessors to understand points students are making in their responses.
- 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 indeed 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.

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.

Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

Students are reminded that the Theory and aural comprehension section (Section A) of the examination is worth approximately 50 per cent of the total marks. Students should ensure that they have practised the skills needed for this section of the paper.

In general, music literacy seemed to have improved somewhat over previous years. The vast majority of students used a pencil for this section of the examination and responses were generally written correctly. Issues that continue to demand particular attention include the need for students to:

- become more familiar with music theory, especially regarding intervals and scale/mode types. For example, 'B' to 'G#' is an Augmented 6th, not a diminished 7th; and the descending form of the Major pentatonic scale does not have the same consecutive intervals as the ascending form
- 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 in such a way that they are easy to discern
- refrain from altering or adding bar lines on the examination paper



- refrain from altering the given notes in theory tasks
- focus upon the full range of scales in the tonalities prescribed for study
- be certain of the root/tonic note and character/quality/type of all diatonic chords (including 7 chords) of the major and harmonic minor tonalities prescribed for study
- be very strong in the clef/notational system they used. For example, students often scored better in Question 3 when they were required to use treble clef than in Question 2 when they could choose which clef to answer in
- be very confident if they decide to use key signatures, especially when writing scales/modes and chords. 'Redundant' accidentals (those not in the specific chord, but in the key signature) are not needed and often appear to confuse the students themselves.

Part 1: Intervals, scales and melody

Questions 1 – Music theory - Intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	2	3	6	10	12	15	21	29	6.0

- 'D' above
- 'A-flat' above
- 'F-sharp' below
- 'F-sharp' below
- 'A' below
- 'A-flat' above
- 'G-sharp' above
- 'D' below

A number of students experienced difficulty with this task, although the mean score was noticeably better than for the same question on the 2006 exam (75 per cent versus 58 per cent). The following issues were problematic.

- Intervals where the note to be written was below the given note were often incorrect because students seemed not to understand that a minor or diminished interval is made smaller by reducing the interval distance itself; for example, a large number of students wrote 'F-flat' for the third and fourth intervals. Many students seemed not to be aware that the interval distance is to be derived from the lower note, even when it is the one to be written, not from the given note.
- Many students seemed to be unaware that the interval distance must be correct. That is, a 5th, for example, must be the 'distance' of five pitches (letter names), inclusive. Hence, a fifth below 'C' must be some form of 'F'.
- A surprisingly large number of students added sharps and flats to the given note. Although this often resulted in the correct interval, it was not the right answer. It is not appropriate to change the question to suit the answer.
- Many students seemed to be unable to use bass clef. The study design states that students must be able write intervals 'on a pitch staff with treble and bass clefs'.

Question 2 – Music theory – Scales and modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	15	0	12	0	14	0	20	0	38	5.1

- Minor Gypsy, ascending: 'C' (given), 'D', 'Eb', 'F#', 'G', 'Ab', 'Bb', 'C'
- Major pentatonic, descending: 'Bb' (given), 'G', 'F', 'D', 'C', 'Bb'
- Harmonic minor, ascending: 'Bb' (given), 'C', 'Db', 'Eb', 'F', 'Gb', 'A (natural)', 'Bb'
- Lydian, descending: 'D' (given), 'C#', 'B', 'A', 'G#', 'F#', 'E', 'D'

Notation as given in the sample examination material published on VCAA website.

Although some students clearly had trouble with these scales/modes, students generally performed better than in 2006. In 2007 most students got at least three of the four scales/modes completely correct.

It was common for students to write only consecutive notes without any accidentals for all four of the scales/modes (even for the Major pentatonic scale), presumably in the belief that some of the notes **had** to be right. This approach is inappropriate as it demonstrates limited understanding of the scale as a specific 'set'.



A disturbingly high percentage of students could not write descending scales/modes, which often resulted in use of the ascending interval pattern when writing the descending scale/mode. For the descending 'D Lydian' mode, this sometimes resulted in the notes 'D', 'C', 'Bb', 'Ab', 'G', 'F', 'Eb', 'D' (or something very similar), almost certainly because the ascending consecutive interval pattern (T-T-T-S-T-T-S) was used to derive the consecutive notes for the descending form of the mode.

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 'Major pentatonic' scale is so named because it features a Major third above the tonic note and has five of the notes (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) from the 'Major scale'
- the 'Lydian' mode is essentially a major scale that includes a 'Lydian (augmented) 4th'
- the 'Minor Gypsy' scale is the 'Natural' minor ('aeolian mode') with an augmented ('Lydian' or raised) 4th
- the 'Harmonic minor' is the 'Natural minor' ('aeolian mode') with a major (raised) 7th and is called the 'Harmonic minor' because the 'raised'/major 7th results in (or creates) a dominant (V) chord that is major in the minor tonality. Hence, it is called 'harmonic' because its primary use is for purposes of harmony/ harmonisation in minor keys.

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

Question 3 – Aural comprehension – Melodic Transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	2	9	12	10	8	8	6	8	7	7	8	10	5	6.0

Oboe

Trumpet in C

Vibraphone

Violoncello

It was pleasing to note that most students attempted the whole transcription and most presented it in the correct key (G Major). A large number of students were quite successful at notating the rhythm with a feasible melodic contour. Pleasingly, approaches that featured the use of stand-alone rhythmic notation presented above a line graph written on the staff (intended to represent the general pitch contour of the melody itself) were fairly rare this year.

Although most students fared reasonably well with the general melodic contour, the 'leaps' (the ascending perfect 5ths from bar one to bar two and in bar four, the ascending perfect 4th in bar two, the descending minor 3rd in bar three and the descending minor 6th in the last bar) seemed to be problematic for many, often resulting in notation that was illogical (both harmonically and diatonically), especially when compared to the other parts in the excerpt. Surprisingly few papers showed evidence of much attention being afforded to the accompanying parts of the trumpet in C, the vibraphone and the violoncello.



Most students coped well with the reasonably sophisticated rhythm of this excerpt, especially given the changes in meter between bars two and three and bars three and four (six–eight to three–four and back). However, although perhaps less common than in previous years, many students did not deal with the compound meter at all well. Indeed, a notable percentage of students wrote the rhythms in every bar as if the time signature was ‘four–four’, sometimes ‘four–two’.

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 considerably by paying attention to the other printed and sounded parts of the excerpt and by learning to read the notes of the parts written in the bass clef. By so doing, the accompaniment can be of optimal use. Also, students should have an awareness of some of the fundamentals of harmony and harmonic progressions and diatonically-related melodic ‘possibilities’.

Some students (although perhaps not as many as in the past) clearly had little or no idea 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, and proficiency can only be established over time and via diligent, multi-faceted and systematic application. One approach that is often successful is for students to challenge themselves 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 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.

The following is a list of observations and common problems regarding the transcription of this year’s melodic transcription task.

Bar one

- Most students approximated the first bar correctly with its rhythm almost always totally correct.
- The contour was sometimes a problem as it was sometimes reversed (that is, the direction was upward with consecutive intervals but the note was written downward and not consecutive).
- The last quaver (the ‘G’) was often written as an ‘A’ and then the leap up to the (intended) ‘D’ on the downbeat of the second bar was often wrong.
- Even when the last quaver was written as a ‘G’, the leap of a perfect 5th to the ‘D’ (downbeat of bar two) was sometimes written as anything from a 2nd to an octave (especially a 7th – that is, to an ‘F’ or an ‘F#’).
- The ‘G’ on beat one was sometimes followed by a note that was more than a 2nd above it. Almost always this error affected the pitches that follow and, often, the remainder of the dictation. Several students tried to make harmonic ‘sense’ from this error, which exacerbated the problem, commonly presenting ‘B’ or ‘D’ as the final note of the melody (end of bar four).

Bar two

- Generally, the pitch contour was recognised, although sometimes it was placed incorrectly on the staff (depending on whether or not the first note of the bar, a ‘D’, was correct).
- The rhythm of the bar was often correct, although even quavers (sometimes crotchets) were presented fairly regularly.
- There was an array of rhythmic figures other than a dotted-quaver (or a quaver tied to a semiquaver) written on the downbeat of the bar.
- The ‘leap’ of a perfect 4th (‘D’ to ‘G’) was often a problem as was the consecutive descending line (8–7–6).
- Weaker students often presented the last note of the bar (the ‘E’) as anything from an ‘A’ (the 9th) to an ‘A’ (the 2nd), including ‘D#’s, ‘C#’s, ‘Bb’ and (upper) ‘Ab’.
- The dotted-crotchet (‘E’) was sometimes incorrect and of just about any duration.

Bar three

- The ‘leap’ of a descending minor 3rd (‘D’ to ‘B’) of beat one of the bar was often problematic, with some students writing intervals as large as a 6th.
- Many students didn’t get the ‘D’, even though the vibraphone also played a ‘D’ but down an octave.
- The triplet of beat three was a problem for many students.



- Many students seemed not to have heard the direct relationship between notes four to eight of bar three and the first five notes of bar one ('G'-'A'-'B'-'C'-'B').
- Many students wrote notes that could not work within the 'iii – vi – ii' (B minor, E minor, A minor) harmonic progression of this bar.

Bar four

- The general pitch contour (up a 5th-ish, down a 6th-ish, leading note to tonic) was generally presented.
- Most students notated the 'ti-do' (lower 7 to 1) that ended the transcription (even if what preceded this was not correct).
- Often the note of the downbeat was not the tonic ('G'). It seems that many students are not 'getting' (or 'internalising') the tonic note which is, of course, virtually essential when transcribing.
- Often the first three notes of the bar were presented as three (or more) 'even' quavers.
- The sharp for the 'F' (lower 7th degree – the leading note) was frequently omitted.
- The final bar was sometimes written as if the 'G' to 'D' interval of an ascending 5th was downward, which created an array of oddities.

Part 2: Harmony

Question 4 – Music theory – Individual chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	7	10	16	24	40	3.7

- G Major: 'G'-'B'-'D'
- Eb Augmented: 'Eb'-'G'-'B (natural)'
- Bb minor: 'Bb'-'Db'-'F'
- Gb maj 7: 'Gb'-'Bb'-'Db'-'F (natural)'
- B half diminished (Bm7/b5): 'B'-'D'-'F'-'A'

This question was answered well, with nearly two-thirds of students able to write at least four of the chords correctly. Nevertheless, it was disappointing to note that a number of students did not know how to construct chords with the correct intervallic structure. A significant percentage of students wrote ascending arpeggios which, technically speaking, are not chords – they are the notes of chords, hence (ascending) 'arpeggios'.

Students who wish to write in guitar tablature should note that chords must be in root position, hence the root note must be in the bass (the lowest note). Even if all of the notes of the chord are included but the root note is not lowest (at the bottom – in the bass) the chord will be an 'inversion' (not in 'root position') and therefore incorrect.

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

- 'G Major': almost all students wrote this chord correctly.
- 'Eb Augmented': frequently the 5th of this chord was a 'Bb', making an 'Eb Major' chord and/or sometimes the 3rd was a 'Gb', creating an 'Eb minor' sonority. Some students wrote diminished chords, some did not flat the 'E' and a few did not write any form of an 'E' as the root note (especially those who used guitar tablature).
- 'Bb minor': the most common error was the omission of the flats for the 'B' and/or the 'D'. There were occasional 'F#'s and many of the students who wrote in TAB did not have a 'Bb' (or even 'B natural') as the root note.
- 'Gb maj 7': sometimes the 7th was flattened (an 'Fb') making a 'dominant 7', not a 'Major 7', sonority; sometimes no 7th was written (simply a 'Gb' triad, and not always 'Gb Major' – sometimes 'G Major', as well as an array of combinations with or without accidentals for the 3rd and the 5th).
- 'B half diminished (Bm7/b5)': incorrect 'spelling' of this chord most often presented a diminished triad with a diminished 7th ('B'-'D'-'F'-'Ab') hence a '(full) diminished 7' chord, not 'half diminished'. The '(dominant) seven flat five' ('7/b5') chord (which is not prescribed for study) was sometimes given ('B'-'D#'-'F'-'A'), as was the 'minor 7' chord ('B'-'D'-'F#'-'A') and a kind of 'minor 6' chord, commonly spelled with a diminished 7th ('B'-'D'-'F#'-'Ab') rather than a major 6th ('B'-'D'-'F#'-'G#') – which is also not prescribed for study.

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

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Question 5 – Music theory – Diatonic chords

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	23	15	27	35	1.8

- Subdominant 7 chord of D Major: G major 7
- Submediant chord of C Major: A minor
- Leading note 7 chord of D harmonic minor: C-sharp (full) diminished 7

While 35 per cent of students gained full marks for this question, another 23 per cent gained no marks. This suggests that many students do not understand concepts relating to the structure of chords and/or what a diatonic chord actually is. This knowledge underpins this question and is also applied in the 'Recognition of a chord progression' question. As preparation for the 'Recognition of chord progression' question (Question 6), it is 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).

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	21	15	26	39	1.8

- Subdominant 7 chord of D Major: 'G²'-'B²'-'D²'-'F[#]' (G major 7)
- Submediant chord of C Major: 'A²'-'C²'-'E²' (A minor)
- Leading note 7 chord of D harmonic minor: 'C[#]'-'E²'-'G²'-'B^b' (C-sharp (full) diminished 7)

Nearly two-thirds of students notated at least two of the three chords correctly. On the other hand, 21 per cent of students scored no marks for the question. Many students did not appear to know the names of the scale degrees and many of them simply wrote the tonic chord of the given tonality. Although it was accepted, students should not simply write in the key signature and then stack 3rds above the required scale degree. This approach frequently resulted in incorrect answers, especially for the 3rd chord (C[#]7) where many students wrote in the 'B-flat' for the key signature of D (harmonic) minor but failed to add the sharp to the 'C', hence they wrote a 'C (dom) 7' chord.

Very few of the few students who wrote their answers in guitar tablature for Question 5 (and 4) did much of it correctly. Many answers had the wrong root note (even when all of the pitches were 'of the chord', but the chord was inverted) and/or included notes above the fifth fret of the instrument, hence these chord shapes were incorrect, and/or were written with more than one note on the same string, therefore not 'playable'.

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
%	3	3	5	8	9	10	8	8	8	7	4	5	5	5	6	7	7.6

1. *Bb minor* 2. Eb minor 3. A (full) dim7 4. Bb minor 5. Gb Major 7 6. F (Dom) 7

or
1. *Bb minor* 2. Ebmin/Ebm/Eb- 3. Adim7/A^{o7} 4. Bbmin/Bbm/Bb- 5. GbMaj7/Gb^{Δ7} 6. F (Dom) 7

or
1. *i (I minor)* 2. iv/IV min 3. vii^{o7}/VII^{o7}/VIIIdim7 4. i / I min 5. VIMaj7/VI^{Δ7} 6. V (Dom) 7

Harmonic Grid	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Bass Note	<i>Bb</i>	Eb	A	Bb	Gb	F
Character/ Quality/Type	<i>minor</i>	minor	diminished 7	minor	Major 7	(Dominant) 7

Although the progression was fairly standard (i – iv – vii^o – i – VI – V 7), it was in minor key which may have made it a bit more difficult. Despite this, the mean score for the question was almost exactly the same as the C Major progression of 2006, which was pleasing. Nevertheless, it was disappointing to note the large number of students who identified chords that are not of the Bb harmonic minor chord scale; that is, chords that are not diatonic to the key of Bb harmonic minor. Responses suggested that much more work needs to be put into preparation for this task. In particular, some students continued to show basic misunderstandings about the most fundamental aspects of diatonic harmony, even



though they listen to (and often perform) popular music that features relatively short, basic ‘cycling’ or constantly repeating diatonic chord progressions that are most commonly in root position throughout.

Students who took a methodical approach to answering this question (which was evident in their rough workings) often fared comparatively well. A number of students who used the lines (rather than the harmonic grid) continued to write inverted chords, whether they used chord names (for example, Bb minor / Db) or figured notation (for example, I min⁶ or i_b). Students and teachers should note that inverted chords are no longer examined; that is to say, all chords of the progression will always be in root position only.

The majority of students who used the harmonic grid demonstrated some of the systematic working out of the various components of the chords in the progression. Correct identification of the bass line was common, but many students had trouble with the three chords with 7ths. In addition, many students who identified that the particular ‘7 chord’ did indeed have a 7th often wrote the wrong type of 7th. For example, chord three was often labelled as an ‘A minor 7’, even though the leading note 7 chord in the harmonic minor is always a (full) diminished 7 sonority; chord five was often labelled simply ‘7’, indicating a minor 7th hence a ‘dominant 7’ sonority; and chord six was sometimes labelled ‘Major 7’.

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 (‘E minor’ or ‘E Major’, ‘G Major(7)’, etc.).
- The diatonic chord qualities were confused by many students (for example, ‘E Major’, ‘Ab Major(7)’, ‘G Major(7)’ and ‘F minor(7)’, none of which are diatonic to ‘Bb harmonic minor’).
- Sometimes the last two chords were reversed, as if students expected an ‘interrupted’ cadence (V to VI rather than VI to V).
- Some students who used the harmonic grid named some or all of the bass notes correctly but did not write anything for the character/quality/type of each chord, while some wrote all of the bass notes correctly but none of the characters/qualities/types of the chords were correct. When using the harmonic grid, it is prudent for students to complete all of the boxes so that nothing of importance is overlooked.
- Some students wrote inverted chords. Most of these responses were not written on the harmonic grid.
- A small percentage of students used upper case Roman numerals exclusively. This is acceptable only if the character/quality/type of the particular chord is indicated, but often it was not.
- A few students used Arabic numbers for both diatonic position and quality – for example, ‘7/7’, presumably indicating the leading note 7 chord (vii^{o7} – A^{o7}). 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 rare examples of this style of nomenclature, probably because it reflects spoken analytical language, 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 at using figured notation are advised to use the harmonic grid. Students who use the grid should 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. However, some students who used it 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	<i>Bb</i>	E	A	B	G	F
Character/ Quality/Type	<i>minor</i>	Major	Major	minor	7	minor

- Chord 2: wrong bass note; incorrect chord quality



- Chord 3: correct bass note; incorrect chord quality (wrong primary chord type and 7th omitted)
- Chord 4: incorrect bass note; correct chord quality
- Chord 5: incorrect bass note; correct chord quality (Major); wrong 7th (stand alone '7' indicates Major chord with a minor 7th)
- Chord 6: correct bass note; wrong chord quality; no 7th

In order to handle diatonic chord progressions successfully, students must know and understand all of the material examinable for Questions 5a. and b. and be able to apply this knowledge **aurally** to tasks involving the recognition of chord progressions. In preparation 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

In this section, some students had difficulty accurately identifying melodic components or aspects within aurally-based (non-notated) contexts. Many students were not able to describe different instrumental sounds or rhythms being delivered or to describe their understanding of how the various elements were related to one another. This made it difficult for these students to write about the tone colours and rhythms of musical excerpts.

Music terminology was often a problem. For example, a disturbingly large number of students stated that they could not discuss dynamics in the Chet Atkins version of 'Mister Sandman' because it did not have much energy, seemingly confusing the musical term 'dynamics' (related to issues of comparative volume or sound output) with the general term 'dynamism' (related to issues of vigour or liveliness). Students must be very familiar with the meanings of the elements of music that are set for study and with the terms and definitions found in the appendix of the study design (pages 99–102).

Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	5	13	19	22	22	12	6	5.0

Students responded well to this question. It was pleasing that most students referred to only the Blind Guardian interpretation in their answers to Question 7a. (although some students did refer to both interpretations).

Students needed to have an understanding of what melodic material is in order to answer this question, and most students were able to write reasonable responses. Most of the stronger answers used dot points and/or columns to show the way that melodic phrases were treated differently in each version. Good responses mentioned the melodic elements that were found in both sections of the excerpt, with more sophisticated answers going on to observe how the change of 'feel' and 'power' affected the identified instrument's treatment of its melodic material.

The main difficulties with this question appeared to stem from students misreading the question. Rather than describing how melody was treated by the instrument they selected, they either presented a narrative of how the piece progressed (with little or no appropriate reference to melody) or described the melody of the vocals followed by little or no reference to the instrument identified and/or its treatment of melodic issues or components. Some students commented that 'only the singer has the melody'. Some students selected an instrument (often the drums) and then asserted that it does not play melodies nor does it support the vocals. Students should select an instrument that allows them to answer the question appropriately. Some students did not stipulate clearly which instrument they were referring to or wrote about the role of all of the instruments in the excerpt, without much (if any) emphasis on the requirements of the question. Students did not need to name instruments correctly when answering this question. A description of the sound/role of the instrument was accepted.

When describing how melody was treated by the identified instrument, a large percentage of answers were fairly general, often bland and frequently lacking appropriate musical terminology. Students should be aware that calling a figure a 'riff', a 'lick' or an 'ostinato' is merely using a term, not providing a description. A description requires that the reader is informed about the **nature** of the figure, not simply told that the given instrument 'plays a riff' or 'plays a funky lick'.

Many students who wrote about the 'bell-like instrument' stated that the part went 'up by steps' or 'went up and down the scale'. This was technically incorrect as the 'bell-like' part (the synthesiser) presented arpeggios. Many students who wrote about the 'bells' also wrote about the guitar, as they seemed to believe they had not written enough about the



‘bells’ part. Generally speaking, these students did not comment about the harmonic support that the arpeggios from the ‘bells’ provided; indeed, there were very few high-scoring answers that addressed the harmonic nature of the part and how its linear/horizontal (melodic) elements supported the vocals.

Most students who wrote about the guitar part focused most of their description on the change in ‘feel’ between the two sections of the excerpt rather than dealing with issues regarding melody. Many of these responses provided detailed descriptions that focused on issues of texture and timbre, in particular power chords, playing techniques and effects used, instead of describing how the melody is treated. These students may have misunderstood the word ‘treatment’ with respect to melody, perhaps believing that ‘treatment’ has to do with ‘treating’ the sound; that is, applying an effect or some particular type of ‘delivery’.

The following is an excerpt from a high-level response to Question 7a.

The guitar creates much interest through the way in which it treats and interprets the main melody. Although the keyboard is the first sound that is heard (introducing the arpeggio figure) the guitar comes in with the vocals, supporting the melody by playing short melodic motifs reminiscent of the melodic contour, however shorter; with shorter articulation. These short melodic motifs interact with the vocal melody, appearing where the vocalist pauses, between phrases for the most part, while also harmonically supporting the vocals alongside.

A huge change in style is created as the previously light and playful texture (of the guitar) is interrupted by the rock section; the guitar now utilising distortion, supporting the melody with harmonic, supporting chords. Another (electric) guitar, using less distortion, creates a fast moving counter melody, heightening the excitement previously created, through the stark contrast in styles and the dynamic contrasts going from mf to forte...

Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	0	0	1	2	3	7	12	17	19	16	12	6	4	7.8

Articulation

- Blind Guardian: The first verse is fairly smooth. The second verse is generally more aggressive and fairly attacking.
- Chet Atkins: This version is generally mezzo staccato. There is some use of finger tapping technique. There is some ‘Travis-picking’ in the bass line. (‘Travis-picking’ is a type of solo guitar playing that involves playing a steady bass pattern with the thumb and filling out some syncopated rhythms with the fingers.) Note, this degree of detail is not required to achieve full marks and is mentioned here as an indication of the types of responses students might have made.

Duration

- Blind Guardian: This version is more syncopated and a bit slower. The ‘feel’ is pop-rock with a simple quadruple metre. There is more potential for rhythmic overlap.
- Chet Atkins: This version is a simple quadruple. The style is more pop-country (especially with respect to the voicings); nevertheless, the approach is very ‘band-like’ as there is a kind of trio operating in the arrangement (melody, chords, bass).

Dynamics

- Blind Guardian: The first verse is comparatively subdued and features fairly narrow dynamic ‘banding’. There is a notion of balanced (perhaps ‘additive’) dynamics. The second verse is ‘in your face’, but without much genuine dynamic contrast.
- Chet Atkins: There is not much dynamic contrast. The volume relationships are subtle in order to demonstrate the very high standard of the player (students were not penalised if they thought it was more than one player).

Tone Colour

- Blind Guardian: There is a relatively large ensemble with several fairly significant timbral differences and sonic characteristics.
- Chet Atkins: The different ‘colours’ have most to do with the nature of the trio-like aspects of the performance (although it is a solo, ‘live-take’ performance, not a trio or even a duet).

The key issue of Question 7b. was how the selected elements of music contribute to the interpretations, especially with respect to similarities and differences. The more sophisticated answers addressed meaning very effectively. Discussion of the effect of changes of tone colour or articulation between the two, for example, often resulted in particularly fine



and detailed responses regarding issues of meaning. This matter was also addressed effectively where, for example, comparisons of nuances in the melodies and dynamics of the two versions were the focus of the response. The majority of students wrote about ‘articulation’ and ‘dynamics’.

A significant percentage of students did not seem to have an adequate understanding of these prescribed-for-study elements of music. Many students needed to read the question more carefully, especially in order to ensure that they addressed all aspects of the question in sufficient depth and with a reasonable balance between the two versions. A very large proportion of students did not clearly specify which elements they were writing about, which often made the response difficult to mark. Many students spent much of their writing time focused upon **one** of the elements and then failed to address a second and third element satisfactorily. Some students wrote about all four of the elements, but such responses rarely featured sufficient depth or breadth regarding **any** of them.

‘Articulation’ was often addressed as if it were ‘tone colour’ or as though it related to ‘diction’ exclusively. Hence, some answers stated that articulation was irrelevant in the Chet Atkins version as there was no vocalist.

The issue of ‘duration’ was handled fairly well, although many students dealt with durations in a non-comparative sense.

Many students approached the element of ‘dynamics’ with limited success, often writing about ‘dynamism’ (‘liveliness/power/strength’) rather than relative volume levels and the relationships between parts. Many students commented that the Chet Atkins version had ‘no dynamics’ and dealt exclusively with the change in style/genre and its implications regarding ‘dynamics’ in the Blind Guardian version (from ‘straight’ or ‘pretty’ to ‘heavy metal’). These responses tended not to address the issue of dynamics-based similarities and/or differences between the two versions, focusing instead upon the differences of style/genre between the two verses of the Blind Guardian excerpt only. Many students brought instrumentation into their description of dynamics, as if a guitar, for example, plays more loudly simply because ‘it’s a guitar – and that’s what guitars do’. A greater appreciation of performance-related subtleties and the language and terminology required to express these issues and subtleties may see future students perform better with questions of this type, especially regarding more refined aspects of the elements of music prescribed for study.

Many students confused ‘tone colour’ with ‘instrumentation’. Many such responses simply listed the instrumentation of the two interpretations with little or no focus upon issues or considerations related to ‘tone colour’. When ‘tone colour’ was addressed, it was almost invariably as if the question was asking about ‘texture’.

Many responses simply restated material used to answer Question 7a. in the answer for Question 7b. Also, some students incorrectly dealt with the melody of the song itself (as delivered by the lyrics in the Blind Guardian version, for example) for Question 7a. and then essentially repeated the same response for Question 7b. This approach seemed to indicate that the focus of the two questions was not understood by these students.

Following are some excerpts from a high-scoring response that focused on similarities of duration and differences of articulation and tone colour.

Similarities – The durations are similar in both interpretations – it is evenly sub-divided with 8-to-the-bar quaver accompanying rhythm. The tempos are similar. Both guitarists embellish the rhythms with some semi-quaver figures. This contributes by decorating the melody and adding interest. The accompanying quavers keep a strong sense of beat and pulse on each beat and the keep the momentum ‘up’, supporting the happy or hopeful outlook of the words.

Differences – The articulation is much more staccato and detached in the Chet Atkins recording, with a clean attack from the plucking of each note. This is appropriate as it is a guitar featured version, so this clean attack makes the melody clearer and helps the song to ‘bounce along’ with the staccato-based articulation. There is a bent electric guitar effect at the end which adds interest. The articulation is more legato in the Blind Guardian recording with sustained, synthesized vibes and held notes in the vocals. In the heavy rock section, the guitar is very distorted, so very sustained and the sounds are connected and not clearly distinct from one to the next. The sustained and connected articulation contributes by giving a dreamy and contemporary style and supports the meaning of the lyrics by creating a dreamy atmosphere through the non-clean attach and decay of the sound.

The tone colours are very different. The Chet Atkins recording only uses electric guitar without distortion and maybe a glockenspiel or vibraphone. The resulting tone colour is light, delicate, clean and gentle. This contributes to a give a jovial and innocent simplicity kind of interpretation. The Blind Guardian recording uses synthesized vibes, male vocals, electric guitars (clean and distorted), bass guitar and drum kit. In the first part, the tone colour is a mixture of clean guitar and drums together with round and dreamy colours of the vibes and vocals. This creates a dreamy interpretation. In the second part, the distorted guitar and more shouted vocals are harsh, brash and muddy and create an interpretation that is angry or rebellious...



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

In preparation for this section, students must become highly familiar with both the prescribed works **and** their prescribed recorded interpretations. They should be prepared to answer questions about two prescribed versions of two of the prescribed ensemble works – that is, four specific recordings. The list of prescribed ensemble works and interpretations can be found on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au> and was also published in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET* No. 55, December 2007, pages 9–11. Note that the Prescribed List of ensemble works for 2009 will be different to the list for 2008. Some works will be deleted and some new works will be added. In 2007, an unacceptably high number of students studied non-prescribed versions of the ensemble works, only one prescribed ensemble work (and sometimes only one version of the work, rather than two as required) or non-prescribed works.

During reading time, students should consider which of the works they have studied is best suited for each question. Students should read the questions thoroughly, and plan responses that include relevant material.

Some students seemed to have run out of time when completing this section because they tried to write down everything they knew about the prescribed works rather than presenting only information, observations, descriptions and/or discussions that answered the question. Unfortunately, some students neglected to provide any information that answered the question and/or addressed the elements of music and/or concepts upon which the answer needed to focus. This was often a result of using responses that were obviously prepared beforehand, which clearly did not specifically address the question asked. In addition, a number of students gave responses that were more appropriate for questions from the 2006 exam, or even exams from the previous study design, which is significantly different from the current study.

Students must be able to write about music – in the language of music – with some degree of insight. The appendix to the study design includes material relating to all the musical terms used in this examination, especially dynamics, tone colour, duration, rhythm, melody, articulation and interpretation. Students should use this information as well as other definitions provided in high-quality reference materials such as compendiums and dictionaries.

Many responses lacked organisation and cohesion and, often, an awareness of what might comprise an appropriate answer to the given question. Many students disregarded the instruction to make clear the issues to which they were referring, for example, through the use of sub-headings. This instruction is included primarily to assist students in the organisation and delivery of a relevant, focused and cogent response. ‘Stream-of-consciousness’ approaches to writing were usually not well focused and of dubious relevance. Such responses were generally difficult for assessors to follow and were rarely convincing.

Other issues for particular attention include the following.

- Some students’ answers for Questions 8a. and 8b. compared the rhythm, melody or tone colour of one version of a prescribed ensemble work to these elements in a **different** prescribed (or even non-prescribed) ensemble work.
- Students need to become aware of the characteristics, requirements and components of different response formats; for example, the differences between ‘identify’, ‘describe’, ‘explain’ and ‘discuss’.

Question 8

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
%	2	3	4	5	0	5	2	15	2	0	15	0	8	14	8	17

Question 8a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	3	7	14	18	18	18	12	5	4.6

The most important consideration in answering this question was exactly **how** (perhaps where and/or when) rhythm contributes to expressiveness in at least one way and with respect to one of the interpretations in performance that were studied by the student. In order to achieve high marks, responses needed to demonstrate an understanding of issues related to rhythm (not necessarily ‘duration’, although ancillary contributions could apply in some instances). Outstanding answers almost invariably referred to matters regarding where and/or when within the music this occurred. The ways in which rhythm is used to contribute to expressiveness might include matters such as rubato, allargando, accelerando, notions of strict rhythm versus more ‘humanised’ rhythm and affection-type issues (‘feel’, ‘groove’, the creation of ‘stylistic authenticity’).



An in-depth knowledge of the work was required to enable students to address this question in sufficient depth. It was pleasing to note that most students had a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the work, with the best responses demonstrating this knowledge by referring to specific points or places in the music. Most of the very best answers presented an excellent description of the features/characteristics of the rhythms identified while remaining focused upon the salient issue of contribution to expressiveness. These responses commonly included a description of the rhythmic features together with detailed descriptions of the treatments of the rhythmic elements with clear emphasis upon the notion of its contribution to expressiveness. When studying the works, it is vital that rhythmic concepts, contexts and treatments are discussed in detail and well understood.

Weaker responses presented very basic descriptions of rhythmic treatments or processes (including definitions of time signatures) which rarely demonstrated sufficient insight or understanding of the work. A simple outline of rhythmic features and characteristics did not address the question adequately as the notion of contribution to expressiveness was essence of the question.

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

- Many students had significant problems with the concept of the use of rhythm 'to contribute to expressiveness'.
- Many students did not deal particularly well with rhythmic elements, aspects and/or characteristics.
- This question did not require a comparison of interpretations, yet many students provided a comparison anyway.
- Rhythm was commonly dealt with as 'duration', hence responses often focused on tempo (including comparisons between the versions). Very few students focussed their discussion of tempo around 'expressiveness', for example about how the rhythms flowed (or did not flow) at the selected tempo.
- Some of the students who wrote about songs (that is, works with lyrics) focused their response around the expressiveness of the text ('love song', 'aggressiveness', etc.) with little or no mention of rhythm, rhythmic phrase characteristics, the relationship(s) between rhythmic treatment or nuance.
- Some students alternated between the two interpretations of the work they had listed, often without notice or clarification, despite the specific instruction in the question to refer to **one** of the interpretations.
- Some students tried to write about every rhythm in the work that they could remember – an exceedingly difficult task within the time available. In addition, such an approach rarely dealt with contribution to expressiveness very well.
- Quite a few answers were simply very brief descriptions of the rhythms played.
- Although many students did refer to specific rhythms and their treatment(s) from within the chosen interpretation of the work, this was not done as often as expected nor was it sometimes done particularly well. Some students identified a particular rhythm or phrase and went on describe its later use in the chosen interpretation, but the later treatment was not of or to that particular, identified rhythm.
- Some students did not seem to know the name of the two works that they had studied and/or who wrote them.

The following mid- to high-scoring response is on 'Petrushka's Room', the Second Tableau of *Petrushka* from the Columbia Symphony Orchestra recording, *Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky: Petrouchka/Le Sacre de Printemps*.

The 1911 score of 'Petrushka' was written for ballet performance. For this reason, the treatment of elements is reflecting the characters on the stage. The 2nd tableau is at a moment in the ballet where Petrushka (a puppet given life) is kicked into his cell. Hence Stravinsky's music in the 1960 recording reflects and symbolises his (Petrushka's) loneliness.

Because it was originally composed for a ballet performance, the tempos and rhythms are suited more to dancers than to strictly musical interests. For this reason we see:

1. little rubato
2. strict tempo (no accel. or rall.)
3. dramatic changes of tempo
4. clear pulse and sense of drive
5. no asymmetric rhythmic patterns or metres generally.

Treatment of rhythm in each section:

- **PETRUSHKA IS KICKED INTO HIS CELL – Rehearsal 48**
 - Fast tempo
 - No rubato
 - Not a very long pause
- **PETRUSHKA MELODY – Rehearsal 49**
 - clarinets with melody (notated rhythmic figure) – quaver triplets – crotchet – quaver triplets – crotchet

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- *bassoon counter melody (notated rhythmic figure) – semiquaver – dotted quaver – semiquaver – dotted quaver ~ ‘pleading’*
- *contrasting rhythms symbolise Petrushka’s split emotions – love & anger*
- **PETRUSHKA CURSES – Rehearsal 51**
 - *fierce polyrhythms in thick texture:*
 - *trumpets – triplets in melody*
 - *woodwinds – rapid demi-semiquaver runs*
 - *strings – tremolos*
 - *percussion – rolls*
 - *all of the different rhythms are juxtaposed against each other to show Petrushka’s frustration.*
 - *The section is at a fast tempo and has no rubato.*

Although the answer presented a range of valid rhythmic characteristics and/or treatments that are indeed found in the Second Tableau of Petrushka (1911 version), this response did not attain full marks because it often failed to make the necessary link(s) to matters related to how ‘rhythm is used to contribute to expressiveness’.

Question 8b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	2	3	5	9	15	22	17	12	7	3	5.7

Students needed to have thorough knowledge of both interpretations in performance of the chosen work in order to address this question in sufficient depth. The best responses demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the music with reference to at least two of the elements of music listed.

A high percentage of students performed well on comparison questions of this type, perhaps because they are reasonably straightforward and 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 have been prepared beforehand. Students should be wary of presenting such responses, which often simply consist of two columns with a listing of the similarities and differences between the two works. Although such an approach can be a useful starting point, students must read the question carefully to ascertain exactly what is being asked of them. In this instance, a **discussion** regarding ‘how similarities and differences are achieved’ was required. Many students simply did not address this matter.

The most popular elements were ‘melody’ and ‘dynamics’, both of which were treated fairly well. Excellent responses on melody tended to deal with melodic outline, harmonic support, rhythmic support, pulse reinforcement, counter-melodic statement(s), doubling and backing. Excellent responses on ‘dynamics’ commonly dealt with the use of dynamic contrasts, especially how each of the interpretations presented particular sections, phrases or segments. Articulations were likewise compared and contrasted. A very large percentage of students whose chosen work was of the more contemporary/popular genres tended to avoid writing about ‘articulation’ and ‘tone colour’, even though most of the works in these genres lend themselves to considerable analytical discussion regarding both similarities and differences of tone colours and articulations between the two versions.

Presenting a true ‘discussion’ was problematic for some students.

Assessors observed that:

- many students wrote very brief answers to the question, which sometimes only referred to the similarities **or** differences between the interpretations in performance, rather than both
- a significant percentage of students used classroom jargon to identify their works; for example, ‘Bo Rap’ (‘Bohemian Rhapsody’) and ‘Cellos’ (presumably referring to *Apocalyptica*’s version of ‘Enter Sandman’) Students must demonstrate that they know exactly what they have studied
- some responses did not refer to both interpretations of the prescribed work
- many students listed differences between the two interpretations without referring to the factors that led to the differences; for example, how a live recording as opposed to a studio recording might have resulted in differences and similarities between (and perhaps within) the interpretations
- many students discussed recording technology. Although such discussions were possible, many of these students simply delivered a prepared response that focused fairly specifically on 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 comparisons of dimensions and/or acoustic properties of the venues of the performances. This approach was tenuously relevant to interpretations **in performance** (as the comparative sophistication,



capabilities and processes of the technologies formed the basis of many such responses, rather than similarities and differences between the interpretations in performance), but is not within the key knowledge required for this section of the study.

The excerpts below from three high-scoring responses below discuss similarities and differences between the two interpretations in performance of the relevant prescribed work.

Example 1

'Bohemian Rhapsody'

Melody

- Whilst the basic melodic structure of the two interpretations are similar, interpretation 2 (by the 'We Will Rock You' cast) differs slightly, due to the live context, different vocalists and gender and the addition of a choral ensemble.
- Whilst Freddie Mercury's uniquely large range could easily sing the melody – which is placed particularly high in the male register – the male playing (the role of) 'Galileo' in the show sings the melody in his head voice and employs subtle changes to suit his range.
- The 2nd female vocalist extends the original melody, as it sits in a comfortable register for her, and the 3rd vocalist, due to her characterisation, improvises over some of the original melody.
- Due to the live nature of the 2nd interpretation, the melody has some imperfections, whereas Mercury, working in a studio, was able to re-take sections over and over, removing any of imperfections in the melody.
- The melody of the guitar solo in the 2nd version is achieved using 3 guitars, compared to simply Brian May in the original recording.

Tone Colour

- The tone colour of the 'We Will Rock You' version is affected by its theatrical nature; it is part of a musical theatre work.
- Freddie Mercury's unique vocal tone cannot be easily replicated and the vocalists' tonal colours are also reflective of their characters in the show. For example, the 2nd female vocalist has a richer tone due the fact that she is female, however she often uses the angry and harsh tones due to the ugly nature of her character.
- The use of a female choral ensemble also changes the tone colour, particularly due to the addition of female vocalists. Where Mercury, May & Taylor used overdubbing (something like 180 tracks) to create the 'operatic section' – with the unique tone colours of males' upper falsetto – the choral ensemble is live, with dictated harmonies, and the famous high Bb is hit by sopranos with a fairly crisp and clear tone that is typical of musical theatre.
- The 2nd interpretation has a more theatrical tone with orchestral elements compared to the 'pop'/rock tone of the original studio recording.

Example 2

'Somewhere' – West Side Story

Dynamics

The Dynamics in the OBR are treated literally. The dynamic range in the score is from 'ff'-'ppp' and the markings are detailed in each part. Dynamics build but often quickly drop dramatically, sometimes in the space of just 2 bars, supporting the swells of the melody and intensities of sentiment.

Waits' interpretation has less dynamic interest, instead focusing much more on tonal colours and vocal articulations. He allows the voice to build into climactic sections. The strings and the solo trumpet remain within a moderate dynamic level throughout – between about 'mp' and 'f'.

Example 3

'It don't mean a thing'

Articulation

Classic Recordings (1932)

- The drummer uses brushes meaning it is often difficult to hear the drums
- The bassist slaps his hand against the fingerboard on beats 2 and 4 which emphasises the natural swing accents
- Both bassists use pizzicato to make each note very defined and more easily audible
- Both female vocalists 'scat' by changing the shape of their mouths and embracher to produce articulated, syllabic sounds
- The alto saxophonist tongues most of his notes which makes the sound very defined and rhythmical

Live at the Cote d'Azur (1966)

- The drummer uses sticks to create much more rhythmic drive as the drums can be heard clearly
- The bassist simply 'walks' by playing a note for each beat in the bar and does not slap his hand against the fingerboard
- conversely, the tenor saxophonist does not tongue many notes at all, giving him a less tangible, undefined tone

Question 9

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
%	6	1	4	10	0	7	5	17	1	0	10	0	16	4	4	14



Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	9	2	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	10	8	5	5	2	1	6.7

Outstanding answers showed extensive knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with the shaping of the two interpretations to create performances with meaning. Such answers clearly discussed the selected issue(s) while maintaining focus on the ‘shaping’ and ‘meaning’ requirements of the question. These high-level responses invariably showed that the student knew quite a lot about the chosen issue(s) and that they could apply this knowledge to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of both interpretations. They provided great insight regarding, for example, relevant performance conventions, technical/technique requirements/skills, execution of intentions and considerations of style and/or genre all linked to matters related to ‘shaping’ and the creation of performances that have ‘meaning’. In addition, these high-level discussions virtually always presented a substantiated argument based upon a clearly reasoned point of view. Although students were able to discuss just one of the considerations listed, the vast majority of the high-level responses dealt with more than one of the dot points.

Assessors highlighted a range of problems, observing that:

- the highly significant implications, ramifications, concepts and contexts related to the term ‘meaning’ were frequently dealt with very poorly; for example, comments such as, ‘the Apocalyptica version doesn’t have lyrics so the interpretation has no meaning’
- although most students wrote about both interpretations of this work (as required), there was still a disappointingly large number of students who wrote about non-prescribed versions or non-prescribed works
- 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 or ‘meaning’
- some students did not seem to realise that ‘personal interpretation in performance’ has to do with the personal input of performers, conductors and/or directors of the two interpretations that they studied, not their own performance(s) or how they might direct or conduct the work themselves. This observation sometimes also applied to responses focused upon ‘decisions made regarding interpretation’
- many students wrote good comparative descriptions (especially apropos ‘decisions made regarding interpretation’), but only a fairly small percentage of students used this information to mount a discussion that demonstrated their understanding of how ‘elements of music (are shaped) to create performances that have meaning’
- many answers were very general and featured little or no supporting evidence from either version of the chosen work
- many students had a basic understanding of the works but were unable to demonstrate this understanding in their response
- straight comparisons of the similarities and differences of ‘decisions made regarding interpretation’ and the treatment of thematic material (generally under the category of ‘other characteristics that contribute to expressiveness’) were common, but a large number of these responses did not go on to present a discussion, especially a discussion that was linked to the question itself
- a number of students gave detailed lists of very subtle differences between the two interpretations instead of focusing on answering the question. In essence, they simply presented a prepared list of characteristics rather than a discussion
- many responses regarding particular works (especially more contemporary and/or jazz material) focused largely on the performance environment and the recording limitations of the time, as well as improvements to these technological issues over time. Although these factors have some influence on issues of interpretation, students also needed to address the notion of the shaping of the ‘interpretations of the elements of music to create performances that have meaning’. Technological advances (although important in their own right) have dubious significance within these contexts.

Following are excerpts from high-level responses regarding the two prescribed versions of Movement IV of Béla Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra*.

Example 1

Decisions made regarding interpretation

In Interpretation 1, Fritz Reiner would most likely have made choices that give the work meaning as the composer would also have liked. This is because of the similarities between Reiner and Bartok...



For example, Reiner chooses to attack the opening fanfare, and to crescendo through the held, paused note, unlike what Salonen does in his interpretation. This makes Reiner's opening interpretation more fearless and adds to the strong impact of the opening section.

Reiner also chooses to make the viola's cantilena theme more prominent in his interpretation, most likely because the theme is said to represent Hungary. Reiner and Bartok both shared a strong sense of national pride and this would be an explanation as to why this theme is more featured, brought out and exposed throughout his (Reiner's) interpretation.

In Interpretation 2, Esa-Pekka Salonen is more subtle in the way he treats the dynamics. The effect of this is that in some places his interpretation sounds more lyrical and serene. For example, with the viola cantilena melody, his interpretation is more balanced, more blended together. The violas are softer and the transition of the melody to the first violins is smoother. When the violins pick up this melody we can also hear the cor anglais more clearly. This approach regarding the instrumentation and dynamics allows the listener to hear each voice within the orchestra, each important line, more clearly.

Salonen has also made different choices about how he treats articulation. Preferring to focus on the smaller details and each nuance at the return to the original oboe theme, the listener is able to hear the cor anglais and oboe start their phrase together. The articulation in the violins is sharper and there is more attention paid to the staccato markings in the score, in the 'interruption section' of the work...

The overall impact of variations in elements of music in Interpretation 1 gives an impression that Reiner was aiming to shape his interpretation more as a whole – it was to be an homage to his homeland. The impact of these variations in version 2 is the interpretation sounds more subtle and with more variety...

Example 2

Personal Interpretation

Fritz Reiner

- *was a piano student of Bartok*
- *knew him (Bartok) personally, so perhaps they would have discussed musical issues and how Bartok wanted the Concerto to be performed*
- *Friendship – Reiner was one of the people that pushed for Bartok to be commissioned to write the work*
- *Can be assumed perhaps that his recording is the way that Bartok would have wanted it performed*

Esa-Pekka Salonen

- *about 30 to 40 years later makes his own interpretation*
- *has no known connection to Bartok so he tends to take the piece in isolation, adding his own personal interpretations*

Reflected in both recordings – e.g. Reiner was Hungarian, like Bartok, and as they were both living in America during the time that this concerto was written, they may have shared a longing for their homeland.

- *This (longing) can be heard in Reiner's interpretation but not in Salonen's – e.g. the viola cantabile section, which Reiner presents much more passionately, with much more personal emotion than Salonen.*
- *Also, dynamic difference – e.g. the pening bars where Reiner doesn't pull back, as Salonen does, to make full use of the subito piano, this perhaps also reflecting his great passion and understanding of Bartok's preferences.*
- *Being Hungarian, Reiner would have understood Bartok's immense hatred and rebellion against supporting the Nazi's in his homeland – this could have been reflected in the 'interrupted' section of the concerto, where Reiner performs it much louder and sharper than Salonen – a more dramatic interpretation.*
- *This piece is said to be programmatic – as in, it has a story line – Salonen does not seem to follow the story with as much emotion, perhaps because of his 'lack' of emotional connection/understanding.*
- *Salonen is very precise and exact – the 'rallentandos' and 'accelerandos' marked on the score are measured in his interpretation, and span over a few bars – Reiner's are more inconsistent and performed very quickly – perhaps again reflecting the frustration associated with the mood of the piece...*