

# 2015 VCE Music Performance examination report

## General comments

The format of the 2015 Music Performance paper was consistent with the examination specifications and sample examination material published on the VCAA website. The examination comprised two sections and was worth a total of 100 marks. Students had to answer 17 questions.

Many students demonstrated high levels of aural perception and music literacy across all sections of the paper. Other students demonstrated inconsistent levels of aural perception and music literacy.

As in other years, the most common areas of weakness included:

- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the correct names and numbers for intervals and the correct terminology used to identify intervals and chords
- lack of skill in identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals
- limited ability to use the other (not to be transcribed) parts of the printed score in transcription questions as a guide.

Other concerns included the following:

- Some students seemed not to read and fully understand the questions.
- Some students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A.

## Advice

- Teachers and students are advised to consult the study design, examination specifications and notation resource for details of the requirements of this examination.
- Students need to be aware of the requirements of the various question types and should practise answering similar questions as part of their teaching and learning program.
- Students should use the 15 minutes of reading time productively and ensure that they have read each question carefully. They should not make assumptions based on questions in previous papers. Students are also advised to highlight words in the question or information on the paper such as clefs to focus their attention.
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. When notating music, students should use a pencil and an eraser rather than a pen.
- When undertaking transcription questions, students are advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space provided for the answer.
- If students do their rough rhythmic transcription work using 'stick' notation (stems and flags without note heads) or slashes across lines representing rhythmic subdivisions/segments of each beat, they need to be very careful when they transfer their work from the 'rough work' page to the answer space.
- Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music 'sequencer', especially to program rhythms, chords and chord progressions for aural practice.

- Overall, more work is required in developing students' skills in aural perception. This includes singing intervals, scales and chords, and listening to and aurally identifying intervals, chords, progressions and melodic and rhythmic transcriptions.

## Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

### Part 1: Intervals

#### Question 1 – Identify intervals presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	12	20	22	19	22	3.1

- minor 6th
- perfect 5th
- minor 2nd
- aug 4th/dim 5th/tritone
- major 7th

This question was generally answered well. Most students answered interval **2.** (perfect 5th) correctly.

To prepare for this type of question, students are advised to sing and play intervals in class and when they are practising or rehearsing. Note that the key knowledge for Outcome 3, Units 3 and 4 includes 'a system to assist the singing of scales, chords, melodic phrases, rhythmic phrases and diatonic chord progressions' (*VCE Music Performance Study Design*, page 32).

Responses were deemed incorrect if the interval was not clearly identified; for example, students should write 'maj'/'major' or 'min'/'minor' rather than 'M' or 'm'.

For interval **4.**, augmented 4th/diminished 5th or tritone was accepted as it was presented aurally.

Some students used incorrect terminology to identify intervals; for example, major 5th rather than perfect 5th.

Some students identified some of the intervals greater than an octave.

**Question 2 – Write intervals**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	4	8	10	19	55	4



1. major 2nd      2. perfect 5th      3. major 6th      4. minor 7th      5. augmented 4th

Overall, students scored highly for this question. Some students were not able to identify intervals on the grand staff, that is, where one note was written in bass clef and the other in treble (intervals 4 and 5). Others could not count the distance between the bass and treble clef notes.

The correct response for interval 5. was an augmented 4th, not a tritone or diminished 5th. This is because it was a written interval, not one presented aurally.

**Part 2: Scales and modes****Question 3 – Identify intervals and tonality in a written melody****3a.**

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	5	17	79	1.8

Opening interval: perfect 5th

Closing interval: major 2nd

Major 5th was not accepted as a correct identification of the opening interval. Some students identified the closing interval as a minor 2<sup>nd</sup>. This would have been correct if it was in the treble clef. To focus their attention, students could highlight the clefs.

**3b.**

Marks	0	1	Average
%	36	64	0.7

Major pentatonic

Some students did not circle a response. Students are advised to attempt every question on the paper.

**Question 4 – Identify scales and/or modes presented aurally**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	5	12	28	53	3.3

1. blues
2. melodic minor
3. major pentatonic
4. natural minor. Aeolian (mode) was also accepted as a correct response.

To score marks for this question, students needed to identify each scale or mode accurately. For example, 'melodic minor' rather than 'minor', which might refer to natural, harmonic or melodic, or 'major pentatonic' to avoid confusion with 'minor pentatonic'. Marks were not awarded for incomplete answers.

**Question 5 – Identify written scales and/or modes**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	7	10	19	59	3.2

1. major scale
2. melodic minor scale
3. blues scale
4. Mixolydian mode

Some students used scale and mode names that are not in the current study design, such as Lydian and Phrygian.

Some students identified the scales using terminology for naming chord types. These responses received no marks.

**Question 6 – Write scales and/or modes**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	7	11	5	18	4	45	4.1

Minor pentatonic scale one octave descending



Dorian mode one octave ascending



Many students performed well on this question. Other students did not use the rhythmic value given and stem directions were not always correct.

A# was not accepted as an enharmonic for B ♭ in the minor pentatonic scale.

Students must learn the sound and structure of all scales listed for study.

Students should sing all scale and mode types listed for study so that they are familiar with the structure of each.

## Part 3: Chords and chord progressions

### Question 7 – Identify written chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	6	7	11	20	51	3.9

- Note name: C      Quality: half diminished
- Note name: A      Quality: sus4
- Note name: B      Quality: major
- Note name: D      Quality: dominant 7
- Note name: B ♭    Quality: minor

Some students wrote the note names as chord types. Other students seemed to read the chords in the wrong clef. Some students missed the A in chord 2, and named it C. Other students identified chord 4. as D dominant, but the correct response was D dominant 7.

### Question 8 – Write chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	21	10	14	19	36	2.4



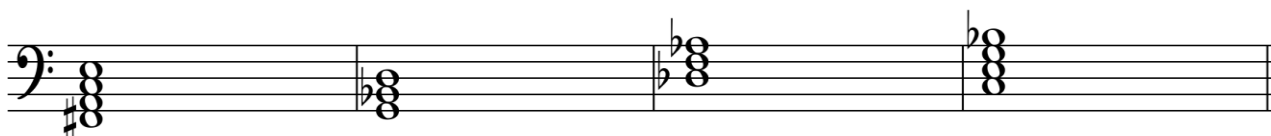
ii<sup>°7</sup>  
(supertonic)  
in e minor

iii  
(mediant)  
in E ♭ major

IV  
(subdominant)  
in A ♭ major

V<sup>7</sup>  
(dominant 7)  
in F major

or



ii<sup>°7</sup>  
(supertonic)  
in e minor

iii  
(mediant)  
in E ♭ major

IV  
(subdominant)  
in A ♭ major

V<sup>7</sup>  
(dominant 7)  
in F major

Students are advised to sing and/or play and write each chord type set for study on a regular basis. They should also practise identifying chords as they listen to music. Some students tried to add the upper tonic to chords 2 and 3 but wrote a 7th; for example, F rather than G at the top of chord 2. If students are using a key signature and not accidentals, they need to ensure that they write the signature accurately and correctly.

**Question 9 – Identify chords presented aurally**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	15	24	25	21	16	2

1. augmented
2. dominant 7
3. minor
4. diminished 7

Again, students should be singing and/or playing chords set for study on a regular basis. This will develop their ability to aurally recognise them in the examination. Many students confused the augmented chord with a diminished chord.

**Question 10 – Harmonic recognition**

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	0	65	1.3

The correct response was **D**.

Chord 1	Chord 2	Chord 3	Chord 4	Chord 5	Chord 6	Chord 7	Chord 8
B ♭ major	D minor 7	G minor	F major	E ♭ major 7	B ♭ major	G minor	F dominant 7
I	iii <sup>7</sup>	vi	V	IV <sup>7</sup>	I	vi	V <sup>7</sup>

Students could circle or highlight the differences in each chord progression to assist them to answer this question. If students were able to hear the 7th in chord 5 and the cadence, they would have answered correctly.

**Question 11 – Harmonic transcription**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	7	12	14	14	10	8	6	7	9	7	4.8

1. E minor
2. F# half dim
3. B major
4. C major
5. A minor
6. E minor

or

1. i
2. ii<sup>ø7</sup>
3. V
4. VI
5. iv
6. i

or

- Harmonic grid**
- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.

bass note	E	F#	B	C	A	E
quality	minor	half dim	major	major	minor	minor

Students found this question challenging, and very few students correctly identified chord 2. The correct response was F# half diminished. Many students either left out the # symbol and/or identified the chord as an F chord, a diminished chord, a diminished 7 chord or a minor chord. Students can prepare for this type of question by learning about the underpinning theoretical concepts; for example, the qualities of the diatonic chords in major and minor keys. This knowledge will also assist students to identify the cadence at the end of the progression.

Students should also ensure that they note the tonic key of the progression and listen carefully for 7ths rather than adding them at random.

## Part 4: Melody

### Question 12 – Melodic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	32	0	68	1.4

B was the correct response.



Students are encouraged to highlight differences evident in the score to make it easier to distinguish the correct response.

### Question 13 – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	4	9	13	13	13	10	8	6	4	3	4	6	8	5.2

The rhythm of the melody is provided to assist students to focus on notating the pitches accurately. Some students transcribed the rhythm incorrectly. The piano part also provided assistance by outlining the diatonic harmony that underpins the melody. Students should use the given harmony to assist them to identify tonality and melody.

#### Bar 1: C – G – A – F – E

- C was given and the second note was a G. Many students did not identify the first interval of an ascending perfect 5th accurately.
- Note 3 was an A, which was the third of the F major chord.
- Note 4 was an F, which was another chord tone. Many students notated this bar accurately. Only the interval of a descending major third proved difficult for some students.
- Note 5 was an E, which was a passing note.

**Bar 2: D – C – E**

- Note 1 of this bar was a D, the 7th in the E minor 7 chord.
- Note 2 was a C. This was a changing note between the other two notes in this bar.
- Note 3 was an E, which was a major third above the previous note. It was also the 5th of the a minor 7 chord.

**Bar 3: A – B – G – A**

- Note 1 of this bar was an upper A that descended by a minor 7th to a B (note 2) followed by a sequence G (note 3) descending to A (note 4).

**Bar 4: F – E – D – D – E**

- Note 1 of this bar was an F, the third in the D minor 7 chord.
- Note 2 was an E, a passing note between the first and third notes.
- Note 3 was a D, the tonic of D minor 7
- Note 4 was a repeated D, which resolved nicely to the E that was the major 3rd of the C major chord.

Many students correctly identified that the key (tonality) was C major, although some students added accidentals.

Singing short melodic phrases as required in the key skills listed for study in Units 3 and 4 will assist students to develop the level of aural memory necessary for questions such as this.

**Part 5: Rhythm****Question 14 – Rhythmic recognition**

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	0	65	1.3

The correct answer was B.

Many students circled the differences in the score, and this is a good technique to adopt. Teachers can use a music software program to create practice examples of this question type.

**Question 15 – Rhythmic transcription**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	5	9	14	15	13	10	6	5	5	4	4	4	5	4.9



Students are advised to use a systematic approach to this question. For example, marking the number of beats per bar and notating rhythmic groupings for each beat. Students also need to practise identifying and notating groupings such as quaver and crotchet triplets. Students who achieved high scores for this question generally identified that the third beat of each bar was a crotchet.



## Section B – Analysis of pre-recorded works

Students who scored high marks for this section of the paper demonstrated a clear understanding of all key knowledge and key skills for Music Performance Units 3 and 4, including a sophisticated understanding of how performers can manipulate the expressive elements of music. Many students wrote a commentary or listening guide rather than answering the questions asked. Students could have answered these questions in dot-point and/or prose format.

### Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	2	6	10	15	18	16	13	9	6	4	5.5

This question asked students to explain the performers' use of instrumental timbre and the blend of instrumental lines to create a sense of character in the performance.

This excerpt was in ternary form (ABA) or (AA'BA'A) and features of the music that students referred to in their responses included but were not limited to the following. Students who only referred to tone colour/timbre indirectly and focused their responses on a blend of instrumental lines were able to achieve full marks.

#### First section

- Sparse instrumentation with rhythmically different roles creates a feeling of space.
- Claves create a metronomic, steady, predictable feel until they sometimes play quick notes in succession on the beat to make it feel more rushed.
- Guitar melody is angular with syncopation, also creating a feeling of nervous anticipation.
- The keyboard at the start plays unconventional and unpredictable chords, hinting at a suspenseful movie sound, but when the xylophone enters the sound changes to a stereotypical horror movie organ sound with vibrato adding to the sparse yet suspenseful sound.
- The instruments (above) combine to create a skittish feeling of nervous anticipation like someone sneaking around, about to be caught.

#### Middle section

- The electric guitar makes a sudden, loud entrance and with it the acoustic guitar and claves disappear (perhaps they have been frightened off by the sudden noise).
- The claves are replaced by quiet, tight hi-hat taps, not obvious, but more subversive, keeping the original pulse going.
- The tom toms are possibly played without snares, pitched drums fill in gaps between the electric guitar statements, which are long, loud, drawn-out phrases like rolls of thunder or some kind of confrontation.
- The xylophone has a new motif, still based on continuous movement, which suggests that the main character is continuing to walk on, despite whatever scary things they have encountered.

#### Final section

- The first section with the vibrato organ returns, followed by the straight sound, suggesting that the sneaking person has snuck away safely into the distance.
- The instruments play a final minor triad, suggesting they have all come to rest together.

**Question 17**

This question required students to demonstrate an understanding of articulation; for example, the attack at the start of a note, slurring or eliminating the attack between notes or use of accent to create a staccato or detached feel.

**17a.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	24	27	22	18	<b>2.2</b>

There were many varied responses to this question. Students' descriptions of how articulation was used to create character included but were not limited to the following points. Terms/phrases referring to articulation are highlighted in bold.

- The excerpt started with a string sounding instrument using **arco bowing**, which creates a warm tone or character.
- The introduction of vocal harmonies on **ooh** with the string sounds creates an eerie feeling.
- The added percussion sounds: bongos, toms are **struck either with hands or different types of beaters or sticks** to create a particular sound that penetrates through the voices and instruments. The rhythmic placement almost sounds random or improvised. This adds to the character that the composer intended.
- The tam tam (gong) has a warm timbre that occurs through the **placement of the beater on the gong and how hard you hit it**. This is a difficult technique and the composer would have intended it to create character at this point.
- There is a cymbal sound **made by using a metal beater and scrapes** along the cymbal to create a particular tone quality.

**17b.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	12	20	26	21	12	6	<b>3.1</b>

Students described techniques used by the performers to create balance between the parts/lines in a variety of ways.

Responses included but were not limited to:

- The percussion performer: bongos, congas, toms and tam tam need to be able to listen to the strings and vocals to place the percussion rhythms that create balance (not playing too loudly or too softly) in the performance.
- At one point the vocalist and string performers sound like they are doubling their line. For example, the soprano part doubles the violin 1 part. It would be very important for them to blend and to know that they are doubling.