2012 HSC Notes from the Marking Centre – Music

Contents

Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of the Stage 6 Music courses. It contains comments on candidate responses to the 2012 Higher School Certificate examinations, indicating the quality of the responses and highlighting their relative strengths and weaknesses.

This document should be read along with the relevant syllabuses, the 2012 Higher School Certificate examinations, the marking guidelines and other support documents developed by the Board of Studies to assist in the teaching and learning of Music.

General comments

Teachers and candidates should be aware that examiners may ask questions that address the syllabus outcomes in a manner that requires candidates to respond by integrating their knowledge, understanding and skills developed through studying the course.

Candidates need to be aware that the marks allocated to the question and the answer space (where this is provided on the examination paper) are guides to the length of the required response. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Writing far beyond the indicated space may reduce the time available for answering other questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with the Board's Glossary of Key Words, which contains some terms commonly used in examination questions. However, candidates should also be aware that not all questions will start with or contain one of the key words from the glossary. Questions such as

'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?' may be asked, or verbs that are not included in the glossary may be used, such as 'design', 'translate' or 'list'.

Music 1

Performance – core and elective

Teachers are reminded that they should carefully read the Music Practical Examinations Requirements document and ensure all candidates complete all required paperwork well in advance of the examination.

In better performances, candidates:

- demonstrated a high level of technical and interpretive skill
- demonstrated personal engagement throughout the performance
- demonstrated effective use of balance and variety within each performance (solo/ensemble) that clearly defined the candidate's role
- displayed an awareness of the overall musical structure and maintained momentum with sustained energy and facility
- displayed a perceptive, stylistic understanding through expressive and dynamic contrasts
- demonstrated a familiarity and an understanding of the performance space and equipment, including attention to appropriate sound levels and balance for each individual performance
- presented a repertoire that highlighted the candidate's musical strengths
- provided a supportive and integrated accompaniment that was secure in intonation and blend and re-tuned when necessary.

In weaker performances, candidates:

- presented musical content that lacked detail, variety and depth, and which was often repetitious
- chose a repertoire that provided limited opportunities to demonstrate technical and interpretative skills, including brief performances with musical limitations
- did not effectively demonstrate their role within the ensemble
- were unable to sustain engagement and momentum for the duration of the piece
- did not adequately consider the stylistic, dynamic and/or expressive features of the repertoire
- selected an over-ambitious repertoire that exposed technical inconsistencies
- used poor-quality backing tracks, which affected the overall musical outcome
- lacked rehearsal and familiarity in the chosen performance space
- displayed intonation insecurity within the ensemble.

Musicology elective (viva voce)

General comments

- Candidates should select topic areas in which they are engaged and which reflect their musical interests.
- Candidates need to ensure they have regular viva voce practice within the 10-minute time frame.
- Aural examples should be cued and organised for candidates to maximise the 10 minutes allocated.

- The summary outline should be prepared well in advance and should follow a logical discussion as planned by the candidate.
- Candidates should not talk over recorded examples during the discussion.
- The summary outline sheet should be provided for the examiners and the candidate.

In better responses, candidates:

- demonstrated an engagement with the topic
- presented a clear and consistent musicological focus
- demonstrated a depth and breadth of their chosen area of study by making links with the broader topic area
- demonstrated evidence of wide listening to support the discussion of their focus area
- entered into a detailed discussion relevant to their chosen topic
- presented aural examples, practical demonstrations on instruments, and scores where relevant, to support and enhance the discussion.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- demonstrated superficial engagement with the topic area
- presented a scripted viva voce
- presented outline summary sheets that were an essay rather than in summary format
- used incorrect musical terminology
- used generalisations rather than specific musical observations
- referred to musical examples that did not always support the discussion.

Composition elective

General comments

Candidates should:

- consider the capacities of chosen performing media, eg range
- always include the rhythmic notation when using guitar TAB
- ensure that recordings are labelled correctly when submitting more than one composition
- check that CDs have been recorded as audio files and not as MIDI files
- submit a complete score – it is not necessary to submit a score in parts
- when using software programs to edit scores, pay close attention to excessive leger lines, conventional notation, scoring layout and, in particular, drum kit notation
- note that maximum time for a Music 1 composition is four minutes.

In better responses, candidates:

- composed highly stylistic works with an excellent understanding of their chosen topic
- wrote idiomatically for the chosen performing media, demonstrating a thorough understanding of their capabilities
- used accurate, perceptive and detailed performance directions
- composed effective melodies that were supported by a clear understanding of instrument roles and textural interplay
- presented a clear and accurate score that provided keys/legends to explain unconventional scoring

- demonstrated excellent knowledge of traditional musical conventions, with stylistic use of performance directions and dynamic shadings
- considered all the concepts when composing, demonstrating an intrinsic understanding of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic development
- composed works that were musically creative and stylistically convincing
- demonstrated an awareness of how balance and contrast provide interest in their works, especially through texture and structure
- successfully used a variety of compositional devices.

In weaker responses, candidates:
- did not consider all the concepts of music
- present compositions which lacked direction and development of ideas within the structure
- used overworked and repetitive ideas that cluttered the texture and harmony
- showed little understanding of lyric scansion (vocal works)
- did not sustain melodic interest, due to excessive repetition and/or lack of development
- used new material without linking ideas, resulting in poor structure and poor overall cohesion
- composed works that could not be reproduced accurately, eg guitar TAB without rhythmic notation, improvisations without notation, inaccurate notation and graphic scores without an appropriate legend
- demonstrated a poor understanding of score conventions and editing
- produced electronic scores without detailed or final editing.

Aural skills

Question 1

In better responses, candidates:
- focused on duration for the entire response
- provided detailed points supported with correct musical references, using accurate descriptions, musical notation or labelled graphic notation
- discussed metre, pulse and rhythmic textural interactions accurately
- identified rhythmic roles of instruments and how they relate one to the other
- commented on rhythmic complexity and polyrhythmic ideas
- identified time changes (simple quadruple to simple triple)
- discussed specific note values
- included a range of duration elements, eg back beat, accents, syncopation, repetition and ostinato
- clearly structured their response to cover a range of duration elements, eg subheadings such as tempo, time or rhythm.

In weaker responses, candidates:
- did not consistently discuss the concept of duration
- made generalised or unrelated comments without appropriate reference to the excerpt
- confused and incorrectly applied music terminology
- referred to other works rather than the excerpt being played

- made limited comparative statements rather than provide further descriptive musical detail, eg short and long
- focused on a limited number of points rather than fully exploring the use of duration
- did not accurately identify the instruments discussed in relation to rhythmic roles and features
- did not refer to the time change.

Question 2

In better responses, candidates:
- wrote clear and cohesive answers
- clearly defined the layers and how they were used
- used appropriate and clearly labelled diagrams
- made use of accurate and representative graphic notation
- identified layers and their relationship to each other
- related layers to musical structure, clearly anchoring points to the excerpt
- supported their statements with appropriate musical examples
- used music terminology correctly
- accurately described the different ostinato rhythms.

In weaker responses, candidates:
- confused performance techniques such as *tonguing the violin* or *plucking the vibraphone*
- generalised musical events rather than providing musical detail
- were repetitive in their answers and only referred to limited layers
- presented disjointed and poorly constructed answers
- described musical events in terms of stories or emotional responses
- did not draw appropriate conclusions
- identified tone colours but did not relate these to the layers of sound
- used diagrams that were irrelevant and not clearly referenced to the music.

Question 3

In better responses, candidates:
- provided detailed responses in relation to the concepts and the maintenance of musical interest
- explored elements of unity and contrast as a means of identifying and maintaining musical interest
- understood that the use of all concepts could support the identification of musical interest
- referred to the music by detailed description and/or annotated diagrams
- provided musical detail and referred to the interactions of concepts.

In weaker responses, candidates:
- applied music terminology in inappropriate or inaccurate ways
- offered statements without detail or appropriate reference
- used diagrams that did not relate to the question
- inaccurately referred to sound sources
- made simple points that did not reflect the concept interactions.

Question 4

In better responses, candidates:

- demonstrated an understanding of unity and contrast, providing supporting examples
- referred extensively to the concepts of music, often using the structure of the extract as a basis for explaining how unity and contrast were achieved in relation to other concepts
- used musical terminology appropriately and identified performing media accurately
- provided well-organised and succinct responses that balanced unity and contrast across a range of performing media
- elaborated and supported their comments with clear explanations
- supported their explanation with appropriately labelled diagrams/rhythmic notation.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- demonstrated a lack of understanding of how to approach a question on unity and contrast and provided few supporting examples in their answer
- provided brief, superficial responses that made minimal reference to the concepts of music or provided lengthy rambling responses that did not answer the question
- described musical events without reference to either unity or contrast
- did not identify performing media accurately and used musical terminology inaccurately
- demonstrated poor writing skills with incoherent or irrelevant comments
- used emotive language, story telling and value judgements at the expense of musical analysis
- provided responses that were disorganised, with meaningless or unlabelled diagrams.

Music 2

Performance – core and elective

In better performances, candidates:

- selected an appropriate repertoire that demonstrated an expressive range and technical facility
- conveyed and sustained a stylistic understanding
- demonstrated the requisite technical facility for the repertoire selected
- successfully explored the diversity that the mandatory topic offered
- took time to prepare the space to enhance the performance
- displayed secure and consistent intonation
- displayed ensemble cohesion and rapport with accompanists.

In weaker performances, candidates:

- selected a repertoire that did not allow demonstration of a full expressive range given the technical facility
- presented performances with balance issues between the accompaniment and/or ensemble
- presented performances that were repetitive in interpretation
- performed pieces that were too long and that often affected their stamina and the musical outcome
- did not display a musical understanding of the genre
- displayed inconsistencies in tuning, tonal and pitch control.

Sight singing

Candidates are reminded that:

- the chord and starting note will only be performed ONCE at the start and ONCE immediately before the test
- the test must be performed in the set key
- students are given the opportunity to choose to read the test in treble or bass clef
- students are given the opportunity to choose to hear the chord and starting note in treble or bass.

Core composition

General comments

- Submitted works should reflect study of the Mandatory Topic.
- Time limits should be carefully adhered to.
- Compositions are to be original works and not arrangements.
- Scores should specify whether instruments are transposed or at sounding pitch.
- Candidates should adhere to the accepted ranges of selected performing media.
- Candidates should clearly indicate whether the intended performing media are synthesised and/or computerised.
- Annotations or notes prior to the score should be kept to a minimum and used to provide essential score directions.
- Scoring details and technical requirements for electro-acoustic works should be provided including, where applicable, chord voicing.
- Appropriate score layout should be considered, including the names of performing media.
- The school, candidate or performers should not be identified on the recording or score.
- Recordings should be submitted on a CD that is playable on a CD player.
- Recordings must be an accurate rendition of the score, including solos in improvised sections, stylistic nuances and performance at realistic tempos.

In better responses, candidates:

- demonstrated an understanding of compositional devices, reflecting evidence of wide listening and analysis within the mandatory topic
- organised and developed ideas with a sense of nuance and interplay between chosen sound sources
- demonstrated an understanding of style and the roles of the chosen performing media
- produced scores that were carefully edited with clear and detailed performance directions
- used coherent structures with smooth transitions
- understood ensemble and instrumental timbres and idiomatic writing using extended techniques effectively
- incorporated a developed harmonic language within the chosen style
- provided unity and contrast and maintained stylistic integrity
- developed melodic and rhythmic material producing successful musical outcomes
- chose programmatic ideas that were well realised in the composition.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- chose performing media without a clear understanding of their capacities, range or technical requirements
- demonstrated a poor understanding of style or genre
- did not convincingly link musical ideas or achieve structural coherence
- combined too many unrelated ideas within two minutes and/or used fragments that were repeated, over-used and/or under-developed
- could not effectively link or develop melodic material
- did not fully manipulate a range of concepts
- submitted poorly edited scores including inadequate performance directions, score conventions, note groupings and articulation
- submitted recordings that were an inaccurate rendition of the score
- demonstrated a basic understanding of harmonic language.

Elective composition

General comments

- Compositions should adhere to three-minute limit.
- Scores should include necessary directions for selected instruments, eg piano pedalling, drum kit notation, phrase markings, essential string bowing or electronic instrument settings.

In the better responses, candidates:

- developed their ideas within a coherent and balanced structure
- maintained effective balance between unity and variety
- provided a detailed and clear score with stylistic expression indicated, eg Jazz inflections
- showed a perceptive grasp of style and harmonic ideas
- understood the potential of chosen instruments and wrote idiomatically for them
- used extended techniques that were integrated seamlessly into the work
- understood the voicing of parts.

In the weaker responses, candidates:

- overly relied on repetition without development
- reflected tenuous links to chosen topics
- created textures that were cluttered and unchanging
- used transitions between ideas, keys, rhythmic changes that were often awkward
- did not have a clear focus or direction.

Musicology and aural skills

Question 1

a.   In better responses, candidates correctly answered how the composer used the interval of a fifth as a motivic idea – melodically and harmonically – throughout the excerpt.

In weaker responses, candidates gave examples of how the fifth was used as a chord and missed the melodic idea of the interval.

b.   In better responses, candidates correctly identified and described the modulations, using accurate bar references

In weaker responses, candidates described the modulations but inaccurately identified them or gave generalised references.

c.   In better responses, candidates gave a detailed treatment of texture with very specific bar referencing.

In weaker responses, candidates inaccurately referred to the concept of texture or made general statements regarding texture.

Question 2

a.   In better responses, candidates identified and accurately notated the pitch and rhythm of the melody, reflecting an understanding of contour, metre, intervallic relationships, subtleties of rhythmic groupings and tonality.

In weaker responses, candidates did not always accurately notate the pitch and rhythm, and were often unaware of pitch relationships and key rhythmic elements in the context of the excerpt.

b.   In better responses, candidates maintained a focus on tension and the various ways to achieve it through the use of music concepts.

In weaker responses, candidates gave general descriptions, eg performing media, without explaining how tension was created.

Question 3

a.   In better responses, candidates identified and accurately detailed observations about the use of duration, supported by appropriate terminology and score references.

In weaker responses, candidates displayed limited understanding of duration and made general observations that did not address the question.

b.   In better responses, candidates addressed the question by referring to a full range of expressive techniques.

In weaker responses, candidates made limited reference to expressive techniques or gave information that was unrelated to the question.

c.   In better responses, candidates clearly analysed the structure in detail and gave specific references to the score.

In weaker responses, candidates gave vague or unrelated information regarding structural elements.

Question 4

In better responses, candidates:

- addressed the comparison of works and drew on a significant work studied
- provided a range of observations that reflected detailed listening
- demonstrated a deep understanding of concepts and their use in the given work
- used higher-order skills such as synthesis and comparison to expand on their observations
- made overarching observations that were supported by relevant musical quotes
- responded with reference to appropriate terminology.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- offered general musical observations with limited reference to the question
- made limited score references that did not strongly support the response
- used musical references and quotes either sparingly or poorly linked to observations
- demonstrated a poor or very limited understanding of concepts that was applied in very general terms
- made extended explanations of musical ideas without references to specific musical examples
- demonstrated a poor understanding of musical terminology.

Musicology elective

General comments

- Candidates should listen to and analyse a wide array of works relating to the chosen topic before narrowing the musicological focus.
- Thorough research of primary and secondary source material is essential to the process of developing a good essay.
- Essays should have a clear musicological focus, which is based on original ideas.
- Essays that make use of comparisons are often stronger when each work is given similar attention.
- Word limits should be adhered to.
- Candidates should carefully edit and proofread their essays before final submission.

In better responses, candidates:

- organised ideas logically and provided relevant and convincing conclusions
- provided annotated score examples to support their observations
- were able to explain use of rhythmic and melodic material in the works chosen and draw conclusions about motivic development, structural relationships etc
- chose topics which enabled a detailed discussion of the music
- focused on discussing the music, with a small and judicious use of secondary sources.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- chose topics that were too broad
- made very general observations unsubstantiated by score examples
- focused on narrative/pictorial description of extra-musical events rather than analysis of the use of musical concepts
- relied extensively on secondary sources
- discussed only superficial, *obvious* features of the music, such as tempo changes or dynamics, without delving into use of rhythmic and melodic material, harmony, structural relationships etc.
- chose musical styles/examples that provided limited scope or analysis

  described a few features of the chosen works without describing a holistic understanding of the whole piece.

Music Extension

Performance

In better performances, candidates:

- explored a range of repertoires that allowed them to demonstrate their facility and musical understanding
- performed with sophistication, poise and clear stylistic awareness
- showed a refined ensemble awareness and demonstrated an interactive role with the ensemble as the performance progressed
- performed pieces that showed sophistication combined with a mature level of communication
- demonstrated a maturity and focus in their performance that allowed for individual and stylistic interpretation.

In weaker performances, candidates:

- selected a repertoire that was beyond their technical capacity and musical understanding
- performed a brief repertoire that did not allow exploration of a full range of musical expression and interpretative qualities
- displayed a lack of adequate preparation with their accompaniment and/or ensemble
- had ongoing issues with tonal quality and intonation across the breadth of their program
- demonstrated balance or ensemble shortfalls that recurred throughout the piece, ie blend, intonation and sustained melodic clarity.

Extension composition

General comments

Candidates should:

- not use overcrowded textures and sonorities that may not work in an acoustic performance.
- edit computer-generated scores carefully and include where appropriate normal scoring conventions, eg percussion or guitar scoring.
- listen to a wide variety of styles before developing a personal style for compositions.
- include necessary directions for instrumental techniques, eg piano pedaling, phrase markings and essential string bowing.

In better responses, candidates:

- composed works that had a strong underlying purpose, focus and direction
- worked in a sophisticated way with appropriate musical material that worked within the available time, rather than work with too many or too few ideas
- provided logical development of ideas throughout the piece
- composed works that reflect motific, harmonic and rhythmic processes and where structural cohesion is maintained through elements such as register, colour, texture, dynamics and articulation
- worked effectively and equally with all instruments, ie interplay, voicing and colour combinations
- maintained a sense of phrasing and textural space rather than having all instruments continually play

- had a meticulous approach to detail in scores and used idiomatic notations
- strongly engaged with the meaning of the text (if applicable).

In weaker responses, candidates:

- had scores that cannot be reliably reproduced because they do not contain enough detail
- relied on repetition rather than development
- had compositions that were texturally cluttered and narrowly focussed in the exploration of ideas
- used transitions that were not successful and lost cohesion despite having strong musical ideas
- demonstrated limited exploration of harmonic, rhythmic and motific possibilities
- did not contain sufficient performance instructions in the scores, including the identification of the chosen instruments.

Extension Musicology

General comments

- Proofread and edit essays carefully before final submission.
- Include page numbers and word count.
- Only include relevant length audio examples that relate to the essay.
- Ensure appendixes and citations are used correctly.

In better responses, candidates:

- demonstrated creative and independent thought
- clearly organised and structured their essay to sequentially argue their hypothesis
- used highly illustrative and annotated examples
- works reflected detailed and in-depth analysis.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- relied on biographical and background information
- responses were poorly referenced and relied heavily on secondary sources
- did not adhere to the word limit
- did not provide sufficient appropriate score examples.