

Section B

Answers and how to mark them

Indicative content for essay questions on unfamiliar music, AS Level and A Level

The points listed below for each question are likely answers. Any other valid points are worthy of credit.

Answer 1

AS Level essay question, AoS 1: Vocal music

Recording

The music for this question was taken from No. 12 and No. 13 of F.J. Haydn's *The Creation*.

Dynamics

Quiet dynamics at 'softer beams', 'silent night' and 'night that is gone'.

Louder at 'space immense', and the proclamation leading to 'The heavens are telling the glory ...'.

Sonority and texture

Shifts of meaning in the text are underlined by changes of sonority and/or texture.

Introduction of the (SATB/four-part) chorus at the triumphant words: 'The heavens are telling ...' after passages for solo voice. (Many voices represent many angels.)

References to 'day' and 'night' that follow are sung by three soloists (three individual angels) only - for contrast - before another choral passage ('The heavens are telling').

The (orchestral) accompaniment is legato/continuous in the gentle passage about the moon's 'softer beams'.

References to 'space immense' and to the proclamation of 'the sons of God' are sung largely unaccompanied, with repeated chords in jagged dotted rhythms in between vocal phrases - arresting and dramatic treatment of more powerful words.

Busy orchestral (violins) part in quavers give greater vigour to the second statement of 'The heavens ...'.

Structure

The opening passage about the moon is an arioso - more melodic than recitative but less extended and developed than aria.

There is then dramatic accompanied recitative - much more arresting, as the text demands.

The proclamation is a chorus with orchestra.

Tempo

The opening passage is slow (the moon is just 'stepping on' through the silent night).

The rest of the music is quicker, to match concepts such as 'glory'.

Melody

The soloist's part is low at 'with softer beams' and much higher for the announcement of the fourth day and at 'proclaiming'.

Note also the consistently low top part at 'The night that is gone...' before the high soprano part at the repeat of 'The heavens are telling ...'.

'The firmament displays' is emphasised by a powerful rising stepwise melody.

The short melisma on 'si-(lent)' emphasises this important word. The accompaniment is silent during parts of this melisma (a clear case of 'word painting').

Harmony and tonality

Entirely diatonic C major for the first statement of 'The heavens are telling'.

C *minor* for 'The night that is gone ...'.

Answer 2**A Level essay question, AoS 1: Vocal music****Recording**

The music for this question was 'What, Then, Did I Want?' from Michael Tippett's cantata *Boyhood's End*.

Melody

Syllabic style of word-setting for clear projection of the opening questions, which set the scene for what follows. May be compared with recitative to some extent.

Relatively high notes often emphasise important syllables, or suggest the rising inflection of a question (e.g. the second emphatic 'What', 'have?', 'ca-(pable)', etc.).

The statement 'I want only to keep ...' receives extended treatment, with elaborate melisma that includes ornaments/short glissandi/mordent-like figures – all of this conveying special intensity. Note the striking leisurely descent from the very high (and long) vocal note on 'want' to notes more than an octave lower as the music subsides at '... what I have'.

On the other hand, the vocal range is very narrow and low at 'and if the question' – perhaps expressing diffidence or uncertainty.

Occasional repetition of words emphasises important words (especially at 'to keep').

'Word-painting' includes an ascending interval at 'To rise'.

Rhythm

The piano part is rhythmically varied, with some syncopation, for the central statement 'I want to keep ...'.

Some dotted rhythms suggest action and determination (e.g. at start of piano part).

Texture and sonority

The piano begins assertively (with big chords and a powerful dotted rhythm), but doubt appears to set in – the texture thins, and the music becomes slower and quieter.

The arpeggiated piano chord (a minor seventh) before the first vocal phrase may suggest nostalgia or a sense of looking back to a far-off time.

For a while, piano and voice are heard separately (although a chord on the piano is sustained through each vocal phrase), as if to express uncertainty, probing for meaning, etc.

The first full-bodied voice-and-piano combined sound is heard only when the forceful 'central statement' is reached.

Generally, piano textures vary from big chords at moments of climax to lighter, sparser ones for less confident moments.

Dynamics

There is considerable variety, with the maximum force and range used in the 'central statement'.

Harmony

Harmony is at times strongly dissonant (notably early in the 'central statement'), but is more consonant at its end, ending on a held (A) major chord - with a sense of repose.

Answer 3

AS Level essay question, AoS 2: Instrumental music

Recording

The music for this question was taken from *Arcangelo Corelli's Concerto Op. 6 No.1*.

Genre

Concerto grosso, a type of concerto with a group of soloists (rather than just one) that was common at the end of the 17th century and in the early 18th century. (See also 'Sonority' below.)

Sonority

The solo group ('concertino') comprises two violins and one cello - the most common combination for a concerto grosso.

The accompanying instruments ('ripieno') are first and second violins, viola, cello and double bass/violone. The last two form the continuo group together with a keyboard or fretted instrument. (The keyboard or fretted instrument will vary from one recording to another - on the given one it is organ.)

Use of continuo was characteristic of most instrumental music (other than for solo keyboard) in Corelli's time (and in the Baroque era generally)

The ripieno may have one instrument on each part, or several (depending on what recording you use - on the recommended one parts are doubled). Small forces (rather than large quasi-orchestral forces) were typical in Corelli's time.

Texture

Two solo violins of similar range frequently cross - this is characteristic of all Corelli's trio sonatas and concertos, and of much other contemporary string music (especially in trio sonatas).

The supporting solo cello and the two violins are widely separated in pitch - a 'polarised' texture.

Passages for concertino only alternate with others for concertino doubled by ripieno - the ripieno is not heard alone. (Among other concerti grossi to contain similar textural contrasts is Vivaldi's Op. 3 No. 11.)

The ripieno has viola(s) as well as two violin parts and cello(s), plus double bass/violone. The ripieno cello part is a simplified version of the solo cello part.

Harmony

Typically for its time, the harmony is functional, with perfect and imperfect cadences (harmonic rhythm being more rapid than, for example, in the Classical period).

Almost all chords are in root position or first inversion, but this is true of much other music from the 17th century into the 19th, and cannot therefore be regarded as especially characteristic of the years around 1700.

(Chains of) suspensions and circles of 5ths are used in characteristic early 18th-century fashion. There are occasional chromatic chords - the handling of the diminished seventh in the second slow section is typical of its time.

Answer 4

A Level essay question, AoS 2: Instrumental music

Recording

The music for this question was taken from 'Serenata' and 'Scherzino' from Igor Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite*.

18th-century features

The melody of both pieces has an (early) 18th-century sound, with typical stepwise movement and small leaps (including, in the slow piece, a characteristic falling diminished 4th from mediant to leading note followed by a stepwise rise to the tonic)

Phrase structures are balanced and 'periodic' in 18th-century fashion.

Rhythm and metre are both characteristic of the 18th century. In particular the first piece is in siciliano style (compare the Largo of Vivaldi's Op. 3 No. 11).

The bass part is characteristic of the 18th century too, with the outlining of familiar cadences (e.g. the perfect cadence near the beginning of the excerpt) and other 'stock' progressions (notably the circle of fifths in the second piece and imperfect cadences ending Ic-V).

Some entire chords are as the original 18th-century composer could have written them (e.g. a diminished seventh in the second piece, complete with trill).

The first piece is unambiguously/clearly in a minor key. The second is mainly major, but with a few touches of minor.

The melody on oboe in parts of the first piece with strings accompanying is typical of the early 18th century (compare, for example, Albinoni's oboe concertos). (However, see also observations below on scoring.)

Later features

The two pieces are joined by an ascending flourish which goes very high. This is not a simple broken chord or arpeggio but a more complex (20th-century-style) pattern.

In the first piece, note the percussive (accented) offbeats (on the third quavers of dotted-crotchet beats in compound time) with pizzicato lower strings.

In both pieces, but more consistently in the first, the middle parts are dissonant with the 18th-century melody and bass parts. At the start of the excerpt, for example, there is a double pedal (tonic and dominant) or 'drone'.

The composer has not used the keyboard or fretted instrument that would have formed part of the early 18th-century continuo group.

Changes of instrumentation are more frequent than in the early 18th century, chiefly in the second piece (note use of woodwind and horns). Also note how a solo flute, previously silent, suddenly appears to round off the first piece (with a scalic descent).

Answer 5**AS Level essay question, AoS 3: Music for film****Recording**

The music for this question was 'The Black Pearl' from Klaus Badelt's soundtrack to *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

First section is in slow quadruple time, creating an air of mystery. Metre changes to fast triple, reflecting the 'swashbuckling' aspects of the story. Triplets impart energy.

Melody

Mainly a balanced phrase structure, often reflecting a dance style.

Stepwise melodic line on brass, eventually doubled an octave higher on strings.

This melody has chromatic notes/consists of alternating semitones and tones, reinforcing the sinister atmosphere.

Harmony and tonality

Mystery emphasised with the opening discord (a tritone plus minor 2nd).

Tonic pedal throughout opening.

Aeolian modality in triple time passage reflects a 'folk' background.

Harmony introduces modal dominant and flattened seventh chord, recalling Portman's score for *The Duchess*.

A modal dominant chord is one in which the 7th of the minor scale remains unraised, e.g. an A minor chord (rather than A major) in the key of D minor

(D) minor key, but touches on relative major for grand effect.

Texture

Murky textures of opening with low strings, horn pedal and melody in octaves.

Primitive atmosphere emphasised in opening of triple time passage with broadly two-part melody and bass texture, with side drum.

Climax underlined by grand homophonic texture.

Final passage typified by prominent tritone, low brass, long sustained notes, wordless voices.

Sonority

Large symphony orchestra used to produce vivid contrast between sinister opening and closing sections and the central 'dance' theme.

'Blockbuster' scoring includes large percussion section with prominent side drum, men's wordless voices/vocalise (an effect frequently used in film scores, e.g. *Titanic*).

Staccato articulation reinforces the energy of the triple time passage.

Answer 6

A Level essay question, AoS 3: Music for film

Recording

The music for this question was 'Hamlet's Parting from Ophelia' from Dmitri Shostakovich's music for *Hamlet*.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

The opening passage is an orderly dance in moderate triple time.

Occasional dotted rhythm adds to the graceful quality.

Quadruple time with more assertive dotted rhythms and disturbing staccato articulation are used in the section (from about 1:12) depicting Hamlet.

Melody

The opening melody is marked by balanced phrases and phrase repetitions.

It rises a fourth then falls by step.

Modal minor key hints at earlier times.

Melody is fragmented and heard in bass instruments, signalling a more threatening atmosphere.

Saxophone enters near end with a new strident motif (associated throughout the film with Hamlet).

Harmony

Harmony in Ophelia's music is generally triadic with relatively mild dissonance.

Harpsichord introduces some chromaticism but also reinforces tonic major with extended broken chord figuration, giving a static effect.

Structure

As this is an underscore, it follows the on-screen action closely, resulting in through-composition.

A gentle Ophelia section at first is followed by the Hamlet music, preceded by a timpani roll and the transfer of the 'Ophelia' music to lower strings.

Texture

Melody-dominated homophony in the Ophelia section.

Sinister Hamlet mood established by timpani roll and two pizzicato chords, with bass rising a minor third.

This section is also melody-dominated homophony with saxophone accompanied by brittle xylophone and pizzicato string chords.

Sonority

The composer combines conventional orchestral forces with

- harpsichord, to suggest earlier times;
- saxophone and xylophone, to suggest the disturbed thoughts of the hero.

Dynamic level is low in the first section, rising in the Hamlet section (though never very forceful).

It would be useful to refer to other Shakespeare scores, e.g. William Walton's for *Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955); Trevor Jones's for *Richard III* (1995); Patrick Doyle's for *Henry V* (1989).

Answer 7**AS Level essay question, AoS 4: Popular music and jazz****Recording**

The music for this question was 'Badge' from Cream's album *Goodbye*.

Context

Enigmatic title and lyrics typical of this period, e.g. other numbers by Cream, Jack Bruce, David Bowie.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

Moderately fast quadruple time.

On-beat crotchet pulse.

Syncopated fills in piano; syncopation in bass in section B.

Scotch snaps in vocal.

Semiquaver fill in drums leading back to Section A.

Melody

Unusual phrase structure with first part consisting of three four-bar phrases, each one with vocals for two bars, fills for the remainder.

The central section consists of repeated two-bar phrases.

Vocal range is limited to an octave, mainly pentatonic.

Guitar slides and a little scat are both typical.

Harmony and tonality

Tonality: (A) Dorian; striking contrast in central section which is anchored to subdominant (D) major.

Chords used in first section are primary triads (I, IV, V) plus C major and G major.

Striking final chord: A minor 9.

Structure

Neat, compact ternary form: intro then AABA.

Texture

Solo bass at opening.

Homophonic with prominent piano chords.

Bass riff.

Sonority

Studio recording of guitars, bass guitar, vocals, drums, piano and mellotron.

There is a noticeably fuller sound in final section.

Characteristically lively bass part: notice scalar figures, e.g. the descending 10th leading to final phrase in first section.

Answer 8

A Level essay question, AoS 4: Popular music and jazz

Recording

The music for this question was *Warszawa* from David Bowie's album *Low*.

Tempo, rhythm and metre

Slow tempo reinforces sense of desolation/despair/sadness.

Free rhythms of the vocal line suggest uncertainty or disorientation.

Mixture of rhythmic patterns, including triplets and dotted rhythms, creates an unsettled effect.

Uncertain pulse has a disorientating effect.

Melody

Generally slow-moving lines create a bleak atmosphere.

Modality in the context creates a sense of remoteness.

Mournful appoggiatura(s) in instrumental section.

Harmony and tonality

Slow harmonic rhythm/rate of chord change results in a lack of energy and a bleak, empty effect.

Switch from major to minor before entry of vocal part adds to the sense of darkness.

(Lydian) modality and/or flattened sevenths suggest the imaginary Eastern European setting.

Texture

Generally widely-spaced homophonic/chordal textures add to the sense of desolation.

Sonority

Combination of voice and drone conveys desolation.

Vocal part has some distortion.

Strident quality of the higher-pitched vocals suggests folk music of Eastern Europe.

Bowie knew the work of Śląsk - a Polish group.

Foreign/quasi-Slavic artificially manufactured language of vocal line helps create imaginary Eastern European atmosphere.

Studio/'ambient' style creates a disembodied sound, far removed from that of 'standard' Western pop music.

Answer 9

AS Level essay question, AoS 5: Fusions

Recording

The music for this question was taken from 'Danza de Jalisco' from Aaron Copland's *Three Latin American Sketches*.

Context

The music is based on Latin-American (Mexican) material, and like Bernstein (*West Side Story*), Villa-Lobos (*Bachianas Brasileiras*) and Ginastera (*Estancia*), Copland treats the original theme with art-music techniques.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

Brisk alternation of $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ metres typical of Latin-American music (See Bernstein's 'I want to be in America').

Repeated $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm pattern on piano.

Occasional shortening of $\frac{3}{4}$ bars to $\frac{2}{4}$ is an art-music device for keeping the music moving in a buoyant manner.

The second of the two themes is in a more stable triple time with repeated pattern of crotchet, two quavers, crotchet.

Melody

Introduction features a prominent falling 4th on trumpet.

Main theme features scalic descent then ascent, followed by broken chords.

A second theme, narrower in span, also moves by step with cross-bar slurs.

Harmony and tonality

Bright, uncomplicated harmony (compare music by Familia Valera Miranda).

(D) major key.

On repeat, the second theme is heard in different keys (G, E, A majors).

Texture

Predominantly homophonic or melody-dominated homophony.

The intro, however, treats the main theme in simultaneous contrary motion, i.e. using counterpoint typical of art music.

Sonority

Small orchestra of strings, (two) piano(s), one each of woodwind, one trumpet, one percussionist employing a wide range of instruments, of which the whip is prominent.

The timbres are bright, though the instrumentation is far removed from Latin-American models.

Effective use is made of contrast with a section for strings only.

Answer 10**A Level essay question, AoS 5: Fusions****Recording**

The music for this question was taken from 'Shepherd's Dance' from Karol Szymanowski's *King Roger (Act II)*.

Tempo, rhythm and metre

Irregular metre ($\frac{7}{8}$ or 4+3), as opposed to basic duple, triple and quadruple times, points to non-European approach.

Cross-rhythms ($\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$) reflect underlying tension.

Changes of metre (from $\frac{7}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ and then to compound duple) also underline increasing tension.

Increases in tempo progressively build excitement.

Increasingly rapid figures added to texture serve a similar purpose.

Melody

Melody is 'orientalised' through use of chromaticism, with some augmented seconds
Fragmentary melody (flutes) suggests breathlessness and a sense of anticipation.

Harmony

Use of ostinato helps to emphasise the rhythm of the dance at the expense of traditional goal-orientated functional-style harmony.

Pedal points create static harmony – a further departure from traditional functional harmony towards a more exotic harmonic language.

Texture

Strings in parallel 6ths heighten the sensuous/hedonistic atmosphere generated by this dance.

Increasingly dense polyphony creates greater intensity as the music goes on.

Parallel 5ths and octaves (in women's voices) are foreign to the main Western classical tradition and provide an exotic and mysterious touch, as in Debussy's Nocturnes and Holst's *The Planets*.

Sonority

Colouristic use of harps, piano and percussion hints at the Orient as well as reinforcing the rhythmic power of the dance.

Performance techniques, e.g. mutes, col legno, glissandi, contribute to the creation of an exotic atmosphere.

Answer 11**AS Level essay question, AoS 6: New directions****Recording**

The music for this question was taken from Peter Maxwell Davies's *Antechrist*.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

Lively $\frac{6}{8}$ pulse (characteristic of some medieval music, including 'Sumer is icumen in') with vigorous cross-rhythms from percussion.

Longer notes in second section (are equivalent of a medieval cantus firmus).

Melody

The adapted medieval material at the start is narrow in range.

Mainly descending lines.

Some modality, typical of much medieval music.

Phrase repetitions.

Fragmentation and distortion in second section, pointing to the effect of the Antechrist.

Harmony

Dissonant throughout.

Structure

The excerpt consists of three distinct sections:

- 'Medieval' [It is in fact an arrangement of the 13th-century motet *Deo confetemini-Domino*]
- Distortion/development (showing impact of the Antechrist)
- Return to basic motet material

Texture

Chordal opening.

Contrapuntal second section with gong ostinato.

Final section is contrapuntal with hard-to-discern inversions and retrogrades, perhaps reflecting perverse effects of the Antechrist.

Sonority

Scored for a small but diverse group, including piccolo, bass clarinet, violin, cello and percussion comprising handbells, Burmese gongs, cowbell, glockenspiel, tambourine, bass drum, claves and Burmese cymbals.

You can view a performance of this work by the Psappha Ensemble, with an introductory talk by the composer, at <https://vimeo.com/108707982>.

Shrill sonorities.

Extended performance techniques: e.g. glissandi, extreme ranges.

Reference could be made to other works by Maxwell Davies as well as to works by James Macmillan and Arvo Pärt.

Answer 12**A Level essay question, AoS 6: New directions****Recording**

The music for this question was taken from Wojciech Kilar's *Krzesany*.

Context

This 'post-modern' work combines primitivism with avant-garde techniques, the shock resulting particularly from its brutally direct and approachable language.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

Brisk duple time (typical of Polish highland music).

Striking doubling of speed of repeated chords.

Eventually rhythmic patterns are obscured.

Melody

The clear reference to folk styles (the section scored for strings with some folk-style ornamentation) is in the tradition of Bartók and Stravinsky.

This melody is in (D) major key and spans an octave, the simplicity and directness of the musical language laying down a challenge to the avant-garde of the time.

Harmony

Prolonged harmonic stasis, e.g. dissonant tritone chord on strings with (four) timps and bass drum

In marked contrast, the start of the folk-style section draws on primary triads, the only dissonance arising from melodic passing notes.

Tonality

The passage is anchored to D, with the D major of the string instrument folk dance eventually obscured by the atonal structures produced by the rest of the orchestra and the final (C major) chord on brass and organ.

Texture

Homophonic at first.

Eventually a polyphonic aleatoric sound is produced (a technique used by Cage and Lutosławski).

'Aleatoric' means that an element of chance is introduced, in this case through instructions to the players to improvise pitches and rhythms at will.

Sonority

Large symphony orchestra with organ and huge percussion section, including sheep-bells, crotales, cow-bells, gongs

Effects designed to add to the sense of excitement include:

- woodwind tremolos
- flutter-tongued brass
- statement of folk-dance on strings
- trills in brass plus cymbals and timps on beat
- improvising (aleatoric) woodwinds, covering entire range and applying any instrumental technique
- percussionists introducing as many bells as possible
- flutter-tongued brass, at first muted then unmuted towards the close
- random timpani and tom-tom