

Musicianship

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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SACE
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MUSICIANSHIP

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

Nearly all the students in 2013 were assessed as achieving within the A, B, and C grade bands, suggesting that they were able to demonstrate success against the performance standards for all assessment types in Musicianship this year. Moderated results for school assessment showed a higher proportion of students achieving in the A and B ranges when compared with results for the external assessment, where a larger proportion of the cohort received results in the B and C range. This may suggest that future candidates will need to be more carefully prepared for the practical application of the requisite knowledge and skills for tasks covered in the examination.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Skills Development

The two tests in this assessment type, as well as being important assessment items in themselves, are a valuable preparation for the external assessment (examination) and should be designed by teachers with this in mind.

The most appropriate and successful tests seemed to be those which covered the whole scope of the theory concepts for the subject, including the harmony, but which did so progressively across the two tests. Test 1, for example, might be best designed to cover part of the scope of Musicianship, at a less demanding level, allowing Test 2 to cover the full scope at a level that reflects the higher learning required for the examination. Skills development tests should be designed to give students the best opportunity to reach the highest level described by the performance standards.

Teachers are encouraged to use the support materials on the SACE website and past examinations as a guide for developing their skills tests. This is particularly important in the harmony section of the subject outline, where students should be given the opportunity in at least one of the two skills tests to demonstrate their proficiency to its fullest extent by being challenged with a question of examination standard. Each skills development test should be between 60 and 75 minutes, and this precludes using a whole past examination paper. Past SACE examinations can, however, be modified to fit this time-frame.

The central moderation process was assisted when both tests had been clearly marked, and the answers supplied. It is also very helpful if teachers make a note of how decisions about the specific features being assessed have been reached.

Task sheets for the tests should also be submitted, to indicate the assessment design criteria being applied.

Assessment Type 2: Arrangement

Most schools included annotated performance standard documents and this proved to be an effective way of explaining and supporting their assessment decisions. Some teachers annotated their decisions and comments directly onto the scores.

Overall the standard of performance in arrangement continued to demonstrate improvement in the work produced and understanding of the requirements by the marking teachers.

Sound recordings to accompany scores worked best when MIDI voices had been chosen carefully to best represent the intention in the scoring. Drum and guitar parts need special attention, and teachers should avoid choir or voice 'ah' sounds with a slow attack. Students can make live recordings, if appropriate, as the process may help them to understand better the capabilities of their chosen instruments.

The most successful arrangements had a number of features in common:

- Well-designed form and structure — deciding how to start, develop, and finish the arrangement successfully is an important part of the arranging process.
- Sound knowledge of the capabilities of the chosen instruments and/or voices. Students should ideally be encouraged to write for instruments and instrument groupings which are available to them, and with which they have some familiarity.
- Knowledge of style was particularly clear in the writing when students showed evidence of having listened to significant examples of music in their chosen style or styles.
- Concise and clear written statements that detailed the technical features of the arrangement, using appropriate terminology. The well-considered use of musical quotations in illustration helps in associating commentary with the musical passages described.
- Presentation of the score in either portrait or landscape format to allow the easiest reading of the music without having to turn the page every three or four bars.

Students should avoid:

- writing for instruments such as voice, piano, or drums without clear stylistic structure or strong harmonic foundation
- selecting original melodies which are their favourites but which do not have the potential to be easily modified and manipulated to create new music
- creating a commentary where the focus is not so much on the arranger's musical intentions as on the emotions the arranger is attempting to engender in the listener or on small events and decisions made early in the writing process; any musical quotations used in the commentary should demonstrate an aspect of the arranging process and should make musical sense, with instruments labelled and clefs, and key and time signatures, included
- creating arrangements in which they do not understand instrumental ranges and capabilities but computer programs appear to show the music as 'playable', and therefore they do not appropriately transpose instrumental parts as required

- not making the best use of the 32 to 40 bars available by either writing an arrangement of more than 40 bars, in which case not all work can be marked, or finishing the arrangement hurriedly or carelessly to fit within the 40 bars; 32 to 40 bars will allow students to demonstrate their skills in this area, but planning is crucial to ensure the arrangement both starts and finishes well.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Part 1: Theory, Aural Recognition, and Musical Techniques

Question 1

Many students answered this question correctly. Of those who erred, many answered part (a) correctly, and part (b) less successfully.

Question 2

Nearly all students struggled with this question, with very few gaining all marks on offer. Many students correctly described the time signature, but fewer identified the incorrect bar, and even fewer correctly wrote the rhythm as requested.

Question 3

A number of students correctly identified both time signatures. Many of those who erred incorrectly identified the first signature as 4/4, which was not possible for an 8-bar extract. Many also incorrectly identified the second signature as 3/4 or 7/8.

Question 4

This question also caused considerable difficulty. Only a few students correctly identified the full rhythmic dictation.

Question 5

Among the mixture of responses to this question, many students correctly identified both answers.

Question 6

Students in general answered this question well. Those who erred gave a range of answers.

Question 7

Just over one-third of students successfully named and wrote the correct intervals. A significant number of those who erred did so by recognising the first interval as a minor sixth rather than as a minor seventh. Many correctly identified the third interval as a major second, but then forgot to add the sharp to the C when writing the note.

Question 8

Many students wrote at least two of the three scales correctly. Quite a few students lost some marks by using accidentals instead of the key signature, as the question requested.

Question 9

A surprising number of students struggled with this question.

Question 10

Most students correctly identified the tonality, but many then erred by writing the key signature of D major, rather than D flat major, for part (a). Many also missed the sharp on the E in part (b) to make the raised seventh.

Question 11

About half the students correctly identified both melodies.

Question 12

Very few students correctly wrote all six notes to complete this question successfully. Students would be advised to use the right-hand melody as a guide to the chord notes that have been used in the left hand.

Question 13

This melodic dictation question proved difficult, with very few students displaying full competency. Many students missed the chromatic auxiliary and passing notes in bars 1 and 2.

Question 14

Less than 40% of students correctly identified all three broken chords.

Question 15

This question was answered quite well by most students.

Question 16

This question produced a variety of answers. One common error included the omission of the key signature in part (a).

Question 17

This question also produced a variety of answers. A large majority of students failed to correctly identify the chords in part (e).

Question 18

Among the variety of answers for this question, common errors included forgetting the transposition in part (d), thus giving an answer of C major rather than E flat major. Similarly in part (f) many students gave a major sixth rather than a perfect unison as their answer.

Question 19

About 20% of students successfully rewrote this melody with correct grouping.

Question 20

Many students correctly identified some or all of the cadences. More struggled with correctly identifying passing notes, with many circling both auxiliary and chord notes.

Part 2: Harmony

Question 21

The students who displayed the greatest competence substituted an A minor seventh chord in the second half of bar 1, and a G major chord in the second half of bar 2, completing the common chord progression 6 2 5 1 for the first 2 bars. The best extensions were to change the D major chords in bars 2 and 6 to D dominant seventh chords. Other students successfully made the Em in bar 5 an Em7.

In this question keyboard-voicing continues to be a skill in which students are generally competent. Students should be careful with chord spelling to ensure that the chord symbol matches the chord voiced. A common error was to write a major or minor triad chord above the music, but to voice it as a seventh chord.

Those who displayed the greatest competency in countermelody-writing generally tried not to be too complicated, but instead concentrated on creating a solid, melodic, and rhythmically complementary tune. Many used the two rhythmic motifs in the melody (dotted quaver, semiquaver tied to quaver, quaver; quaver, quaver, quaver, quaver tied to a minim) in building their countermelody rhythm. Care should also be taken throughout the body of the countermelody to avoid dissonant clashes with the melody. Those students who fared best in building their countermelody used chord notes that were not already in the melody. The best note on which to finish the countermelody was a B, producing a consonant interval with the melody.

A substantial number of students correctly transposed the extract for clarinet in B flat. It is also important to note that, when transposing, all elements of the music should be included in the transposition. For the transposition to be fully correct, the time signature should have been included but was omitted by some students.

Question 22

There were many varied chord choices overall. The most successful opening was 1 6 2 5; however, 1 4 7 3 also worked. Many students demonstrated some degree of competency in chord selection.

Most students experienced some difficulties with the two modulations.

The first modulation was demanded by the F natural accidental in bar 4, with the correct key being C major. Many erred by starting the modulation in the second half of bar 3, under the E and G melody notes. Correct placement was Dm7 and G7 in bar 4 and C major seventh in bar 5. A number of students used Bm7 flat 5 or even a B7 on the first two beats of bar 4 instead of Dm7, in an attempt to modulate to E minor. A significant number also tried, without success, Em7 flat 9 or E7 flat 9, in an attempt to cope with the F natural and try to modulate to A minor.

The second modulation by permission to E minor in bars 5 and 6 was more successful overall but many students missed a second modulation point altogether.

It was pleasing to see that most students altered notes in dominant seventh chords; some, however, still altered inappropriate chords such as minor or major sevenths. In this harmony altering the D7 penultimate chord was common but many did not notice the A in the melody which meant that altering the fifth was not appropriate. Ninths were not ideal to alter either, because of the first and third in the melody.

There was some very good piano-voicing and also good voice-leading at times. Students who were not successful in this area regularly voiced too high and also left large gaps between the bass and treble notes. Six-ninth chords were generally voiced quite poorly. Students are reminded that the best piano-voicing is middle to moderately low register. A number of students moved above the third space C in RH which is not ideal. Some students lost marks unnecessarily for including no stems on any notes, and for missing the sharp sign in the F sharp chords. The most successful students remembered to add the correct accidentals as required by the modulations into the keyboard-voicing. Note also that triangle means 'major seventh', and so there is no need to put a 7 after the triangle (same as half-

diminished seventh symbol), nor is there a need to make the piano part rhythmic; minims and crotchets are all that is required.

Question 23

Overall the responses to this question were done well. Many students showed a sound knowledge of the fundamental requirements, and the most effective solutions were those in which students correctly selected harmonies for the specified cadences and correctly used second inversion chords. The dominant seventh was correctly resolved in most solutions. The addition of passing notes was problematic for a number of students, who failed to add appropriate passing notes to the lower parts in their harmonisation. The most effective answers were given by students who found places between subsequent chords where a third interval allowed a passing note to be included.

Voice-leading was, again, mostly well accounted for. Spacing between upper voices was greater than an octave in a number of answers. Some students were unable to complete the task in the time given, leaving a number of melody notes unharmonised.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers should ensure that they have carefully read the relevant subject operational information on the Musicianship minisite on the SACE website. This information sets out key dates and gives assessment requirements and details for school assessment and external assessment.

Schools that combine for assessment purposes should, whenever possible, collaborate on the design of the skills development tests, task sheets, and assessment decisions in both the skills tests and the arrangements to ensure consistency and validity of results across the assessment group. They should also, whenever possible, confirm each other's results by moderating across the grouping.

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