

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2018

Paper 1: Historical Studies Topics in 20th and 21st Century Music

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
56	6	31	16	2	0	1
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>10.7%</i>	<i>55.3%</i>	<i>28.6%</i>	<i>3.6%</i>		<i>1.8%</i>

A number of the best candidates showed a marked willingness to engage with the questions and to introduce material that revealed considerable reading, listening and thinking outside the contents of the lectures. The main failings of the weaker answers were an inability to address the questions fully, and in many instances, to misread the quotations and to attribute meanings to them that were not there. One particular example of this was to apply a purely retrospective, World War I context to Elliott Carter's comment on neo-classicism, and to assume that Carter was implying a bias in favour of Viennese serialism. While the overall level of legibility was better than many cohorts, the quality of argument in general was somewhat disappointing.

Paper 2: Analysis (19th & 20th Century)

Overall results

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
55	9	32	13	1		
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>2</i>		

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Section A – 20th Century

Marker 1:

Set work: Schoenberg Op 10 String Quartet.

In general, candidates engaged well with the general musical context and key themes at play in this seminal work. However, with a number of notable exceptions, candidates tended to repeat clichés about the piece rather than engage in their own analysis. It cannot be stressed enough that candidates' own analysis is what is of interest to the examiners (even if the conclusions they draw might at times be debatable or controversial). While candidates cannot be expected to uncover a work's every secret in the two weeks before the exam, they should nonetheless undertake to do their own *detailed* analyses of a (small) number of characteristic passages, covering a range of relevant parameters – in this case, perhaps choosing harmony as a focus since the work's harmonic argument is of such obvious and central importance. These characteristic moments can then be generalised from or used as examples. Such passages could include the beginnings or ends of movements, or other moments of structural importance.

In fact, this year some answers included little or no actual analysis, spending too much valuable time discussing the interesting – but not directly relevant – 'personal context' of the work, or simply dealing with the work in a general or superficial manner. This was compounded by a failure in many cases to give examples to back up what might otherwise have been promising arguments. For instance, many candidates noted that the freedom of contrapuntal lines in the piece is one of the factors at play in the breakdown of standard functional tonality, but didn't give any examples of this, even though a brief analysis of almost any bar would furnish plenty.

Although a great deal more literature surrounds this work than the less 'canonical' set works of recent years, references to the literature were of approximately the same number. Candidates should, as always, be encouraged to critique what other commentators have written about the work. One obvious example in this case is the form of the last movement, which – despite many candidates unquestioning acceptance of a sonata form reading – is by no means in straightforward sonata form, with alternative readings tending to be more convincing.

This year, the question on a specific passage happened to cover a section of the recapitulation, and as such the best answers to this question made reference to the alterations that were made here in comparison to its expositional appearance. Answers which failed to do this tended to be less successful, as this question really needs context to succeed.

Marker 2:

From the year-group as a whole this was a somewhat middle-range response to a particularly rich and stimulating set work. Answers were generally solid if a little routine in relation to movements 1 and 3; 2 and 4 received much more superficial treatment. It was disappointing that few candidates discussed in

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any depth the fourth movement with its unusual blend of atonal and tonal thinking (though some of those that did produced some of the best answers). In the weaker essays one found comments that might have passed muster from a hasty glance at the score (allowing sometimes for a misreading of leger lines or clef) but would have immediately been ruled out and corrected by *listening* to the passage in question. It was also disappointing when candidates uncritically repeated ideas from published authorities (usually acknowledging the source, quite rightly; sometimes not) when the ideas in question were, at best, debatable, and would have served better as a discussion point or as the stimulus for further and more thorough analysis.

Section B – 19th Century

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
	7	29	18			2
Percentage	12.5	51.78	32.14			3.57

Marker 1:

The Schumann Lied was tackled by many more candidates than was the Brahms Intermezzo; moreover, the latter was clearly more difficult for candidates to grasp, and there were some very poor responses, too few candidates clearly pinpointing the rigorous 5-bar phrasing. There was scant attention paid to the metrical shift at the close also. It was clear that some could not accurately hear this score, and were engaged in a largely visual exercise; even so, some came to grief by failing to notice the treble clef in force in much of the left hand. By contrast, there were some very good responses to 'Kommen und Scheiden', the best of them allying a good grasp of tonal detail with an imaginative response to the enharmonic shift in the second half of the song. Few candidates brought concepts of 'voice' or 'persona' to bear, or considered the potential for voice and piano to be independent agents.

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Paper 3: Applied Tonal Skills

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
55	4	40	11	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

General comments (Marker 1): Slightly fewer candidates obtained an overall first-class classification than in previous years and only one candidate achieved first-class marks in each of the three components. The difficulty in sustaining a high level across different elements may reflect the diversity in the available options and may also be an indicator of improvement taking place between first and second submission deadlines.

General comments (Marker 2):

While there disappointingly few outstanding submissions there were, on the other hand, no disasters. It was evident that candidates were, for the most part, aware of the rubrics for the different parts of the paper, and had attempted to fulfil expectations. In a couple of instances candidates had disregarded the rubric specifying the permissible forms, and had been obliged to submit compositions that, despite being given a legitimate label, were clearly conceived for a form that was not on the list.

Presentation was often good, but in some cases candidates were clearly unfamiliar with the niceties and idiosyncrasies of Sibelius. Too many submissions were carelessly bound; the best were ring-bound.

Performances were sometimes impressively well done, whilst others demonstrated a lack of technical competence and rehearsal.

Section A: Style composition

Marker 1:

Although there were not many really outstanding pieces of work that managed to be both stylistically consistent *and* compositionally imaginative, the overall standard was quietly impressive in the level of control of harmony and form and command of compositional techniques. Folk song settings were, in general, one of the more problematic tasks, often leading candidates to coast through a texturally unvaried or stylistically vague treatment of the tune. Given the 'head start' afforded by the use of an existing melody, the bar has to be raised higher in terms of the compositional interest, developmental

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resourcefulness and harmonic/textural imagination that candidates bring to bear on the material. Song settings were also perilous for some candidates: some were formless, some were blandly strophic, some were marred by an apparent lack of familiarity with the chosen language. However, there were also several brilliantly effective examples, often in later nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century idioms. Although most work was decently presented, it was striking that many pieces suffered from rhythmic impoverishment at the hands of notation software that can produce an unconscious bias towards simple and repetitive rhythmic patterns. This can have a significant negative effect in evoking elements of style that are often defined by rhythmic characterisation.

Marker 2:

Songs: Where a candidate submitted only one song they put all their eggs in one basket and in some cases disadvantaged themselves by displaying less variety than where two or three songs were submitted. The most successful submissions displayed a convincing response to the text(s), balanced the keyboard and vocal lines well and generally showed a) imagination and b) knowledge of the idiom being emulated. Some candidates could have been more aware of the appropriate tessituras for the stated voice; some submissions showed little ability to exploit the tonal and structural possibilities within their song(s). A few candidates disadvantaged themselves by failing to provide texts and/or translations at the start of their submission.

Instrumental submissions: The best submissions showed real stylistic awareness and imagination, but in many cases the pastiche revealed only scant familiarity with the professed model. Some pieces were let down by weak 'cut and paste' procedure in recapitulations.

Motet: While there were relatively few motet submissions, and only one outstanding one, in all cases the candidates displayed some knowledge of and feel for the idiom and an appropriate sense of harmonic structure. Voice leading was not uniformly competent, and a noticeable weakness was a lack of understanding of melismatic text underlay; too often candidates selected, within the same section of music, randomly different words in the various voices to set melodically. Ranges were not always carefully enough considered (candidates would have done well to write the range of each voice at the head of the score, which would have focused their attention of this important detail).

Ground Bass / Folk song arrangements: These were among the least successful submissions. In the case of ground basses they often lacked both imagination and a sound knowledge of the repertoire. Folksongs were too often merely unimaginative repetition of verses with scant variety of harmony, adding very little to the basic text and tune, to which the music was slavishly bound, instead of using the melody as a springboard to real invention.

Section A: Fugue (39 candidates)

Marker 1:

As in previous years, this exercise proved to be a concise and revealing test of a candidate's command of functional harmony, linear construction and voice leading. The overall level was solid, though even some of the stronger pieces of work suffered from lapses in part writing that should have been corrected in

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proof reading. Some work attempted a hotchpotch of contrapuntal 'tricks' (inversions, augmentations (rarely used effectively), stretti etc.) without always retaining control of the ensuing part writing or overall sense of formal balance.

Marker 2:

Whilst the majority of submissions were 'dutiful', with acceptable counter-subjects, and the appropriate number of middle entries and key changes, there were only a handful of submissions that attempted to make the fugues more than simply a technical exercise. There were a surprising number of technical infringements (parallels, poor voice-leading and the like); parallels can be checked by Sibelius notation amongst other methods of assuring such infelicities do not occur. There were a surprisingly large number of poorly thought out pedal points, and misunderstanding of stretto procedure.

Section B: Orchestration (22 candidates)

All candidates made a respectable attempt at the task set and were able to demonstrate at least a basic level of awareness of instrumental capabilities and competence in texture and balance. The task set favoured subtlety and nuance over more exotic or dramatic approaches and some candidates fell into the trap of spicing it up with unwarranted crotales or glocks or beefing it up with incongruously thick brass writing. Some candidates made very effective and inventive use of additional lines that supported the harmony and texture in an idiomatic way, although one or two went overboard in this regard.

Section C: Film Score (12 candidates)

There was a wide spectrum of stylistic approaches on display here, ranging from modernist orchestral writing to chamber-scale minimalism and electronica. Some of the synth-based submissions suffered from a lack of variety over the relatively brief timescale of the set film and a lack of responsiveness to its narrative form. One piece demonstrated exceptional flair in the way it harnessed its jazz-inspired language to the atmosphere and storyline of the film, suggesting that this part of the course has the potential to be one of the most creatively rewarding activities in the Tripos, but only when the technical challenges of working to picture are embraced and realised compositionally rather than being ignored in favour of aural wallpaper

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Paper 4: Introduction to Performance Studies

Overall Results for the Paper

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
Overall Mark	10	16	1	1	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>35.7</i>	<i>57.1</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Written Paper	8	16	3	0	0	1
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>28.6</i>	<i>57.1</i>	<i>10.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3.6</i>

Marker 1:

On the whole, this was a strong set of results, with a significant percentage of Firsts and II.1s. The average marks for the Essays and Recitals were commendably high – respectively 69.00 and 68.28. The examination results were good although lower on average at 64.93, but, as indicated by the statistics above, there were many in the First and II.1 categories. I was generally impressed by the answers provided by candidates, but the responses to Question 2 – which was attempted by nearly everyone – were somewhat disappointing because the question was not directly addressed. Many students wrote about HIP in quite general terms, failing to relate their essays to the quote from Robert Morgan that was meant to be the springboard to the discussion. Similar problems occurred in respect of Question 3 (about expressiveness in performance), the different parts of which were not always adequately dealt with. In contrast, there were especially good answers to questions about the relationship between recorded and live performance conditions, about analysis and ‘embodied understanding of music’, and about the gap alleged by Schechner between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives. All in all, the lesson that should be drawn is simple: answer the question that is asked of you, and if you do that well then you will receive a good mark!

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Marker 2:

The examination results were generally high at 64.9 on average. It is noteworthy and commendable that 28.5 percent of the scripts were in the first-class band. Students overwhelmingly chose to answer question 2 on historically-informed performance (21 students, %75), followed by question 1 (on changing perspectives on performance/performers within musicology, 13 students, %46.4); question 3 (on performance expression; 8 students, %28.5); and question 4a (on the relationship between live and recorded performances; 8 students, %28.5). There were 4 responses to question 5 (on embodied music analysis), and 1 response each to questions 4b (on the parallels between naturalistic recordings and work-oriented aesthetics) and question 6 (on practice-led research in performance studies). In spite of the rigorous 'coaching' during the review lecture and final supervision to prepare students for the exam, it was disappointing that a considerable number of students did not answer the precise question asked, even though in many cases their responses displayed good knowledge of the literature and good critical skills. For example, many of the responses to question 3 neglected to engage with the more evaluative part of the question, which asked about the pedagogical benefits of incorporating a wider understanding of expressivity into performance teaching. Unfortunately, this resulted in lower marks than the students would have achieved had they addressed the question that was actually asked, rather than discussing the general research area implied by the question. The best responses critically unpacked the terminology and concepts involved in the question, providing multiple interpretative possibilities, while also carefully and rigorously positioning their own perspective within this diversity; they also presented original examples and critical reflection that clearly came from their knowledge of the literature acquired from texts that went beyond those assigned for the lectures and supervisions. The weaker responses tended to remain within a limited perspective in addressing the question, without providing a wider critical context; they were at times also not very well structured. Overall, the results indicate that the students prepared well for this exam; as Music Performance Studies covers a very wide area of research, the knowledge students have acquired in this course, together with the critical skills they further developed to be able to discuss complex issues related to music performance, is commendable. The most important recommendation for future exam preparation is to make sure that students answer the actual question asked.

Recitals:

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
24	8	11	5			
Percentage	33	46	21			

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Marker 1:

The overall standard of programming, performance and presentation (including printed programmes) was very good indeed, with some recitals being outstanding. Thank you to all recitalists for the performances this year.

Paper 5: Portfolio of Compositions

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
11	6	5	0	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>54.5</i>	<i>45.5</i>				

Marker 1:

This was an extremely encouraging set of portfolios, which if not quite stellar at the higher end, was altogether evidence of serious engagement with many of the current aspects of contemporary composition. A few of the submissions were strong in musical thinking if harking back to earlier eras, while most displayed a lively imagination and a secure range of techniques. It was also gratifying to see such a wide range of performing forces being utilised and in some cases, explored in highly original ways.

Marker 2:

The overall quality of work was good. The most striking works/portfolios showed a sensitivity to colour and texture, and made focussed use of their chosen compositional techniques. In some cases there were interesting uses of unconventional notation, though it is important to remember that where notation diverges from accepted norms a sufficient level of explanatory detail is needed in order to accurately convey compositional intentions. Similarly, wherever there special technical requirements (such as use of electronics) these need to be thoroughly detailed in performance notes.

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Paper 7: Notation

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
11	2	4	5			
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>46</i>			

This was the poorest set of marks for this paper that I have ever encountered; and something of a surprise based on supervision work. While Section 3 was answered slightly better than in some previous years – answers being fuller and the opportunity to annotate extracts used more freely – the transcription exercises floored many more candidates; and this despite them being by no means the hardest passages ever set (e.g. there was only one case of *alteration*, and that not in a significant context). Problems particularly arose with imperfection of the breve by combinations of notes (e.g. minims or a dotted configuration).

Paper 8: Keyboard Skills

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
	2	8	1			
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>9</i>			

Marker 1:

There was lots of evidence of good work in this paper but, as so often, few candidates were able to maintain a uniformly high standard across all the tests. Most, perhaps unsurprisingly, performed best in Figured Bass, the one 'takeaway' test. However, a significant number of candidates miscounted at one point or another, sometimes failing to notice the problem for a couple of bars – surely an indication of insufficient study of the score (as opposed to the harpsichord part). Also, it was very odd that some attempted to accompany the vigorous Allegro movement (replete with double and triple stoppings on the violin) with a single 8' stop; candidates must take responsibility for their own 'registration'. Miscounting, plus a slightly wayward approach to

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accidentals, marred several attempts at harmonisation; the best performances were marked by a clear awareness of the difference between dissonant and consonant notes in the given line. Most made a good attempt at the transposition exercise; the best performances here impressed both through their accuracy and fluency. Several students could have done better in the C clef score-reading, had they thought more about shaping the lines. Clearly, this can be difficult in knotty four-part textures; however, there were also some thinner passages in the chosen extract. The piano reduction test proved challenging for a surprising number of the candidates. Few produced beautiful sounds on the piano and, remarkably, the numerous ledger lines seem to have confused many.

Marker 2:

Most candidates gave competent answers to all tests. The best candidates showed a natural flair for the different tests, were able to show good stylistic understanding and gave fluid, expressive answers. Most candidates successfully harmonised the first half of the extract, but many struggled in the second, failing to recognise obvious suggestions of augmented and Neopolitan 6th harmony. An alarming number of candidates played the rhythm of the given melody incorrectly, in numerous places. Many candidates failed to consistently read the high ledger lines in the C clefs score reading exercise, causing them to stumble or hesitate. The best candidates maintained a fluid, realistic pulse. Transposition was mostly executed successfully, with the best candidates scoring highest in this question, presenting not just the correct notes but a stylish reading of the exercise. Similarly, the best answers to the vocal score question were more than just the correct reading of notes. Some candidates seemed to struggle to set the correct pulse for this question, and many omitted markings in the score, such as the request to bring out the internal melody. There should have been higher marks achieved on the figured bass exercise, particularly as candidates have time to prepare this question in advance. Nearly every candidate made some unnecessary errors, such as omitting rests or half bars, offering too dense a texture, or simply playing incorrect realisations. Better candidates displayed some rapport with the violinist, and showed some invention in dialogue with her.

Paper 9: Introduction to Ethnomusicology

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
28	9	16	3			
Percentage	32%	57%	11%			

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Overall, I was very pleased with the results for this paper. There was a high proportion of first-class and high second-class marks awarded, indicating that students had prepared well and answered the questions critically. The best papers were those that showed a good understanding of the relevant literature and which engaged critically with the readings and case studies, moving beyond mere summary. The idea of the paper was to introduce students to key theoretical approaches in ethnomusicology and apply those to relevant case studies. The very best answers did this, and some students even put forward their own critical opinions in a cogent and sophisticated way. I was also pleased that the majority of the students followed my advice and structured their essays carefully, with a clear introduction and concluding statement. This made the essays much easier and more enjoyable to read!

There were, however, issues with some of the answers. At times questions were not directly answered. Question 5a was a particular culprit: the question asks you to discuss Rice's quotation and through it explore the ways in which ethnomusicologists might conceptualise music. It does not ask for a timeline of the discipline's historical development, which is what some answers consisted of. Also, in questions where there are quotations (such as question 4), the quotation and author need to be invoked and critiqued at some point in the essay. The answers with lower marks were often poorly structured with disjointed arguments, which made it difficult to pick out the main points. These answers also rarely made use of relevant literature.

Paper 10: Elective Topics I

(i) Purcell and the English Imagination

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
9	2	4	3			
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>33</i>			

Marker 1:

Most candidates had clearly got to grips with the course materials and were able to respond to the exam questions with appropriate subject matter and thoughtful reasoning. Those who performed best added to this a more probing engagement with the terms of the questions (especially in Part B), and showed a more wide-ranging knowledge of the repertoire concerned – which meant that they less likely to be forced to rely upon examples introduced explicitly in lectures.

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Question 1 was generally well done, most candidates having prepared answers on the set works (though a few seemed to have little to say about one or two of those stipulated in the question; given the foreknowledge of set works this is an area in which future candidates could ensure that they are well prepared). Disappointingly, no one attempted Question 2 on the Te deum and Jubilate in D. Among the other questions, the most popular were nos. 3 (on Purcell's 'Peculiar genius to express the energy of English words') and 6 (responding to Locke's definition of opera). The former question produced somewhat polarised responses, ranging from those who simply gave brief descriptive observations about Purcell's vocal music at the bottom end, to the best answers, which identified the source of the quotation and carefully examined the role of *Orpheus Britannicus* in the creation of this reputation alongside discussion of well-chosen musical examples. In Question 6, most candidates were able to link Purcell's dramatic operas in particular to the tradition described by Locke, but several appeared confused as to the position of *Dido and Aeneas* in relation to this genre, and almost no-one extended the discussion into the much larger corpus of incidental music for plays that forms the greater part of 'Purcell's dramatic music'.

Marker 2:

Overall the exams clearly demonstrated the level of familiarity that students had gained with the repertory under consideration as well as its contexts and associated literatures. The best answers managed to integrate a high level of detail (musical and/or historical) into a broader narrative or argument that showed those materials in an interesting light. In question four, it would have been interesting to see candidates raise some of the issues connected with stylistic analysis more generally. In more than one case candidates apparently ran out of time in answering their final question – this is an issue that could hopefully be avoided through more careful monitoring of time during the exam, and perhaps practicing essay writing under exam conditions in advance.

Paper 11: Elective Topics II

(i) Don Giovanni

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
3	1	2				
Percentage	33.3	66.6				

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Marker 1:

This was overall a good set of answers.

The especially good thing was that they all showed evidence of much study.

The only slight disappointment was that students who attended an entire lecture course on *Don Giovanni* (and opera buffa more generally) could still make the occasional basic mistake, especially in matters of genre: some answers suggested that *dramma giocoso* and opera buffa indicate different genres, and that the presence of *parti serie* or the absence of Da Capo arias were remarkable traits (whereas both are customary in opera buffa, by the time of *Don Giovanni*). The best answers showed the occasional spark of originality.

Marker 2:

This was a very pleasing set of scripts, all of which demonstrated an enthusiastic engagement with the course and a good understanding of Mozart's opera and the surrounding issues. The best essays offered original insights into the work, detailed references to the score and libretto, as well as to relevant modern productions, and a critical appreciation of the scholarly literature. In some cases, the essays would have benefitted from a tighter focus on the question in hand: there were occasional lengthy digressions to explore only tangentially-related arguments and contexts; particularly in a timed exam, any such digressions run the risk of detracting from the strength of the argument. It is important to keep the essay question in mind at all times, and to answer the question that has been asked, not the question that the candidate would like to answer.

(ii) *Carmen in Context*

No of students taking paper	I	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
16	2	12	2			
Percentage	12.5	75	12.5			

The best scripts demonstrated a detailed and critical engagement with the opera and the surrounding discourse, drawing on a wide range of literature and productions, and in some cases offering original interpretations of the work and its scholarly reception.

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Where many candidates came undone, was in failing to answer the question being asked; indeed there were a number of instances in which students wrote what was a first-class essay to a different question. Too often, candidates seemed to reproduce a prepared answer, and did not adapt their ideas and arguments closely enough to the question in hand. This was particularly the case with Question 4b, on realism, which was answered by half the class. The majority of answers conflated realism with authenticity, choosing to focus on the extent to which *Carmen* makes use of genuine Spanish sources, and overlooking the title quotation entirely.

Question 6, the most popular question, elicited some of the best answers, demonstrating students' independent exploration of contemporary adaptations of *Carmen*; in this case, once again, however, there were several occasions where candidates largely disregarded the specific context of the question, and simply wrote about their chosen adaptation with barely any reference to the title quotation.

It is crucial that students read the question carefully, address *all* aspects of that question, including any quotations, and be prepared to be flexible in the way that they apply the ideas and materials that they have engaged with during the lecture course.

Paper 12: Introduction to Music and Science

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
6	1	5				
Percentage	17	83				

This paper was taken by disappointingly few students this year, but resulted in a very solid set of scripts, with a few outstanding answers that indicated reading well beyond the prescribed material. Most chose to answer question one, which asked candidates to relate Hanslick's apparent proscription of emotion in listening to current research; as answers ranged from good to exceptional, this was evidently a topic that had engaged the members of the course. Those students who took the lecture material as a starting point rather than as definitive were those whose answers were most accurate, confident and convincing; the stronger answers were supported by specific references and examples.