PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE MUSIC

2023

Paper 1: Listening

Section 1: General Comments

There were 9 centres taking the examination in 2023. The paper requires candidates to listen to some music and respond to different stimulus. The syllabus is assessed through three components targeting different skills. Candidates mostly attempted questions on recall and identifying music rudiments. Generally, candidates showed challenges in application of their aural skill to the examination. Although some candidates had vocabulary, they lacked knowledge on how to apply it to the audio examination.

Section 2: Comments on Individual Items

Section A

MUSIC A1

1 **(a)** Almost all the candidates were able to classify the instrument heard.

    (b) The item was well done by most candidates as they were able to identify the instrumental effect heard.

2 Well attempted item by almost all the centres, as candidates were able to describe the accompaniment of the music.

3 The majority of the candidates were able to identify the scale used throughout the extract.

4 Candidates were generally able to state the suitable metre.

5 **(a)** Well attempted item where most of the candidates stated the indigenous style.

    (b) The candidates were largely able to classify the style.

MUSIC A2

6 The item was well answered by the majority of the candidates as they were able to name the starting instrument.

7 The item was well done as candidates were able to identify the musical device in the bass line.

8 Most candidates were able to name the two chords heard.

9 **(a)** The majority of the candidates were able to correctly identify the popular style heard.

    (b) Candidates were able to access both marks in stating the reasons describing the style.

10 Most candidates were able to describe at least one melodic movement in the vocal section.

11 The majority of the candidates did well in this item as they were able to identify the tempo for the music.

12 The item was fairly done. Some candidates opted for Mmereki Marakakgoro in the list of options given.

MUSIC A3

13 **(a)** Most candidates accessed at least one characteristic of the style as heard in the music.

(b) The candidates were largely able to name the region associated with the music.

14 The item was fairly done. Most candidates could not describe the vocal ensemble heard as they listed voices randomly.

15 Most candidates were able to state the structure of the music.

16 The item was well done as most candidates were able to state the time signature for the music.

17 **(a)** Majority of the candidates were able to name the dominating instruments in the music.

(b) Most candidates could not state the function of the dominating instruments.

SECTION B

MUSIC B1

18 **(a)** Most candidates were not able to identify the instrument heard at the beginning instead stated musical instruments randomly. Only a few candidates were able to name the correct instrument while others either stated any other instrument that does not even belong to woodwind family.

(b) Some candidates were able to correctly identify the section of the orchestra.

19 **(a)** Most candidates were able to identify the correct instrumental effect with a few selecting random instrumental effects on the list provided.

(b) Candidates were generally unable to name the instrument playing the effect instead stated musical instruments randomly.

20 Most candidates did not have vocabulary to describe how tempo and articulation can be used to express mood in the music as most of them left blank spaces.

21 Most candidates were unable describe the music on the second appearance.

22 **(a)** Candidates described the harmony or melodic pattern rather than the rhythmic pattern.

(b) Candidates were mostly able to describe the melody played by the strings.

23 Most candidates were not able to state a correct response for a typical characteristic of the Romantic period.

24 **(a)** The majority of the candidates were unable to identify the genre of music heard instead selected random genres on the list.

(b) The justifications for the chosen genres were also random mostly referring to the type of dynamics.

SECTION C

MUSIC C1

25 Almost all candidates were able to state the instruments heard at the beginning of the extract.

26 Most candidates did not have vocabulary to describe the music as most of them left blank spaces.

27 Candidates could not access all the two marks as they only described the melody from bars 9-12.

28 Almost all candidates were unable to reflect the melody shape, reproduce correct pitches and some even failed to reproduce a rhythm that was already provided for them.

29 Majority of the candidates were able to describe the changes.

30 The item was performed below average. Most candidates gave repetition as their response.

31 Most candidates were able to identify the correct composer.

Recommendations

1 Candidates to be equipped with relevant vocabulary for specific musical concepts such as music styles, devices, texture etc.

2 Candidates to be assisted with approaches to melodic notation in aural setting.

3 Characteristic of music and role or purpose of music need to be clarified.

4 Candidates to be given more practice on interacting with and using the music scores to answer questions.

5 Candidates need to contact and use the assessment syllabus for reference about the concept and scope of approach.

6 Elements of music need to be unfolded in understanding so that they can be used appropriately in responses.

7 Styles of music and musical characteristics need to be clarified more.

Paper 2: Performing

Section 1: General Comments

The practical/ performance paper was taken by nine centres just like in 2022. All the centres have taken the examination before. A total number of 270 candidates took the examination. The centres ranged in number of candidates from 13 to 70. The candidates appeared to be prepared/ ready to take the examination even though a few did not have ensemble performances in 8 centres. However, the 2023 cohort performed lower than the 2022 cohort because of a number of issues raised in the report.

Section 2: Comments on Individual Questions

PERFORMANCES

SOLO PERFORMANCE

In most centres, candidates used a variety of instruments for their solos such as recorders, keyboard, marimba, clarinet, saxophone, guitars, trumpet etc. However, a few centres used voice mostly for their solo performances.

Some solos still have challenges in overall performance presentation; a few candidates faced challenges of precision when they struggled to perform in their selected tempo while others still opted to have no accompaniment even when it would have assisted their performance precision. Some centres managed to either have a live band, backtracks or a beat providing instrument such as drum kit supporting the solo performances. Most solo music was recycled around the candidates in the centres. There were centres where most of the candidates would perform the same song for their solos; in such instances some were able to execute the songs a lot better than others. Other candidates seemed to overly rely on their backing for performance support so much and therefore the candidate would be overshadowed.

The range of skills was spread across the centres; some had chosen songs of elementary or simple demands, most chose music of moderate difficulty while others brought music of substantial demands and executed it well. The selection of music is paramount to the range of skills demonstrated and the marking criteria rewards a combination of wise song selection and a demonstration of developed skills on the music. The use of microphones, though intended to enhance and aid projection in a performance was sometimes a challenge to some solo performers who seemed unfamiliar with the microphones; often stopping its use while performance was still on or struggling to switch it on or to hold it in proper proximity to the mouth and to balance the volumes. A few candidates chose instruments that limited their

proficiency and scope of performance. Some performances were punctuated by moments where a candidate would stop playing suddenly in the middle of a song and request to start afresh; such candidates would then be unable to take off after that pause. However, there were excellent solo performances presented on carefully selected music and on appropriately chosen solo instruments of proficiency. There was a significant number of candidates who opted to perform on musical instruments rather than on voice. Such instrumental performances showed levels of preparedness and good technical control on their instruments of choice.

ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE

A few candidates from different centres did not have ensemble performances. The few candidates stated that they did not have ensembles and some asked to be awarded a zero, some called other students to accompany them for the first time during examination.

Unlike the solo performances, selection of songs limited the coordinated efforts of the groups; some songs were overly repetitive with no variations while others restricted the freedom to perform as independent team players in a coordinated setting. Some candidates' music limited the performances to either basic call or response or to homophonic texture. A few other candidates brought suitable music but then the candidate would take a less significant role and contribute insignificantly to the overall performance. Some candidates could not coordinate well with their team members especially on intonation and tempo control while very few ended up part doubling for the major part of their songs.

The ensemble performances were predominantly melody and simple chordal accompaniment. The live music bands were comparatively well coordinated with multiple roles that complemented each other rather than just imitating one another. In centres that used marimba as the main ensemble instrument, the candidates either selected limited musical challenges in songs or could not unfold their skills on the instrument. However, there were some candidates who managed to show developed marimba skills especially on the soprano set.

INSTRUMENTS

The improvement on the use and choice of performance instruments is significant across the majority of the centres. Ensembles are no longer limited to choral unaccompanied sound; live bands, band and choir combination and marimba groups dominate the ensemble performances. The candidates displayed a high level of proficiency on instruments such as the keyboard,

saxophone and clarinet. A few centres were still concentrated around using the descant recorders.

OBSERVATIONS

An insignificant number of solo candidates selected notated music and provided scores for evaluation. Most of these notated scores were music of moderate to substantial demands. The same candidates presented notated music for evaluation during their ensemble performances. However, they used same songs for their solos and ensembles and that could disadvantage some candidates. There was a variety of genres used for the examination across centres; some genres allowed performances to unfold while others appeared to be static. If a genre chosen is static, the candidate cannot demonstrate a range of developed skills. The most preferred approach to song selection across centres was the medley. There is still need to develop the structure of the medley; the progression of the level of difficulty, the musical agreement between the different pieces and the overall coordination of the length.

Vocal performances need to be improved in overall skill; intonation, resonance and projection especially the solo performances. Such vocal solo performances were often shadowed by balancing of volumes; either the soloists voice would be very soft or the use of microphones was not well set. However, instrumental solos were mostly well coordinated and balanced.

Although there were some candidates who were weak on tempo choice and control, there were a majority of candidates who played with precision and tempo control to phrasing and expression as well as general improvisation.

In some centres candidates took more time than the stipulated time of 10 minutes for both solo and ensemble performance. Some candidates took 10 to 14 minutes for their solos only and repeated the same for their ensemble performances .This was significant on marimba, saxophone and keyboard performances.

Some candidates struggled to play their back-tracks, some took time searching for them to prove that backtracks were not prepared well on time and this created uneasiness on the part of the candidate. This year candidates used their tablets to search for back tracks and it took a lot of time to find them. This happened in 8 centres.

Centres with large number of candidates used voice mostly for their solos and ensembles, using untrained voices and using songs of simple demands that took less than two minutes.

Some centres used same songs for their solos and ensemble performances and it disadvantaged some candidates because some ended up having a poor quality of aimless improvisation.

In essence, the overall performance of the centres was rather weak compared to the previous year and this was highly influenced by the fact that there was one centre which had a large number of candidates who used voice mostly though having weak technical control of the instrument with a narrow range of modest skills. However, a noticeable improvement from the previous years was observed amongst the other centres.

Paper 3: Composing and Arranging

Section 1: General Comments

The moderation exercise for the component was undertaken on the 16 October to 23 October 2023. There were Nine (9) centres for the 2023 examinations, and candidature stood at 249, with some centres having very few candidates, as little as 10.

Most Centres met the project submission requirements. Some (3 of them), had to be followed to submit either summary marksheets, individual marksheets or registers. In the end, all centres had all the required projects and documentation. However, there were some centres who continue to provide summary marks in percentage form, whilst this is not the requirement. Whilst projects were submitted accordingly, in other cases a few centres submitted track lists which were not helpful and effective for the use by moderators. Thus, it would have been possible for a moderator to listen to an audio which is not compatible with the score given. This then created more work for moderators to ensure correct alignment of candidates' audio material and the music score. This compromises the credibility and security of individual projects and further posed challenges to moderators, in accessing candidates' work.

There were 2 centres whose projects were returned for remarking. For all the 2 centres, the rank order was highly affected. In effect, there were some candidates whose marks deserved less and were given more marks. Similarly, there were some candidates who were marked high when they actually could have scored less. It would appear that the centres marked without adhering to the standards and that there were wide discrepancies in the marking within the centre, where it appeared some candidates' work was marked with some leniency. Upon remarking, both centres satisfactorily adhered to the advise of the moderators.

Section 2: Comments on Individual Questions

General Instructions

It was observed that most Centres have knowledge of all requirements for submission. Centres were expected to submit Compositions and Arrangements. However, there is need to have standardized and correctly notated stimuli for the Arrangements. Centres must also be encouraged to have clear understanding of "Indigenous Music". This will allow them to have good choices of music for arrangements. They also have to differentiate between an ARRANGEMENT and a NEW COMPOSITION.

Compositions

Candidates across all Centres were creative and came up with new Ideas which were meant to be the foundations of their creations. In this regard, there were interesting melodic lines that were noticed in the compositions. However, the following were notable limitations:

- Some Candidates were unable to develop the melodic phrases that they composed. Their melodic progressions lacked direction and in some cases they just created some melodic loops that were not punctuated with cadences.

- Some Candidates had problems with Harmony. Instruments were notated horizontally and a lot of dissonances were created as a result. This also affected effective and sensible instrumental writing.

- Melodic lines were not clear since instruments chosen competed against each other. This also affected the structural development of the compositions/arrangements.

- Most candidates seemed challenged in using compositional techniques and devices.

- Some compositions did not seem to have been thought through and tended to be overly formulaic and repetitive.

- Compositions were generally too short and lacking inventiveness.

Arrangements

- There were some excellent arrangements (however, **very few**), which showed superior understanding of the use of medium, idiomatic writing and excellent understanding of the instruments written for and that were in the context of different music genres, such as jazz.

- Centres provided stimuli that were used by Candidates, for arranging. However, some Centres must consult to check if the stimuli they give Candidates are based on indigenous tunes and that those stimuli have been correctly notated. Some arrangements actually also sounded like other "arranged indigenous pieces", which are now in the popular music space.

- Most candidates did not show any new input in the arrangement and lacked a lot of creativity. In most cases they diverted from the given stimulus and the Arrangements seemed like new compositions.

- Some arrangements appeared as if it is the original stimuli being basically accompanied by mostly a keyboard instrument, whose musical lines was simply chords.

- Most arrangements lacked resolutions of melodic lines.

- Most arrangements were overly repetitive and lacking creativity, with no sense of connectedness.

Strengths

- Score presentation was mostly suitable and neat for both compositions and arrangements.

- Some Centres managed to produce very clean sounds and very clean scores.

- Music ideas in some Centres was well attended to, hence producing music that was catchy and easy to follow.

- Instrumentation in some Centres was well taken care of, hence producing music that has instruments that go together.

- Some centres used unfamiliar and unpopular styles, such as jazz and the music was effectively meaningful

Structure

In most cases, Composition/arrangements were fairly well attempted. Candidates however produced rather too short pieces and some were rather limited in structural development. Variations were rather "divorced" or sounding foreign from the musical ideas initiated.

Use of Medium

Some Candidates made good choices of instruments which combined well. However, in some cases candidates had problems with combining melodic instruments and another instrument. There was limited idiomatic writing for instruments. For example, a Candidate would have a piano playing with the left hand only and basically playing basic chords throughout. This was showing great limitations in the use of instruments.

Score Presentation

• Scores were presented in staff notation

• In some instances (**although few**), scores were incomplete. The audio will continue playing whilst the score ends just anywhere.

• Most Candidates produced legible and tidy scores. In some cases, however, overlaps and music weak in harmony, was presented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Centres must do internal standardization before submitting to BEC

2 More supervision is needed at Centres to ensure that Candidates are well guided

3 Centres must always submit helpful and accessible portfolios and audios.

4 Centres must ensure that each Candidate has a separate CD attached to their project. It has been found out that Centres have been putting Candidates work as same project in one or more CDs but the documentation provided was not helpful. Where single CD is used, then there must be helpful Track list that has been checked and is dependable.

5 Centres must ensure that Audio transferred to CD is playable in any simple Audio player.

6 Centres must intensify supervision and understand Arrangement more. An arrangement ought to be developed but not totally divorced from the original stimuli.

7 Centres must familiarize themselves with the informal portfolio and know why it is needed as part of the package.

8 Centres need to work more on harmony and improvisation to improve the quality of compositions and arrangements, as well as suitable and sensible instrumental writing.

9 Markers at Centres must always adhere to marking criteria so that projects are awarded marks that they deserve. Centres tend to inflate candidates' marks. Therefore, during moderation, this affects rank order and a true reflection of the quality of work submitted.