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EDUCATION

SAMPLE QUESTIONS
One question from each section of this exam, with its marking scheme, so teachers can see what the full paper is like. Full exam and solutions: captivateeducation.com.au/trial-exams

Music Repertoire Performance

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

- Reading time is 15 minutes
- Writing time is 1 hour

Approved materials

- Pencil should be used where notation is required.

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book, including blank manuscript for rough work
- An audio recording of the musical excerpts for Sections A and B (supplied by your teacher)

Instructions

- All of your work, including rough work, will be considered for assessment.
- You may write at any time during the playing of the audio recording.

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents

Section A (2 questions, 20 marks)

Section B (7 questions, 40 marks)

Practice material in the layout of the 2025 VCAA paper – generated 2027. Not a VCAA examination.

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Section A – Listening and interpretation

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions in pen or pencil in the spaces provided.
- Write your responses in English.
- An audio recording will play continuously throughout Section A.

Sample – Question 1 of the 2 questions in this section.

Question 1 (8 marks)

This question relates to the excerpt from ‘Mars, the Bringer of War’ from *The Planets*.

Work: ‘Mars, the Bringer of War’ from *The Planets*, Op. 32
Composer: Gustav Holst
Performer: Berliner Philharmoniker
Conductor: Herbert von Karajan
Album: *Holst: The Planets* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1981)

The excerpt will be played five times. There will be silent working time after each playing.

First playing (1′25″) – 30 seconds of silence
Second playing (1′25″) – 1 minute of silence
Third playing (1′25″) – 2 minutes of silence

a. Describe how the performers use duration and dynamics to convey musical character in this excerpt. 4 marks

Fourth playing (1′25″) – 2 minutes of silence
Fifth and final playing (1′25″) – 3 minutes of silence

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b. Discuss how repetition is used in this excerpt. 4 marks

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Section B – Music language

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided. Pencil should be used where notation is required.
- Write your responses in English.
- An audio recording will play continuously throughout Section B.

Sample – Question 3 of the 7 questions in this section.

Question 3 (2 marks)

Listen to the following two melodies. Each melody will be played twice. There will be silent working time after each playing.

Melody 1 first playing – 5 seconds of silence
Melody 1 second and final playing – 10 seconds of silence
Melody 2 first playing – 5 seconds of silence
Melody 2 second and final playing – 20 seconds of silence

Four melodic contours, A, B, C and D, are provided below.



A



B



C



D

From the options above, identify the contour of each melody played. 2 marks

Melody 1 _____

Melody 2 _____

End of sample questions

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Marking scheme for the sample questions

Section A

Question 1a. (4 marks)

Describe how the performers use duration and dynamics to convey musical character in this excerpt.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Describe how the performers use duration and dynamics in the opening of ‘Mars’ and link each element to the menacing, militaristic character it creates.

This part is marked holistically against the descriptors in the mark allocation; there is no mark per point.

Expect: duration treated as the length of the excerpt; "it gets louder" with no indication of where, how gradually or through which instruments; a war story with no musical evidence.

Mark allocation: 4: both elements (or the device) described accurately and in detail, with specific, located evidence (named instruments, techniques and moments) clearly linked to the musical character or to what the device achieves; precise study-design terminology. **3:** both addressed with some specific evidence; the link is mostly clear but one element or one side of the discussion is less developed. **2:** general description ("it gets louder", "it is repeated") with limited evidence or link. **1:** an isolated relevant observation, or one element only. **0:** nothing creditable.

Responses could have included:

- **Duration:** from the first bar a one-bar rhythmic ostinato (a quaver triplet followed by longer, evenly weighted notes) in an asymmetric five-beat (quintuple, 5/4) metre that never settles into a regular march — relentless and unsettling.
- **Duration:** the orchestra holds a steady, moderately fast tempo with no rubato, so the pulse sounds mechanical and inevitable, like an army advancing.
- **Duration:** long, sustained notes in the bassoons and horns (and later the brass) sit over the busy ostinato — two rhythmic layers moving at different speeds build tension.
- **Dynamics:** the excerpt begins very softly (pp) — the ostinato is played col legno by the strings with harp and timpani — so the threat sounds distant.
- **Dynamics:** a long, gradual crescendo across the excerpt as more instruments join and the brass enter; the menace grows steadily closer rather than arriving suddenly.
- **Dynamics:** accents within the ostinato and the heavier brass entries towards the end (about 1′00″–1′25″) reach a loud, harsh level, giving a brutal, overwhelming character.

Sample full-mark response

> The character is menacing and mechanical. Duration: the strings, harp and timpani repeat the same one-bar rhythm in an unusual five-beat metre, a triplet followed by heavy, even notes, and the orchestra keeps a strict, unchanging tempo, so the music feels like a machine that cannot be stopped. Above it the bassoons and horns hold long notes, so a slow layer moves against the busy

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> rhythm and the tension grows. Dynamics: the opening is very soft — the strings tap the rhythm col legno — so the threat seems far away; the performers then make a long, gradual crescendo as more instruments enter, and by the end the brass are loud and accented, so the menace feels close and overwhelming.

Question 1b. (4 marks)

Discuss how repetition is used in this excerpt.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Discuss how repetition is used in the excerpt: where it occurs, how it is treated and what it achieves, with a judgement about its effect.

This part is marked holistically against the descriptors in the mark allocation; there is no mark per point.

Expect: describing the character or a battle scene instead of the device; naming contrast or variation (the ostinato does not change); listing where repetition occurs without saying what it achieves.

Excerpt specification — Question 1. Gustav Holst, 'Mars, the Bringer of War' from *The Planets*, Op. 32; Berliner Philharmoniker, Herbert von Karajan; *Holst: The Planets* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1981, digital recording). Source: the album or a streaming service (search "Karajan Planets 1981 Mars"). Trim from the first note to about 1′25″, fading out during the first big brass build-up. Play five times as scheduled (three playings before part a, two before part b). The student must hear the col legno string ostinato in five, the long-note bassoon and horn idea above it, and a clear, gradual crescendo as instruments are added. Confirm the label, year and timings on your copy before use.

Mark allocation: 4: both elements (or the device) described accurately and in detail, with specific, located evidence (named instruments, techniques and moments) clearly linked to the musical character or to what the device achieves; precise study-design terminology. **3:** both addressed with some specific evidence; the link is mostly clear but one element or one side of the discussion is less developed. **2:** general description ("it gets louder", "it is repeated") with limited evidence or link. **1:** an isolated relevant observation, or one element only. **0:** nothing creditable.

Responses could have included:

- The ostinato rhythm is repeated in every bar of the excerpt — first on a single repeated pitch — so it establishes the pattern and becomes the music's foundation.
- The repetition is unchanging in rhythm while other elements change around it: instruments are added, the dynamic level rises and the harmony above it shifts — repetition gives unity while the build gives direction.
- The sustained melodic idea of the bassoons and horns (long notes moving by step) is repeated and then taken higher by other instruments, so the repeated idea intensifies rather than simply returning.
- Effect: the relentless repetition creates an obsessive, mechanical, inescapable quality — the listener is given no relief, which suits the war-like subject; a strong verdict might argue that the

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repetition, combined with the crescendo, is what makes the climax feel inevitable.
- Techniques from the study design list that could be named: ostinato / repeating motifs, repeating rhythmic patterns, dynamic change over repetition.

Sample full-mark response

> Repetition is the backbone of the excerpt. The strings, harp and timpani repeat the same five-beat rhythm in every bar, so the pattern is established immediately and then never lets go. Because the rhythm itself does not change, the performers can build around it: instruments are added and the dynamic grows, so the repetition feels more threatening each time it comes back. The long-note idea in the bassoons and horns is also repeated and pushed higher by the brass, which adds to the sense of an approaching force. I think the repetition is highly effective: by refusing to vary the ostinato, the music becomes mechanical and inescapable, and the climax at the end feels like the inevitable result of everything repeated before it.

Section B

Question 3. (2 marks)

From the options above, identify the contour of each melody played.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Identify each of the two melodies played from the options printed.

Answer: Melody 1 — B; Melody 2 — C.

All four contours share the stepwise rise over the first three notes. Melody 1 drops back to its starting pitch on the fourth note (B); Melody 2 keeps rising to its highest note on the fifth note before falling (C), whereas A and D turn down after the fourth note.

Audio specification — Question 3. Piano (or a flute sound), crotchets at ♩ = 80, legato, G major. Melody 1: G4, A4, B4, G4, C5, B4, A4, G4 (contour B). Melody 2: G4, A4, B4, D5, E5, D5, B4, G4 (contour C). Each melody played twice with the silences printed.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each melody correctly identified (2 marks).

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