

Extracts from ESSAY-WRITING Module

Examiners often comment that students have lost marks because they have not **related their answer to the question**. Before you even begin to answer a question, you must decide what the question wants you to do - to give reasons for a particular point of view, to discuss a statement about the music, to describe some feature of the music, or to compare and contrast features or sections of a work. Here are examples of the types of question that are asked in exam papers:

a) Give reasons for a particular point of view

'In Mahler's Fourth Symphony we are sometimes in another world, sometimes fixed on solid earth.'
Justify this statement, giving examples from the music.

b) Discuss a statement about the music

"The development of melodic ideas is one of the most fundamental features in Brahms' music." Discuss this statement with reference to his Piano Quintet in F minor op.34.

c) Describe some feature of the music

Discuss the various ways in which Stravinsky uses instrumental colours in his Symphony of Psalms. Relate your answer to the structure of the music.

d) Compare and contrast different

Although instrumental colour is an essential element, rhythm also plays an important part in Loussier's arrangements of Bach. Discuss this with particular reference to ONE track of Toccata: Loussier plays Bach.

The examiner will not give you points for simply writing down everything that you know about the music. You have to do what the question asks.

- In question (a) you are asked to present an argument, to prove that the work is couched in fantasy at times, but is also rooted in the real world. You must
- In question (b) you are asked to discuss a statement. Unlike question (a), you don't have to agree with this statement. However you must
- In question (c) you are asked to describe the use of instrumental colour. You are also asked to relate it to the structure. So you must
- In question (d) you have to describe the arranger's use of instrumental colour and rhythm, and show how they are both important in the work. You have to quote from one movement in particular. You will need to

You should be able to form an opinion about the work Here is one way of doing it:

1. Listing all
2. Organising the
3. Supporting your arguments
4. Making the decision

Here is an examination question, and a possible method of drafting an answer to it:

'The leading force in the Brahms' Piano Quintet in F minor op.34 is the piano. However the piano does not dominate the work as soloist' Do you agree?

- a) Look through the movements, and analyse
- b) Make two lists...
- c) Decide which list is longer, or
- d) Judge whether you
- e) Try to find some common features in the types of passage in each list (e.g.)
- f) Discuss each feature in turn, giving
- g) Start a new paragraph for
- h) Check that what you have
- i) Draft a conclusion listing
- j) Finally write an