

2012 Practice Analysis Questions (1st published on Facebook – VCE Music Support page)

It is said of this work that Georges Lentz expresses qualities of the Australian landscape - "Extreme loneliness, great silence and a sense of ...fragility" How are these concepts expressed through balance and blend of instrumental voices, tone colour and melody?

<http://www.georgeslentz.com/guyuhmgan.mp3>

Elena Kats-Chernin - Piano Concerto No. 2, Third Movement
How do dynamics and tone colour work together to express character in this work?

<http://au.myspace.com/music/player?sid=35742951&ac=now>

Sample Response Student 1: Elena Kats-Chernin's 'Piano Concerto No. 2 – Third Movement' employs a variety of dynamic effects in addition to contrasting tone colours (TC's) to create its overall mood which is that of manic energy and tension.

Jenn's Reply: You've answered the question as if it was an English question. Try not to restate the question in your answer, you don't have time. This would be much better and concise if you used a heading, or dot point saying "Overall mood = manic energy/tension. Achieved through: dot point dot point". You don't get any points for the rest of what you've written here.

Sample Response Student 1: The brittle TC of the dissonant fortissimo piano chords contrasted by the warmer timbre of the strings could highlight the tense nature of the work.

Jenn's Reply: Great. You've answered the question well - ie. talked about how dynamics and TCs work together. I'd just add a few more TC words to describe this. My usual 'rule' is two, as they add to each other. Eg. the brittle, sharp TC

Sample Response Student 1: This is further achieved with the 'squeals' of the upper register clarinet with a penetrating TC. Such a piercing TC may further elicit feelings of tension.

Jenn's Reply: Great. You've answered the question well - ie. talked about how dynamics and TCs work together. I'd just add a few more TC words to describe this. My usual 'rule' is two, as they add to each other. Eg. the brittle, sharp TC

Adding more about what happens dynamically here would strengthen this as an answer to the question.

This question asks how these two combine so when you mention one you should mention the other.

Sample Response Student 2: The overall mood of the piece is one of controlled energy and tension. This is achieved by:

- the harsh 'struck' timbre of the hammers of the piano resonating at a louder dynamic in contrast with the taught, brittle tone colour of the accompanying strings, providing tension and a sense of restraint
- The different instrumental tone colours of the instruments through use of disharmony creates cacophony of sound, a backdrop to the piano to express the barely controlled, almost manic energy

Jenn's Reply: You need to use tone colour words here - eg. the "___ ___" tone colour and the "___ ___" tone colour of the ___ ... You could also say this is enhanced by harmonic considerations, such as dissonance (if that's what you're trying to say).

Sample Response Student 2: Instruments are layered to crescendo, building tension

Jenn's Reply: How does tone colour support this?

Sample Response Student 2: The use of range (piercing woodwinds compared with deep brass) creates a dense texture to facilitate a full, forte dynamic

Jenn's Reply: What is the tone colour of the deep brass - you've talked about melodic range, but this also relates to tone colour range. You need to actually state what you think the tone colour is and this would complete your point more clearly.

Sample Response Student 2: The fortissimo solo piano uses heavy accents to express barely constrained energy, exemplified in the stark percussive timbre and the constant loud dynamic with little contrast

Jenn's Reply: Again, your tone colour description is a little light on. Overall - some great language, good use of musical terminology, good descriptions of dynamics and moments where you clearly state how they work together. A little more work needed on your tone colour descriptions and how elements of music compliment each other.

Sample Response Student 3: The character of this piece is dramatic chaotic and theatrical. The discord of the musical one but very steady pulse makes every beat clearly felt, increasing the character of drama, tension and release to chaos

-The beginning of the piece

Jenn's Reply: Introduction rather than 'the beginning'.

Sample Response Student 3: sets a soft dynamic in the bass that works together with the tone colour of the low buzzing strings and tense percussive beats. This sets tension but steadiness in the character of the baseline

Jenn's Reply: Is tense a tone colour? I usually use two tone colour words - I like buzzing. An example : The buzzing, warm TC of the strings and the ___ ___ TC of the percussion... What do you mean by "sets tension/steadiness" I'd expand further on this.

Sample Response Student 3: The main musical line is introduced by a squarking woodwind at a raised mf dynamic. This contrasts with the low, tense base and creates increased tension in the blending of the two parts **Jenn's Reply:**

Watch 'squarking', maybe a little too value judgement-ish?! Do you mean piercing? Nasal? Penetrating? I'd use tone colour words for the bass too but I love your point that the contrasting of two extremes of tone colour creates tension. GREAT point.

Sample Response Student 3: The piano enters this piece adding new dynamic and tone-colour to the blend of instrument.

The piano brings the piece to a steady forte dynamic with some variance within the phrases with tinkling tone colour in a softer dynamic range adding to a tension/ release feel of the phrasing. This contributes to the forward motion of the piece with tinkering and rough discordant harmonies that add chaotic colour to this motion.

Jenn's Reply: When they're talking about tone colour you need to talk about the quality of the sound. You can say that dissonance compliments or enhances this effect but dissonance in itself I not really a tone colour, is it? Overall: Some good descriptions and answering of the question but you need to talk more about how the elements work together in order to answer the question fully. Work on your tone colour vocabulary and add more descriptions of other instruments. Your dynamics could go into a bit more detail too, especially in regards to HOW dynamics is created.

Sample Response Student 4: When the bass string instruments enter with a brittle tone colour combined with a low dynamic, an ominous character is initially created. The dynamic level gradually increases with the addition of other instruments with contrasting tone colours;

Jenn's Reply: Stating WHAT these tone colours are may be helpful and if they are brighter, more strident tone colours you could argue that the use of particular tone colours enhances or complements the building dynamics.

Sample Response Student 4: the percussion has a very tinny tone colour at the beginning of the piece which is juxtaposed against the dissonant flute line, which has a clear yet harsh tone colour.

Jenn's Reply: You've used similar tone colour words here. You could maybe draw a comparison to the elements of these colours that are similar while elements are different.

Sample Response Student 4: The dynamic abruptly increases with a sforzando when the strings are introduced with a piercing tone colour and builds up to the introduction of the piano. Overall, a harsh, rumbling and brittle combination of tone colour is created by the various instruments and thus, these two techniques create an agitated and ominous character. The dry tone colour of the piano as well as its dynamics, which are imitated by the rest of the instruments, contributes to the overall character of the work.

Jenn's Reply: You've used similar tone colour words here. You could maybe draw a comparison to the elements of these colours that are similar while elements are different.

Listen from 1 minute to 3 minutes 30 seconds.

Practice Question:

How does articulation and melody combine to create character in this work?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Br5PN3Cvm4&feature=plcp>

How does tone colour express a sense of fun and excitement in this piece?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKamWp610ng>