

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01

Listening

Key Messages

Breadth of listening experience, and developing the ability of candidates to reflect on it and make connections, is needed to give them wider scope in choosing and answering questions.

General

There was a wide spread of marks, from impressively high achievement to a handful of very inadequately prepared ones. The majority sat comfortably in the middle range with a pleasing number in the upper rather than in the lower bands.

No candidate was unable to tackle three questions and, generally, what was required had been understood. A few made too much in two of their three questions of very similar points and references to the same narrow range of repertoire. There are increasing signs that candidates are beginning to reflect more on their own performance repertoire and to recognise relevant opportunities for an answer to make references to their understanding of it. Similarly, more candidates in this session referred appropriately to musical techniques in traditional music of which they had personal experience. These trends towards cross-referencing between the activities of performing, composing and listening are to be encouraged.

Conversely, i.e. more narrowly, there was a handful of candidates who duplicated in their answers large sections of material already presented in their Reports for Component 8663/06. While some saw a legitimate new aspect to their topic that they could relevantly introduce, others seem simply to have used it as an opportunity to persuade the Examiners that they had a wider knowledge of music than they could, in fact, demonstrate.

Section A

Question 3 was by far the most popular question. Few candidates tackled **Question 2**.

- 1 Most candidates knew something about the Sonata Form structure of the symphony's first movement but few were clear about the 'double exposition' nature of it in the concerto. Many correctly observed that the concerto had only three movements against the symphony's four but disappointingly few recognised the Menuet and Trio in the latter as the significant additional movement. Several compared the slow movements, generally in rather vague terms, but few attempted to compare the two finales. The different role of the orchestra in each genre was frequently mentioned but hardly any candidates exemplified this.
- 2 The few candidates who attempted this question found it very difficult to give 'a full account'. Some misunderstood the notion of 'link' and answered in terms of unlikely similarities of mood.
- 3 Candidates seemed to have considered this a much more straightforward, perhaps less demanding, question than either of questions 1 or 2. On the contrary, the demands were as great, in that **(i)** an 'account of the music' of each instrument required an ability to describe in a recognisable way what each instrument played in detail; **(ii)** the discussion of 'role' required a secure understanding of texture and the ability to recognise what was significant about individual instrumental rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles within it; **(iii)** absolute precision was essential.

The best candidates were able to describe and 'account' for some of the detailed features e.g. why the viola provided the bass in Variation II, or how the pitch of an instrument affected its timbre and, consequently, its effect in the balance of the ensemble.

The spread of achievement was very wide. Some candidates referred to violas and cellos (plural) in their answer; others counted the Theme itself as Variation I and wrote, therefore, only about two variations specified in the question. In most cases familiarity with and general appreciation of the music and the basic techniques were discernible by 'reading between the lines' of the answer, but the actual language expressing understanding was sometimes very vague, e.g. 'sunshine'/'darkness', or even couched in descriptive metaphors of 'cool forests'/'sunny beaches'.

Section B

The majority of candidates chose **Question 6**, very few **Question 5**. Those who answered **Question 4** were, generally, by far the best prepared showing close familiarity with, and understanding of, the music of each song.

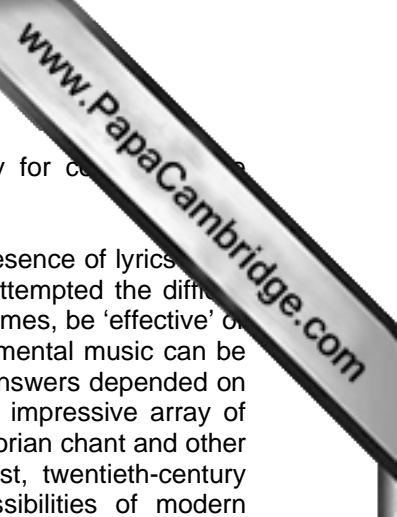
- 4 All the candidates who chose this question clearly did so because they had a fine appreciation of each text and the techniques Schubert used to interpret it. Almost all kept to the point. The difference between the answers lay principally in the extent of relevant detail cited. Most discussed the piano's role in portraying the natural background of brook and mill and in reflecting the singer's changing moods. Some concentrated on one aspect more than the other. Most were able to pinpoint how particular words in the text were emphasised, e.g. 'mein!'. A few, usually out of enthusiasm, gave a little too much space to features of the vocal line and forgot to demonstrate how the piano supported it.
- 5 Though the music was clearly very familiar to the few candidates who chose this question, and their explanations of composers' interpretative techniques were usually convincing, the distinctions between recitative, arioso and aria were rarely clearly understood. The basic differences between recitative and aria/song were not always correctly defined and candidates had difficulties with Arioso, which is less tractable to define and describe.
- 6 The question was generally well understood and references to all three Core Works were often enthusiastic and appreciative, some candidates explaining scenes and moments in vivid detail, but few were able to pin down and explain precisely how the music achieved its effects. The techniques most frequently cited were modality (usually referred to as 'tonality' but this was almost always used as a term for simple contrasts of major/minor), tempo, dynamics, chromaticism and, particularly with reference to examples from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, the use of melisma and word-painting. Instrumentation was often listed but often without convincing examples.

The examples of some candidates ranged more widely, including music they themselves performed, popular and traditional music as well as a few, enterprising, purely instrumental examples. Some commented on the contribution of performers, particularly in relation to jazz repertoire.

Section C

Question 9 was by far the most popular, answers to the other three questions being almost equally divided.

- 7 Candidates were generally aware that the orchestra had grown in size and could trace the development from the strings and continuo orchestra of Purcell to the increasing role of wind and brass in Beethoven's music. Some wrote at length about the transition from harpsichord to piano as though they believed the latter to have become a staple of the late eighteenth-century orchestra. Most were vague about Verdi's orchestra, simply asserting that it was bigger, louder, denser and more versatile, without being able to support this view by reference to any specific examples from *Otello*. Better-informed answers ranged successfully beyond the Prescribed and Core Works citing between them Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, Handel's *Water Music*, Vivaldi's *Seasons*, Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*, Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique* and on to the use of electronic instruments in the present day.
- 8 Most candidates had some understanding of the modern terms, though they had difficulty distinguishing between them. Some described in relevant detail the sort of relationship a performer might have today with his/her record company. Although there was a general understanding that the situation was very different in the Vienna of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this was too often described only in terms of aristocratic patronage. The circulation of pirated copies was rarely mentioned. Few distinguished between the different experiences of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and hardly any discussed the growth and impact on composers and audiences of publishing. It was



a particular surprise that no-one mentioned how Haydn earned any money for commissioning the *Emperor Quartet* and who owned it, when.

- 9** Several candidates argued, in varying degrees of convincing detail, that the presence of lyrics restricts the audience's freedom to interpret the music they are listening to. Others attempted the difficult task of distinguishing ways in which vocal and instrumental music can both, at times, be 'effective' or 'ineffective'. The most purposeful answers were those that argued that instrumental music can be both more powerful and/or open to wider interpretation: the success of these answers depended on the level of support given by detailed discussion of pertinent examples. An impressive array of repertoires was drawn on in the best answers ranging from primitive man, Gregorian chant and other religious traditions, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, twentieth-century and popular music, up to thoughtful observations on the expressive possibilities of modern technologies. At the opposite end of this breadth of references, one candidate's answers consisted solely of examples already examined in detail in answer to **Question 6**.
- 10** Fewer candidates chose this question but the answers of those that did were very much to the point, illustrated with detailed references to, and explanations of, apt examples that they knew well, usually as performers themselves.

MUSIC

Paper 8663/6
Investigation and Report

Key messages

Reading needs to be assimilated and understood and the music to which it refers listened to at first-hand.

Judgements about the music should be supported by precise reference to musical examples.

General comments

The Investigation and Report for this Component may take any suitable (musical) focus for its topic and all the candidates had chosen sensibly. Repertoire chosen for study ranged from the Baroque to the late twentieth-century and encompassed both very well-known and less famous 'classical' works, as well as music from other traditions and popular genres. Most were adequately resourced.

Candidates for this Component are not expected to have the same types of technical understanding as those taking the A level Component but they must, nonetheless, acquire during their Investigation of the music sufficient facility in explaining in their own words what they hear in the music. Many wrote persuasively about their responses to, and appreciation of, their chosen repertoire. Some had a sufficiently keen ear to be able to tease out for themselves how effects were achieved and could express this convincingly but a few took refuge in reproducing what other commentators had identified as significant features. While they could be credited for their investigative endeavour – finding relevant sources, reading and selecting from them – they could not, and should not, claim the judgements of others and/or explanations of examples as their own.

All candidates had observed the requirement to list their sources in a Bibliography. Most had relied fairly heavily on websites but some had also read – and understood – one or two relevant books. In the body of their text most candidates had been careful to use quotation marks for direct quotations from these sources, together with a footnote identifying which of the sources had been quoted. A few, however, had not acknowledged at any point the extent to which they were actually drawing on their listed sources. The work of one candidate was so closely dependent on two websites that it amounted to a patchwork of quotations (some acknowledged, the majority not) and close paraphrases.

The 'Authentication' statement, which all candidates had signed, draws attention to the inadmissibility of paraphrasing the words of other commentators without a specific acknowledgement of the original source. The deliberate, systematic substitution of synonyms for a few words in what is otherwise the quotation of a whole sentence or paragraph does not make it the 'candidate's own work' e.g. replacing 'descending' with 'downward', 'gradually' with 'steadily', 'portends' with 'foretells', 'objective' with 'intent', 'deceptive' with 'misleading' and 'unwary' with 'unsuspecting'. It may happen that candidates, in the initial stages of their Investigation, make close notes as they read and, when they come much later to write up their 'findings', inadvertently reproduce the exact wording in their notes, forgetting that these are direct quotations from their original sources. The substitution of synonyms as illustrated above, however, is a fully conscious act, intended to conceal the fact that the bulk of the words used are not the candidate's own: this is plagiarism. Teachers are asked to be forthright and very clear in their explanations of this as well as vigilant in their supervision of how candidates are working and writing.

It was pleasing that all the candidates had explored worthwhile music and really got to know it well. Several wrote detailed commentaries. Although most had supplied CDs, in many cases complete recordings of often major works, few solved the problem of how to demonstrate their understanding and familiarity with the music by reference to identifiable 'events' in it. The enclosure of complete recordings (some without any track information at all) was irrelevant: a carefully-compiled CD of short extracts, each designed to illustrate a specific point, would have been much more effective. Other candidates had acquired scores and their commentaries followed these closely but references to bar numbers or rehearsal figures were meaningless unless the Examiners, too, had a score. This cannot always be the case.