

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01

Listening

General comments

As in previous years, most candidates achieved their best marks in **Section A**. It was evident that they had prepared carefully. Answers in the highest band showed very close familiarity and appreciation of the music and gave recognisable descriptions of precise features in their examples. Although candidates generally also knew the Core Works of **Section B** well, there were many who did not do themselves full justice: answers frequently contained long passages of irrelevant material e.g. descriptions of the images contained in each of the six planets in the Holst without any reference to instrumentation, or commentaries on all the movements in the Vivaldi concertos, leaving themselves little space or time for the main focus of the question; or did not address part of the question e.g. **Question 5** began 'Compare the orchestras....'; or misunderstood the thrust of the question e.g. several answers to **Question 6** considered only the lyrics of a song, explaining the images behind them but not relating these to the music itself. **Section C** yielded few really satisfactory answers: where references to musical examples were required, most relied on the Prescribed and Core Works, some even duplicating material they had given in a previous answer. The level of expression was frequently poor (and handwriting by this point had sometimes deteriorated to near-illegibility) and the 'argument' often circular, with little evidence overall of familiarity with a wider range of repertoire (than the Prescribed and Core Works) or of reflection about the music which was known.

Section A

- 1 Responses to this question were disappointing. Although most tried to address the three aspects suggested, answers were generally vague, lacking convincing evidence of real familiarity with the music of either piece. Many were able to describe the first few moments of the first or second movements in some detail – Beethoven's use of piano to open the first movement, or the triplet accompaniment in Mozart's second – but rarely were there references to later events. Only one candidate discussed Beethoven's linking device. Although most were aware of the concept of a 'double exposition', hardly any candidates had noticed that the introduction of the second subject in both first movements was left to the soloist. Explanations about cadenzas were often very confused. The form of each of the second movements is problematic: some tried to squeeze both into sonata form; none understood the variation nature of Beethoven's. Few candidates chose to compare the third movements but one gave a masterly, succinct explanation of sonata rondo form followed by brief, but telling, descriptions of the different natures of the two themes and the piano textures. Many candidates had some awareness of the different natures of the pianos for which the two composers wrote and mentioned increased range, use of the pedal and the greater dynamic demands in Beethoven's music but very few could relate their discussion to specific moments in the music of either composer.
- 2 The candidates who chose to answer this question were nearly all on very solid ground (there were no poor answers). They knew their way confidently around sonata form and could often describe the course of the movement in vivid detail. Answers that could both show the extent to which Schubert was conventional (and many understood the 'Classical' nature of the movement) and point out the movement's less regular aspects (the four-bar introduction and the avoidance of the tonic at the beginning of the recapitulation) scored well, some very highly. A few candidates had made a close study of the score and committed to memory bar numbers of particularly significant moments: quoting these is not in itself evidence of close familiarity and understanding of the music – bar numbers cannot stand in place of recognisable descriptions of events or details which relate individual moments to the whole movement.

- 3 Of all the questions in this section this one attracted the most candidates and displayed a wide range of achievement. Comparing two such short pieces was the most contained of the questions, but also the one that depended for success on a very high level of detail. It was their ability to provide these details convincingly that differentiated candidates in the top mark bands. At the lower end there were a number of vague, often repetitive, answers. A few were not even sure about which instruments played what. Most candidates, however, mentioned many of the obvious points: melody back in the 1st violin; the octave transposition; the minor harmony at the beginning; the short coda (which prompted some very detailed, precise descriptions of the final two chords) and the scalar link between phrases. Full explanations of the changes in texture and the chromaticism were rare, though many candidates showed an appreciative awareness of their effects.

Section B

- 4 This was both the most straightforward and the most tightly-focused of the three questions in this section. The most successful answers were clear about which parts of the sonnets the music alluded to and illustrated their explanations of how the programmes were expressed by detailed commentaries which touched on instrumentation and performing techniques, tempi, textures, keys, rhythms and features of the principal melodies. Candidates who were less sure of the details but had a fair idea of the relationship between text and music often padded out their answers with irrelevant material about Vivaldi, concertos in general or the other movements. Some were only able to engage in impressionistic speculations that often confused imagery e.g. 'thunder' with 'flies' or, even, movements (there were a number of vivid references to Boreas and cracking ice).
- 5 The question demanded a comparison. Many answers gave detailed descriptions of a good range of examples from the music of both composers but left the comparisons unspoken. The best answers began by setting out clearly the similarities and differences in the size and make-up of the two orchestras and a few made telling points about Ravel's use of timbre to colour Mussorgsky's original. Some candidates discussed the musical material of *Pictures at an Exhibition* as though the original conception were Ravel's. There were many misspellings of Holst's name and some confusion about chronology, the two composers finding themselves sometimes categorised as Romantic composers, at other times described as influenced by World War II.
- 6 Several candidates who chose this question had not read it carefully or thought through the implications of 'related to an extra-musical idea': one wrote about Holst's *Mars* (the question ruled out the Core Works); several about popular albums, all with a strong focus on the meaning (rather than the musical interpretation) of the lyrics and which instrument played what when; one who wrote about background music to a film made some relevant points about the relationship between the visual images and the music. The most relevant choice was that of a Couperin keyboard piece. Many answers were weak, candidates not managing to get beyond writing an enthusiastic appreciation of a piece dear to their heart.

Section C

- 7 This question was poorly answered. While most candidates had at least some understanding of patronage, very few were able to discuss concert-giving and publishing. Several candidates sketched some political or social background – the French and Industrial Revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars, the rise of the middle class – but failed to make it relevant to their discussion of musical life. Some were very confused about chronology and several misunderstood what they called 'copywrite' (sic).
- 8 This was a popular question about which most candidates had a clear view (usually, 'yes, of course, one must treat the composer's intentions with respect but it is quite fitting to adapt/arrange to suit a contemporary audience'). No-one queried how we might claim to know a composer's 'intentions' (this was often interpreted as 'emotions') but many pointed to the importance of what had been notated. Some well-informed candidates knew about the search for authenticity in performance - the gap between the written score and how, historically, the music might have been performed – but hardly any of them supported what they said by reference to apt examples. A very small number were able to discuss changes in instrument technology and how this has affected performing techniques. Answers were often poorly-expressed, particularly those that dealt principally with 'cover' versions, and some were even downright contradictory. Many candidates were unable to support their assertions by more than one or two fleeting, superficial examples.

- 9 Very few candidates attempted this question and their answers were nearly all confined to comparing Western classical and 'folk' (in the current popular usage of the term) traditions.
- 10 'Contrast' was rarely discussed *per se*: it was usually claimed as an illustration of a varied repetition (the same tune but with different instruments, different lyrics or change of key), although there were a few clear citations of Menuet and Trio form, as used by Schubert in Symphony no 5, and one or two references to Rondo form. Many did discuss relevant examples of contemporary popular songs but most other musical references were drawn from the Prescribed Works. Evidence of familiarity with a wider range of repertoire was scarce.

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Paper 9703/02

Practical Musicianship

General comments

Overall, there was a good standard of work produced for this Component with most candidates having prepared thoroughly for the various Elements. There were some outstanding performances on piano, cello, voice, accordion, electric guitar and marimba.

Almost all candidates offered **Element 1**. They presented a range of appropriate repertoire which enabled them to demonstrate their technical skill and understanding. It was encouraging that very few candidates attempted music that was completely beyond their current level of ability and many were thus able to show true musicality in their performance. The vast majority of candidates gave excellent spoken introductions, which offered Moderators a real insight into the music that had been prepared. Most candidates were skilfully accompanied where necessary and all Centres provided suitable facilities for recordings to take place.

Although many Centres presented excellent submissions in all aspects of **Element 2**, both in terms of the work the candidates undertook, the recordings of assessments and the completion of the working mark sheets, this was the area that gave most cause for concern in terms of syllabus infringements. This Element provides an opportunity for candidates to expand on their practical musicianship and also to gain credit for extracurricular work they might already undertake. A reminder of the requirements might prove helpful to Centres:

- The two disciplines offered in Element 2 are to be distinctly different from that offered in Element 1.
- Candidates should choose their TWO disciplines from:
 - the instrument used for Element 1 in ensemble (not if Element 1 has already been presented in ensemble) [participation in an orchestra or choir may be included here]
 - a second instrument – solo or in ensemble
 - accompanying on the instrument used for Element 1 or another appropriate instrument
 - improvising – solo or in ensemble
- Work in both disciplines should be carried out over a period of not less than six months.
- Assessments should be carried out for each discipline on THREE separate occasions during this time.
- Recordings should be made on each occasion and the relevant section of the working mark sheet should be completed.
- Audio recordings are acceptable for any solo activity, but video/DVD recordings are essential where the candidate is part of any ensemble where there might be an element of doubt about which performer heard *is* the candidate.
- At the final assessment, the last section of the working mark sheet should be completed and a mark should be awarded using the appropriate assessment criteria.
- ALL the recordings, with the dates of each assessment and track numbers, and the working mark sheets should be sent to CIE with the Centre's submission for this component.

Centres which prepared candidates for **Element 3** presented an appropriate range of existing repertoire for the exercises thus enabling candidates to develop a clear understanding of harmonic principles in the chosen genre.

A larger number of candidates prepared **Element 4** this year. Most used instruments they played and understood and were able to develop their ideas to create compositions of appropriate length. There were several outstanding live composition recordings, which gave candidates a real opportunity to understand how effective their music was. It is, of course, not always possible to achieve live performance in the Centre environment and there were some exemplary sequenced recordings. Other candidates, however, when faced with the full range of instruments available on the computer, produced multi-instrumental compositions which demonstrated little understanding of medium and texture. Compositional quality is not dependant on instrumental quantity.

MUSIC

Paper 9703/03

Performing

General comments

Almost all performances for this component were of at least a good standard and there were some outstanding recitals of music in a wide range of styles from Mozart and Tchaikovsky to Hendrix. Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performances to take place. A number of candidates performed to an audience and this often added to the sense of occasion.

The repertoire chosen for performance was, for the most part, well suited to candidates' capabilities and gave them an opportunity to demonstrate the full range of musical skills required by the assessment criteria. Many candidates clearly relished the prospect of performing and entered into the whole event with great enthusiasm and passion for the music they had prepared.

Candidates had thought carefully about the focus for their performances this session. Almost everyone linked their pieces together in an appropriate way and had clearly learnt much from researching their chosen focus.

Some Centres presented recitals containing a mixture of instruments and modes of performance. For this part of the examination candidates should perform on ONE instrument as a soloist, duettist or ensemble member, or as an accompanist, but should only mix these groupings if doing so makes a genuine contribution to the focus of the recital.

Most candidates gave appropriate oral introductions to their performance and, as with Component 2, those who did not, disadvantaged themselves in their lack of ability to access the full mark range in Assessment Criterion E – Stylistic Understanding. Candidates should set the focus in context and give an insight into how it is demonstrated in each of the pieces performed. It was disappointing that some excellent performances lost marks for the lack of a well-prepared introduction.

Most Centres presented their candidates' work on CDs or DVDs of high quality and all had taken care to ensure the candidate could be readily identified. The majority of Centres presented the work in a manner that was easy to manage and enclosed all the required paperwork as well as copies of the music to be performed. Unfortunately some CDs and DVDs, although seemingly well packaged, were damaged in transit. The Centres involved were able to provide replacement copies, but this is a timely reminder that copies of all recordings should be kept by the Centre for use should the need arise.

Centres are again reminded that submissions for different components of the examination should be sent separately as they are required by different Examiners.

MUSIC

Paper 9703/04
Composing

Report to Centres

This report will provide feedback from this season's examination, highlighting positive aspects of the work submitted by candidates and providing guidance for the future preparation of candidates' work in composition.

Administration

Examiners are grateful for the care with which the majority of Centres presented candidates' work for assessment. Centres are reminded that this is an examined component and work should be clearly labelled so as to avoid confusion with any other component of this qualification.

General Comments

The numbers of candidates who chose to 'specialise' in composing remains relatively small but there were a number of highly successful submissions this season. Compositions provided evidence of candidates' ability to work successfully with their own musical materials within an extended framework. In some cases, accompanying notes made the compositional rationale clear to Examiners and whilst this is not a requirement, some candidates understood that in certain circumstances it could be beneficial to the assessment process. It is always pleasing to be made aware of the links candidates make between listening and performing experiences whether directly related to their course of study or otherwise.

Materials

Programmatic stimuli provided the impetus for generating materials for several candidates. The natural world, times and places linked to specific personalities or relationships, the idea of 'journey' – these were some of the extra-musical ideas that gave candidates a means to shape their initial ideas.

Candidates were, for the most, part working within the conventions of Western tonality with varying degrees of success.

Use of Materials

Candidates are required to present a piece of composition of at least 8 minutes duration. They should not under-estimate the skills required to extend, connect and combine their ideas. In this regard it may be helpful, for example, for Centres to encourage candidates to work with short tasks prior to commencement of the main work. It is rare for a candidate's 'first idea' to be the 'best idea'. Being compelled to construct a second or even third version of a melodic idea, for instance, will convince candidates of the wisdom of applying the intellect as well as the sensibilities to refining and developing an idea. To take a theme and go through the rigours of fragmenting, augmenting, presenting in diminution, inversion and so on can appear mechanistic but will also open up the potential of the theme for candidates when viewing their materials from these alternate perspectives.

In the realm of harmonic language, candidates may need to spend considerable time developing a sustainable scheme, for example, which has a sense of movement and direction and is capable of operating beyond a four or eight bar plan.

Structure

Several candidates chose a pre-existing structural concept as a starting point for their ideas - some of the symphonic principle of 'sounding together' were two examples. Several candidates presented a collection of short movements – piano pieces or three short songs, for example. Those seeking to present a single composition wisely broke the piece into manageable sections defined by contrasting keys or tempo. Those that struggled to work within the demands of a larger time scale had typically tried to work with too few materials or were unable to extend their ideas sufficiently; they presented a series of under developed materials, each one hastily left in favour of producing yet another 'new' idea.

Use of Medium and Texture

There was a pleasing range of work for both vocal and instrumental resources. All the submissions were for traditional acoustic forces ranging from solo piano to large orchestral scale compositions, from solo voice and piano to the use of choral combinations. Several candidates displayed competence and a tangible sense of enjoyment in the working out of contrapuntal textures. There were several fine examples of the use of texture to provide effective contrast in a structural sense.

Candidates are reminded that orchestration at the computer requires extensive knowledge of the way in which instruments in combination sound quite different in the live context. A large orchestral score can all too easily be 'computer-driven', betraying a lack of acoustic understanding of the properties of combining instruments.

Notation and Presentation

Examiner observations once more confirm that scores are often accurate with regard to basic notational requirements but that candidates are frequently neglectful of the performance *detail*.

Piano parts may require pedalling marks; a performance direction may be appropriate in addition to a metronome mark; wind players will often require precise articulation markings; generalised string phrase marks cannot excuse the lack of thoughtful, occasional bowing marks to ensure that a connection between the compositional and performance demands are met.

Recordings of live performances are always welcome although it is acknowledged that they are not always possible. The benefit to the candidate of trying out ideas in the instrumental / vocal context for which they are intended, cannot be underestimated.

Concluding Remarks

The level of industry and determination on the part of candidates and Centres is to be commended. Many folios demonstrated an increased understanding of the demands of compositional work and were accompanied by a pleasing display of enthusiasm and commitment.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9703/05 Investigation and Report</p>

Most of the candidates this year had approached their task in a business-like way. Although the overall range of achievement was wide, there was a very pleasing number of good submissions. Many candidates had pursued a sustained course of study investigating an appropriate topic and were able to present their report coherently. Those who scored less well, in spite of having worked hard at researching and reading, and presenting their findings carefully, were those in which the engagement with any actual music was rather slim. Centres are advised to draw their candidates' attention to the Assessment Criteria and to stress the importance of demonstrating their abilities in relation to the first and third categories (A – 'Aural perception' and C – 'Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary'). These both relate to the study of the sound of the music – at the very least, 'how it sounds' and, at best, 'why it sounds as it does'. Merely downloading and paraphrasing articles from Internet sites is only a minor aspect of 'Investigative techniques' – it does not offer an opportunity to candidates to demonstrate their own specific musical skills and understanding.

For 9703/05 the Assessment Criteria require that 'a link' be made with the other component being taken (either Performing – Component 3, or Composing – Component 4). In most cases this was explicit: candidates explored an aspect of their performing programme, usually in the context of the principal genre presented. These ranged from rather loose background notes (typically the composer's life and 'interesting' facts about performers or performances of the music or discussion of lyrics) to in-depth analytic discussion (e.g. detailed analyses of the ways in which three different composers handled their Sonata Form movements, or the evidence of jazz influences on a composer heard in the music being performed, or an assessment of the place of a specific nineteenth-century solo concerto in the overall development of the genre) and to a detailed comparison of the interpretations offered in two significant recordings of the main work in the candidate's programme. Some candidates found it hard to move beyond a 'programme-note' format, others appeared only to have extended slightly the spoken introduction to their performance in Component 3. Some of these had misunderstood 'link' as referring to the 'focus' of their programme i.e. what line of thought connected their pieces, and did not go beyond explaining the relationship between the individual items. A handful of others thought it sufficient to describe in some detail what technical difficulties had had to be mastered in learning their pieces.

It needs emphasising to candidates that the process of Investigation should involve a substantial amount of independent learning, undertaken over sufficient time to allow them to extend their skills and deepen their understanding (not quickly researched on the Internet over two days). The best Reports offered detailed, reflective accounts of candidates' findings, supported by musical examples (not just a brief summary). Many candidates managed this well but the evidence of some of the weaker submissions was that this had not always been fully understood.

Musical examples: these may be audio, or notated (the candidate's own transcriptions or score extracts). Before enclosing with the Report, it would be helpful to the Examiners if any CD is checked to make sure that it will play on a conventional stereo-player and that access to it is not restricted to the use of a personal computer. Complete pieces transferred to the CD were rarely necessary: brief extracts chosen to demonstrate a particular point in the text were more convincing than vague, general assertions that required the Examiner to listen to a whole movement e.g. of a concerto. The same was usually true for notated examples – that they worked best when they were incorporated into the text and carefully referenced (with bar nos. and CD track nos.). Occasionally, it proved very helpful to have a copy of the whole score (it should not be assumed that the Examiner of this component will routinely have access to any scores despatched with the recordings for Component 3).

Some candidates enclosed a mass of material, notebooks detailing all the work that they had done during the year. While this practice has the potential to throw light on how the Investigation was tackled, it is not a requirement and should not be assumed to enhance the submission. Candidates should be able to rely on their Report, setting out their link (between 3 or 4 for Syllabus 9703) and their aims, and explaining their methodology, followed by the main body of their text, and concluding with a detailed bibliography and

discography. Their attention should also be drawn to the use of the word 'documented' in the Assessment Criteria: this refers to the need, not only to label all examples and to make clear references between their text and CD tracks, but also to acknowledge in full (in a footnote, appendix or their text) not only every direct quotation used but also, where another author's text is being paraphrased, what the source of the information was. Some candidates who presented apparently substantial pieces of work had relied far too heavily on the words of others: they could not, therefore, be credited with the information thus reproduced. Disguising the source by changing a word here and there wasted these candidates' time and offered no evidence that the 'knowledge' presented had been assimilated.