

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01

Listening

Key Messages

- Write clearly, both in terms of English and handwriting.
- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable.
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant.

General Comments

The general standard has improved, especially amongst candidates taking the paper for the 8663 syllabus. There were some excellent responses seen at the top end of the mark range but most candidates knew the music, understood significant points about it, and were able to describe recognisably, in their own words, what they were hearing.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good, which greatly aids Examiners' understanding. In rare cases where meaning was unclear, it was not possible for Examiners to award full credit; this highlights the importance of clarity.

There was a widespread tendency to present a commentary believing that this answered the question sufficiently. However, many questions required more critical thought and reflection. At best, a commentary might demonstrate a particular level of familiarity with the music, but will not necessarily answer the question. Also, when asked to 'describe', weaker candidates resorted to enthusiastic accounts of dynamics, which is only one musical element. Generally, **Section B** was much more confidently answered than **Section A**, with some particularly fine observations about Ravel's orchestration in **Section B**.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Candidates should be reminded that referring to timings on recordings is unnecessary, as the Examiner will not necessarily have access to the same recording.

Question 1

A significant number of candidates were able to identify at least some of the principal features of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5, 3rd movement*. The four-note motif was the most commonly recognised feature, and many candidates attempted to outline the structure in its basic form, although not always explicitly. The strongest responses were very precise in describing changes in instrumentation in relation to the structure. Some did know the difference between Minuet and Scherzo but hardly any could identify 'Trio.' Few candidates identified the fugal section, and many focused on dynamics, which was not sufficient.

Question 2

This was the most popular question in this section. Most candidates responding to this question were able to give very clear information about the Schubert, yet struggled to describe the Haydn in as much detail. It seemed that the structure of the Haydn, and of course his use of variation techniques, was not well understood. The best responses provided an overview of techniques with accompanying musical examples.

Question 3

The best responses for **Question 3** focused on comparing the two different forms, rather than comparing two of the pieces more generally. Stronger candidates used supporting evidence from the prescribed works (demonstrating close familiarity with them) to answer the central question. Few candidates seemed really clear on double expositions and cadenzas.

Section B

Although close familiarity with Core Works is to be commended, the strongest candidates showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question.

Question 4

There were many responses with engaging personal responsiveness to the music, and the very best were also clear in how these effects were achieved through musical techniques. Some candidates struggled to link the music and effect to lines from the sonnet, which was a specific requirement of the question. Many responses strayed into matters of performance interpretation (relative speeds and dynamics) rather than the bare bones of Vivaldi's original composition and its relationship to the poem.

Question 5

This question was generally well answered, insofar as three pieces were discussed with some level of personal responsiveness and an understanding of musical techniques. A pleasing number of responses gave a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of the chosen pieces; some very strong responses wrote persuasively about the 'monotonic' limitations of the piano in contrast with the superior range of colour and power of the orchestra. Quite a few candidates were unaware that what they were describing was a feature of Mussorgsky's original piano composition and not an enhancement on Ravel's part.

Question 6

This proved a popular question with the best responses referring to a range of repertoire and specific examples linked to these. Holst and Mussorgsky/Ravel were popular Core Works to discuss, and these responses could have been improved by reference to works outside the syllabus as well as more musical detail within the discussion. It was disappointing that candidates clung to the safety of the Core Works.

Section C

The best responses organised their thoughts logically and presented them in an orderly essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters, drawn from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience.

Question 7

Most candidates understood that this question was essentially about patronage and the changing nature of musicians' work. A few candidates were able to give a very balanced response, including specific examples from modern times, but most could have improved their response by including more specific knowledge of Haydn/Mozart/Beethoven/others and a wider range of comparisons with the **working lives** of 21st century musicians. Occasionally, candidates were able to refer to the fact that record producers and albums are not necessarily the way that most musicians earn a living, and that live concerts have once again become a main source of income.

Question 8

This was a less popular question and most responses managed to point out the basic differences between acoustic and electric, with only a few being able to expand upon these points and make a more nuanced argument (i.e. beyond a simple argument of authenticity). The very best drew upon personal experience and/or specific examples of performances/artists.

Question 9

Candidates were able to refer to two performances they had heard. Responses could have been improved by considering a wider range of performance choices and circumstances. One response differentiated between analogue and digital electronic devices with full and detailed explanation. Many responses, legitimately, rooted themselves firmly in the 21st century: there were some very convincing detailed comparisons of different versions of commercial popular music (even different recordings by the same performer), and of music that had been heard live in the Centre, for example, jazz and concert bands. There was little evidence, though, that many candidates had heard more than one recording of any of the Prescribed or Core Works.

Question 10

Some candidates had difficulty with this seemingly simple question; to begin with, a definition would have sufficed. Differentiation thereafter depended upon the depth and range of examples provided and explored. The subsequent discussion usually made clear that the candidate knew well what 'dynamics' are. Most focused on different levels of 'loud' and 'soft', but few considered the possibilities of crescendo or diminuendo.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9703/02 Practical Musicianship</p>

Key Messages

- Centre assessors should provide comments in support of the mark awarded on all working mark sheets.
- For **Elements 1** and **2**, all recordings should be submitted on DVD.
- Exercises for **Element 3** should normally include at least one given part throughout.
- Submissions for **Element 4** should include a short written commentary.

General Comments

The overall standard achieved by candidates in this component was good with some outstanding performances and compositions produced. Most candidates had prepared thoroughly and had worked to their strengths by choosing the combination of elements best suited to their individual skills.

Almost all candidates offered **Element 1**. The majority of candidates presented appropriate repertoire that allowed them to perform to the best of their ability and which demonstrated their technical skill and understanding, thus enabling them to access the full range of the assessment criteria. Most candidates were ably accompanied where appropriate by piano, guitar, small combo or backing track, and performing venues were almost always suitable. The standard of spoken introductions was, on the whole, good, with candidates demonstrating genuine understanding of the music. Centres are reminded that inclusion of a spoken introduction is a requirement of **Element 1**, and, without it, candidates cannot access the full range of marks in Section E of the assessment criteria. Most Centres provided copies of the music performed. DVD recordings were of good quality with cameras placed appropriately.

In **Element 2**, almost all candidates offered two disciplines as required. Most submissions were documented with some assessor comments and the discipline/performance details clearly identified. Detailed comments on all three assessments for each discipline showing how marks have been awarded are essential to enable Moderators to make their assessment with full understanding of Centre intentions. Centres are reminded that DVD submissions should be compiled in such a way that individual assessments of each candidate may be easily located and accessed. An additional discipline of 'Conducting and Rehearsing' is now available as part of **Element 2**. Centres should consult the syllabus for details.

All candidates who submitted folios of exercises for **Element 3** were able to show some knowledge. A set of six to eight exercises demonstrating understanding of techniques in an established notated tradition should be presented. Candidates may cover some preliminary work in preparation for more specific exercises, but the final exercises selected for assessment should contain evidence of the range of language and technique acquired within the selected tradition. The material chosen for submission should be based on actual (identified) repertoire with the given material clearly distinguishable from the candidate's work. Candidates are not expected to present full texture without any given material and at least one part (usually the top or bottom) should be given throughout each exercise. The course should give candidates an opportunity to develop their understanding of **one** established tradition. Some Centres expected rather too much of their candidates and presented completely different tasks for each exercise. At this level, it is important that candidates develop a genuine understanding of the chosen tradition rather than be expected to diversify in too many ways. Most Centres gave a clear indication of the course undertaken, together with details of how the mark scheme had been applied where the chosen tradition was not 'western tonal harmony'. It is a requirement that this information is submitted with the folios for this element.

Compositions presented for **Element 4** covered a variety of styles and genres. There were some imaginative submissions with live or detailed computer-generated recordings. While most candidates demonstrated an ability to develop their ideas and had clearly refined their compositions, others needed to pay greater attention to these aspects of their submission. Scores were generally neatly presented, though some lacked detail and precision. There were several compositions for solo piano, thus not meeting the requirement that

Cambridge International Advanced Level
9703 Music June 2015
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

each composition should be written for at least two instruments/voices. The majority of candidates included a short written commentary explaining the origins of the compositional thinking, listening influences, and the on-going compositional decisions, as is now required. Most Centre assessors applied the assessment criteria accurately, though some were rather generous in their marking, particularly in the areas of *Materials* and *Use of Materials*.

For the component as a whole, Centre assessors should make comments in support of the mark awarded in the space provided on the working mark sheet for each element presented. Most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork and provided DVD recordings of good quality.

MUSIC

Paper 9703/03
Performing

Key Messages

- Candidates should select repertoire of suitable standard appropriate to their technical capability.
- Candidates should perform with accompaniment where relevant.
- Copies of the music performed should be enclosed with the submission.

General Comments

Almost all performances for this component were of at least a good standard and there were some outstanding recitals. The music ranged from Bach and Chopin to Hendrix and Japanese pop. Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performances to take place. Backing tracks were used where appropriate. 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 for the music they had prepared.

Some candidates performed their individual part without the inclusion of the accompaniment or other vocal/instrumental parts needed to make the piece complete. This takes the music out of context and prevents the candidate from fully demonstrating stylistic understanding of their chosen repertoire.

Most candidates had thought carefully about the focus for their performance. Almost everyone linked their pieces together in an appropriate way and most had clearly gained something from the research they had undertaken.

Some Centres presented recitals containing a mixture of instruments and modes of performance. For this part of the examination, candidates should usually 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 spoken introductions to their performance and, as with Component 2, those who did not disadvantaged themselves as they could not 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.

Most Centres presented their candidates' work on 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. Centres are reminded that copies of the music to be performed should be included in the submission.

MUSIC

Paper 9703/04
Composing

Key Messages

- All compositions should be accompanied by a short commentary.
- Preparation and research with plenty of relevant listening to the works of composers/song writers underpins successful composing.
- For many styles and genres presented by candidates, working with live forces is to be encouraged; the computer is a useful tool but candidates must remain aurally vigilant and show evidence that the instruments/voices written for are carefully considered.

General Comments

A wide variety of submissions have been presented for assessment this session including a range of both instrumental and vocal compositions.

The purpose of the commentary is to concisely explain the candidate's process of composition, referring to the starting place for ideas and the on-going decisions made as the work progresses. References to listening influences should be included. Candidates who make a link between composing and Component 5, Investigation and Report, may not realise that the assessment is made by different Examiners; it is important to include a short commentary with the composition even if this includes or duplicates some information from the Investigation. A single page of commentary is usually sufficient to communicate the information required.

Centres are reminded that recordings should be playable on standard domestic players and should not be computer dependent. Given the large number of software platforms available globally, it may not always be possible for Examiners to access evidence presented in DVD format and this should be avoided as the main means of presentation. A track list to accompany the CD is essential, particularly where several candidates are entered.

The Scope of Submissions

The following examples outline the range of compositional formats or ideas that were used successfully this session. They are not intended to be prescriptive or directional, but they serve to provide a wider window for Centres on the scope of submissions presented:

- Works for a single instrument and piano, e.g. 'cello and piano in a single movement or several shorter related movements
- Composing for string quartet
- Music for a video game
- Programmatic music – often with sections that follow the unfolding of the 'story'
- Use of mythology in storytelling as a stimulus for music exploration
- Imagined or actual film scores
- The inspiration of the natural world, e.g. The Sea in its different moods
- Feelings – subtle exploration of a range of emotional responses to national disasters or more personal experiences
- Exploring the use of an instrument in the style of a respected exponent, e.g. Guitar techniques
- Instrumental works based on national folksong
- Jazz-influenced compositions reflecting a specific harmonic language or instrumental usage
- Dance-inspired music – from traditional ballet to street dancing
- Variations on an original ground
- Song settings of liturgy, own lyrics or poetry, both art song and popular song formats
- Folk influences in song style
- Compositions exploring electro-acoustic possibilities.

Materials

Having an aural familiarity with a chosen sound world in the shaping of ideas, successful candidates were able to mould and refine distinctive materials of their own. In a minority of instances, candidates were less successful when they 'borrowed' ideas directly or modelled their music rather too closely on the music of others. Candidates should be aware of the difference between arranging and composing and that they will be credited for the *creative* means by which materials are shaped, used and developed.

Candidates frequently referred to films or other visual stimuli. Effective compositions were those that sought to paint subtle portrayals of character and scenes and understood the need for the music to be able to stand alone without the visual element. Candidates who referenced a range of listening rather than a single piece or song were more able to generate independent materials capable of extension and musical manipulation.

Candidates choosing to write using tonality were most successful where there was a clear grasp of the foundational principles when working using this harmonic language.

Candidates are asked to supply an English translation of any lyrics they may use in another language.

Use of Materials

Candidates can learn a great deal about how to use the materials they construct by attentive listening to the works of other composers and when they apply what they have learned in the study of prescribed and core works in Paper 1. The way in which ideas grow, the use of different keys and the ways in which ideas intersect and relate to one another are some important areas to consider. Experimenting with ideas in an improvisational way is often an important first step, but rigour in the application of techniques is also important in the composing process.

Structure

There was a range of responses in the way candidates approached the framing of their ideas. Some chose a structure with contrasting ideas and variety within a single concept. Others found it appropriate to explore their ideas in a series of shorter linked movements and this often fitted with programmatic intent, for example, *The Four Horsemen*. The movements of Holst's *Planets Suite* had been influential for many.

The successful use of structures such as Rondo or Theme and Variation depended on the quality of the repeating material and its treatment. Taking time to refine and hone the melodic or harmonic ideas had a direct bearing on the outcomes of composing for many candidates.

Use of Medium and Texture

There is clear evidence that candidates make choices about instrumentation because of familiarity with those forces and the writing is thoroughly idiomatic as a result. Candidates using voices successfully often point to a personal interest and experience in singing in bands/choirs or as a soloist.

Whilst some submissions rely on sequenced recordings, it is important, nevertheless, to make clear the intended instrumentation. A funk-jazz style of composing may be intended for synthesized keyboard sounds; the distinction between writing for string quartet rather than string ensemble, for example, should be explicitly stated.

Notation and Presentation

Candidates should present a score of their composing when the writing requires conventional notation. There is no need for individual parts to be included with the score. Candidates were able to enhance the appearance of the score layout by reducing the size of the staves and by considering landscape presentation as an option.

Although guitarists may choose to compose using tablature, they are reminded that final scores must use staff notation as well, given that 'tab' is not a universally understood means of notation.

Candidates should make every effort to attend to all the necessary details required for a comprehensive score and be aware that not all computer software allows for this.

If parts are evident in the recording but not accounted for in the score or commentary, the boundary between performer and composer becomes blurred. It is not always made clear whether the composer is responsible for the non-notated material or whether another performer has made this contribution. For assessment purposes, the commentary should make the respective roles clear: improvisation cannot be credited to the composer unless specifically identified as such.

Many scores were fully furnished with a range of expressive detail and candidates showed an understanding of the importance of phrasing, articulation and the use of an expressive term at the opening of the piece rather than a simple metronome mark.

Candidates showed initiative in combining live and pre-recorded aspects of their compositions as well as working hard to produce well rehearsed live performances where appropriate. The care and determination shown in this final presentation of the composing artefact is a significant measure of the understanding of candidates that their work needs to be heard to be complete.

MUSIC

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

Key Messages

- The Investigation should build on and extend the focus of the candidate's other component.
- Audio extracts should be on CDs, not memory-sticks or youtube. references, with an accurate track listing and cross-referenced in the text.

General Comments

The standard of work submitted for this component has continued to improve. There was a significant proportion of higher-band grades. As usual, candidates whose Investigation was linked to Component 4 (Composing) tended to perform slightly better than those linking to Component 3 (Performing), but the Examiners noted that some of the latter had, in this session, extended their listening further than has sometimes been the case. A few of the composers wrote too much in detail about the rationale for their composing *decisions*: the proper place for such commentary lies as an accompaniment to the composition itself, in Component 4.

Fewer performers engaged this time in discussion of the technical difficulties they had encountered in performing the music and describing how they had overcome them, but several in this session had shifted their attention to the reasons behind their *interpretative* decisions. There may be legitimate cases for such a focus, for example where there are issues of historical 'authenticity' or where scholarly background reading provides strong contextual evidence, but, when the interpretative explanations are based too much on the candidate's *imagination* – visual images or a biographical narrative – this has limited value.

The best Reports took the link with Component 3 or 4 as their starting point and demonstrated how their Investigations had ranged over a much wider field of relevant enquiry, with significant extension to the candidate's listening experience.

With some exceptions, the standard of presentation was generally high and the Examiners thank Centres for their careful attention to documentation. Audio extracts are essential and they should be submitted in the form which is most readily accessible to Examiners, i.e. on CDs, fully described and identified by tracks in a discography, and accurately cross-referenced in the text. (It is recommended that they be protectively packaged – a few had been damaged in transit.) Some candidates also enclosed scores, the most useful of which were very clearly marked up to pinpoint specific points discussed in the text. When done well, this is a very effective way to demonstrate understanding.

8663/06

Key Messages

Check the syllabus regulations and other requirements. Has each candidate:

- read, signed and enclosed an Authentication Form?
- chosen a topic that does **not overlap** with **Sections A** and **B** of Component 1?
- enclosed a CD of audio extracts (not on memory stick or as youtube. references)?
- included full bibliographical information and a discography?

General Comments

The Examiners found a very wide disparity in the standard of work. There was some increase in the proportion of Centres that did observe all the requirements and, among these, some outstanding work had been achieved. Centres that may perhaps be disappointed by poorer results than they had expected should check whether their candidates had, in fact, met all the requirements. In some cases, it seemed that the instruction and guidance given to candidates had been less than clear and, in a few, it was even doubtful whether the syllabus had actually been read: signed Authentication Forms had not been included; no audio extracts at all were enclosed; many Reports were lacking any indication of what sources had been read; some topics focused solely on one of the Core Works, others were too closely related to **Section A** or **B**; in some cases the total listening that the Investigation was based on was as little as 5 minutes. Usually, such poor outcomes were demonstrably the product of a couple of evenings' work trawling a few internet sites. Some Reports were perfunctory, well below the suggested approximate word length. A sincere, serious Investigation needs a sustained period of time for listening, reading and reflection to take place, time for the candidate's own understanding to develop, and conclusions that can be supported by examples from the music to be explained.

Choice of Topic

The syllabus sets out the scope of the Investigation as:

'....a single focus for detailed study, a further body of music **not** represented in Paper 1.....it should not be drawn from the 18th or 19th century Viennese tradition, nor be associated with the *Picturing Music* topic.'

While Examiners were glad to find such enthusiasm for some of the Prescribed and Core Works that candidates wanted to write fulsomely about them, they regretted that, within the terms set out above, such topics could not be credited.

A great many candidates chose to study an aspect of jazz or popular music – there were impressively knowledgeable enquiries into a wide range of genres, sub-genres and performers, notably on 'Electronic Dance Music' and 'Charles Mingus'. These and others were the fruit of deep, longstanding familiarity with their subjects and excellently illustrated by very short extracts that aptly supported specific points in their texts.

Listening

As a way of ensuring that candidates did listen to sufficient music, some Centres had encouraged them to compile and include 'Listening Logs'. These were helpful evidence of the range of music studied. Usually they were 'stream-of-consciousness' accounts of whatever features had immediately taken the candidate's attention on first hearing. These needed to be built on by further, closer listening to develop real familiarity and sufficient understanding to be able to distinguish significant features from surface ones.

Intending to improve candidates' powers of aural perception, to encourage them to hear more than just which instrument is now playing, more than one Centre seems to have provided a structured course that offered precise reference points, some of them modelled on Aaron Copland's book on listening. These were helpful exercises in developing focus and concentration, most obviously as preparation for aural dictation, but they sometimes proved to be something of a straitjacket when they were applied too rigorously to more complex music. While candidates could comment in detail on the pitch contour of a melody, their extensive, apparently systematic but randomly-detailed commentaries often failed to arrive at the 'bigger picture' of the style or genre they were discussing, to the point where they could 'place' what they heard in a relevant context.

With the best of intentions, candidates sometimes took on too much listening: this was particularly true of the many who chose whole albums as their topic. In several cases, the self-imposed challenge of writing something about every song in the album led inevitably to superficiality – to 'whistle-stop tours'. It would sometimes have been more fruitful to have focused more closely on three or four, and on evaluating these in greater depth *in the context of the whole*. The best Reports of this kind were those of candidates who successfully demonstrated that they had understood what made the music 'tick'.

Some candidates, having included a recording of a whole album on their CD, then referred in their text to timings. Yes, it may often be helpful for the Examiner to be supplied with the whole of the music that has been heard, but they cannot be expected to spend their time fast-forwarding through it. Choosing an apt example, finding exactly the right spot and transferring it to a CD and then *cross-referencing* by track number

to their text need not be an irksome chore for candidates but rather a helpful part of their learning process. In the best Reports, well chosen extracts that 'hit the right spot' demonstrated real understanding.

Plagiarism

A handful of instances of wholesale plagiarism in Reports were recognised and dealt with appropriately. More widespread, and equally unacceptable, were the many occasions on which candidates seemed to believe that they were avoiding plagiarism by turning round phrases from a source, substituting synonyms (often making garbled nonsense of the text, thereby betraying their own lack of understanding), or adding different conjunctions, for example 'as well as' or 'also' in place of 'and.'

The internet now offers many very reliable guides to standard repertoire (such as Alan Pollack's comprehensive commentaries on the music of The Beatles) and these are a valuable resource for candidates but they **must** acknowledge in quotation marks every judgement that they are 'borrowing' from them. If that is done properly throughout the Report, then relevant reading and the level of understanding shown in the selection and use made of it can be credited. If it is not specifically acknowledged but passed off as the candidate's own thoughts, then it must be discounted. Perhaps some candidates assumed that listing the source in the Bibliography would then allow them to draw heavily on it without further acknowledgement? The Authentication Form makes it clear that this is not so. By signing it, both candidate and their teacher acknowledge that they have understood this.