

MUSIC

Paper 0410/03
Performing

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General comments

The Moderators heard a variety of music performed on a range of instruments, and in most cases these performances were very successful. Centres are reminded that the expected minimum total performing time is four minutes. If candidates have only learned short pieces, they simply need to play more than one piece for their solo and/or ensemble, which is what many Centres do perfectly satisfactorily. Performances which are significantly shorter than four minutes cannot be given marks at the higher end of the range.

Assessment

It was pleasing that most of the marking by Centres of candidates' performances was realistic and accurate. Many Centres include very useful comments supporting the marks awarded in the space provided on the working mark sheet; all Centres are encouraged to do this.

Presentation of coursework

Most Centres organised the recordings effectively, with clear announcements of candidates' details on cassette tapes, and clear track listings for performances submitted on CD. Some Centres submitted performances on DVD/VHS – please use tape/CD for future submissions. Centres are reminded that copies of the music should be enclosed for both solo and ensemble performances unless the music has been improvised.

MUSIC

Paper 0410/04
Composing

General comments

Although there was only a small number of candidates in this session, the range of compositions submitted was exceptionally wide. Some pieces were long and very complex, while others consisted of hardly more than a few bars of a very simple keyboard texture.

There were problems at both extremes. The most ambitious candidates sometimes lacked the skill and experience to control the technical challenge they had set themselves: they might have been better advised to submit rather simpler pieces that might have allowed them to score higher marks. Those who wrote the shortest and least demanding pieces were often unable to demonstrate significant achievement across all the assessment criteria, and their marks were correspondingly low as a result.

Administration

The paperwork that accompanied most Centres' submissions was generally complete and the information required by the Moderators was easy to find.

There were a few errors in transferring marks from the individual candidates mark sheets to the summary sheet and then to the computer mark sheet. More often than not this was a case of failing to take holistic adjustments into account when transferring the marks.

Some Centres did not include the Moderator's copy of the computer mark sheet (MS1). If this document is omitted there is no way of checking whether the marks submitted to Cambridge agree with the marks on the individual candidate mark sheets, and this compromises the whole process of moderation.

Internal Assessment

Most of the marks sent in by Centres were broadly in line with the standards expected in this examination. Holistic adjustments to the marks were widely used, but it was often very hard to see why – the totals achieved by adding the individual marks for each criterion were normally much more accurate.

Several Centres had marked generously under the headings of 'Score Presentation and Notation' and 'Use of Medium'. For 'Score Presentation and Notation' this was most often the case when candidates had used computer programs to notate their scores. A computer-generated score, especially one produced using sophisticated programs such as Finale or Sibelius, usually looks very professional – at least superficially. However, it is not the superficial appearance of the score that is important, but its detailed content.

Several scores contained very basic errors which could easily have been corrected with more careful editing. For example, if the key of a piece is E flat major or C minor (with a key signature of three flats), G sharps are incorrect if they occur in a passage in the Tonic key. There were many instances of the wrong enharmonic spelling of notes, which made some scores very hard to read. Scores that contain such errors should not be given a mark of 10.

For 'Use of Medium', the root cause of over-marking was often the use of orchestral instruments in pieces where (a) the score was produced using a computer program and (b) the recording was reproduced from a synthesised, computer playback. Such pieces often contained notes that were outside the range of the chosen orchestral instrument. Unless a piece is deliberately intended to be written for synthesiser (and clearly indicated as such on the score), the normal ranges of acoustic instruments must be observed.

Some candidates had not observed the Syllabus requirement that compositions should be either contrasting in character or written for different forces. Some submitted three very similar piano pieces, or three rock pieces.