

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/02</b> <b>Performing</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Time programmes accurately well in advance of the examination and adjust the repertoire if necessary.
- Improvising should be considered by candidates who are performing an advanced recital, but whose second instrument is weaker.

## General comments

The Examiners enjoyed visiting the Centres, and appreciated the warm and friendly welcome offered by both teachers and candidates. In virtually all cases, arrangements had been made efficiently in advance, photocopies of the repertoire were ready and waiting, and everything ran smoothly on the day itself. The range of instruments and musical styles offered was extremely wide, and the Examiners enjoyed hearing all of the performances. Whilst the quality of the performances inevitably varied, the overall standard of performing was high, and in many cases, exceptional. The variety of ensemble types and repertoire was particularly fascinating, and Centres and candidates are to be congratulated for the effort which has gone into these performances.

As always, the same general advice remains constant: candidates should choose repertoire which matches their current level of technical and musical development, and which they should feel confident playing in an examination situation (with the obvious understanding that nerves will affect some candidates more than others on the day). It is also important that the programmes are timed properly; some Section A performances were too short, and occasionally Section B programmes were rather long. Programmes which are too short do not allow the candidate to demonstrate sufficient skills to access the higher mark bands, and those which are too long can impact on the schedule for other candidates.

Centres are reminded that while the Examiners will do everything they reasonably can to arrange a convenient date for the visit, there is an expectation that all dates within the official examining period should be offered, with the exception of those which are genuinely impossible (e.g. because of a school concert). Some Centres offered a very limited choice of dates and/or days of the week, which made scheduling difficult at times.

## **Improvising**

A few candidates offered improvising for Section B, most often opting for the melodic stimulus or the chord sequence. These improvisations were usually very successful, with a fluent, purposeful sense of musical direction. Candidates who choose improvising should be reminded of the assessment criteria, which include the effective use and extension of the original stimulus, the introduction of contrasting material to create a coherent structure, and the idiomatic use of the instrument/voice. As always, the improvising option should be considered by those candidates who wish to perform an advanced recital but whose second instrument is very much less strong than their first.

## **Accompanying**

The examiners were most impressed by the quality of accompanying; a few candidates this year had chosen some exceptionally challenging repertoire for the accompanist, who nonetheless provided calm and efficient musical support to the soloist. On a very small number of occasions, however, the accompanying seemed to slightly hinder the candidate's performance. The examiners fully appreciate the various sensitivities here, but Centres are encouraged to think about the best options for accompanying candidates, as the quality of accompanying is very important in allowing the candidates to give of their best.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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Paper 9800/03  
Composing

## Key messages

- Candidates who choose Bach Chorales in the stylistic options should learn how to apply standard cadential patterns in a variety of contexts;
- Coursework exercises should be chosen to permit clear progression from simple early examples to more complex ones at a later stage in the course;
- All candidates should be encouraged to take the same pride in the presentation of their Commissioned Compositions that is already demonstrated in the best submissions. Live performances, unless circumstances really do preclude them, are always better than synthesised ones.

## General comments

### **Section A: Stylistic Exercises (Examination)**

Almost all candidates chose the Chorale. There were too few examples of the other options for general points about them to be made.

The standard of chorale harmonisations this year was, with a few notable exceptions, much lower than usual. Most candidates completed the exercise in a simple, note-by-note style, with few if any features of a Bachian chorale style. Many candidates modulated to D major in bar 4, rather than the more likely D minor. From that point on, there were several who harmonised every phrase in an unrelieved A minor.

The examiners were concerned that several candidates found the cadences hard to harmonise. Even when the basic chords were correct, the part-writing often did not follow the normal patterns, which probably ought to form the starting-point for the study of this style.

### **Section B: Stylistic Exercises (Coursework)**

With only a few exceptions, candidates submitted the correct number of exercises in each of their chosen styles. The number of draft versions submitted varied greatly: some centres supplied only the final version, while others had as many as five or six preliminary drafts. In some cases the drafts were completed within a day or two, while in others they were weeks (or even months) apart. In neither case was there much evidence of consistency in the study of the two styles, spread evenly across a substantial period of time.

Most exercises were of an appropriate length, although there were several examples of String Quartets and early 19th-century Piano Accompaniments that were substantially shorter than the Syllabus requires. Ideally the selected exercises should be progressive in their demands, from relatively simple ones in the earlier stages to more complex ones later in the course, but this was often not the case.

**Chorales** completed as Coursework were often rather better than the examination exercise, perhaps suggesting that the idiomatic features of the style had not been as well assimilated as the coursework alone might imply.

**String Quartets** were a little better than usual, at least from the point of view of understanding the pace of the harmonic rhythm. Part writing was often less good, especially with viola parts either being too low, or crossing above the 2nd violin. There were instances of both 2nd violin and viola crossing above the 1st violin, thus confusing the melodic outline of the extract. Many exercises were rather simple, giving candidates few opportunities to use chromatic harmony (augmented 6ths, Neapolitan 6ths and even simple modulations were surprisingly scarce). Candidates, especially able ones, ought to be given opportunities for

invention within the style, but most exercises demanded little more than a basic continuation of the given texture.

**Accompaniments** focused mainly on Schubert songs, although there were several examples from Schumann. In some cases exercises were drawn from later in the 19th century, which is not altogether appropriate in this context. Many of the extracts selected were rather simple in their demand, giving little opportunity for the use of chromatic harmony or for inventing preludes, postludes or interludes. Given textures were often copied slavishly, even when a modulation meant that the resulting texture became too muddy at a lower pitch than the original. Idiomatic accompaniments often require the rearrangement of the texture to avoid such problems.

Examples of **Two-part Baroque Counterpoint** were very few. Most of the exercises were appropriate, although the suitability of extracts from vocal works might be questioned, especially if they involve substantial rearrangement of the original.

There were too few examples of **Music in Jazz, Popular and Show Styles** for general comments to be made.

### **Section C: Commissioned Composition**

**Option 1**, Masfield's *Trade Winds*, was the most popular choice by some way. There were some highly effective settings of this text from candidates who had clearly studied the English song genre in some depth. There were also a few settings in folk or pop styles.

**Option 2**, Melissa O'Neil's *Kiss Goodnight*, produced some rather less effective settings. They were often rather bland, with melodies that needed more careful shaping. Several lacked both a clear song form and the characterful hooks and riffs which might have been used to create something more stylish. The text was unnecessarily altered in a number of settings, but careless treatment of the relationship between words and music was a very common failing.

**Option 3**, a piece in *Passacaglia* form, produced some pieces that were rather variable in quality. Candidates seemed to find it difficult to construct a theme that lent itself to this type of variation, and the challenge of moving the theme from the bass to the treble was not always successfully achieved.

In **Option 4**, few candidates chose the rhythm, and a number of them disregarded the palindromic pattern of the given stimulus and simply composed a piece in 7/8 time. The pitches were substantially more popular. There were some very good pieces in which the four pitches were thoroughly integrated into well structured and harmonically adventurous music. Some candidates seemed to be fixated on the semitone, at the expense of the other intervallic relationships, and some retained the original pitches without variation, thus seriously weakening the structure of their pieces.

The majority of candidates took great pride in their work in this Section, producing very polished scores and beautifully recorded, live performances.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/11**  
**Listening, Analysis and Historical**  
**Study Sections A and B**

## Key messages

- Knowledge of performance practice in **Section A** should be demonstrated by reference to features of the recordings used in the examination
- Time management is important, with particular reference to the final contextual question in **Section B** which was not always answered

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Although there was inevitably a range of achievement in **Section A**, the majority of answers were quite successful, and some were very detailed and accurate. Most candidates observed the very big difference in tempo for the Adagio section; many went on to describe the contrast between the Adagio and Allegro sections therefore being greater in Performance 2. Candidates also mostly spotted the difference in pitch, and most knew that this suggested Performance 1 was on period instruments. Some, but not all, candidates commented on the bigger orchestra and considerable vibrato in Performance 2, and this was often correctly given as evidence of a modern orchestral performance. Discussion of articulation varied somewhat; not all candidates considered this aspect of the music despite there being some very big differences in the approaches to staccato playing. Many candidates discussed dynamics and balance, although this listening was not always entirely accurate, particularly with regard to balance. The level of understanding of performance practice demonstrated in the answers varied considerably. Beyond a recognition of the reason for the pitch difference, some answers did not refer to performance practice at all, whereas a few wrote at great length about various features of performance practice (often including instrument or bow construction) but without any clear link to the music of the extracts. The best answers ensured that discussion of performance practice was fully linked and relevant to this year's recordings. Overall, candidates seemed well prepared for this question.

### **Section B, Topic B1 Instrumental Music**

#### **Question 2**

Most candidates answered this question well, correctly identifying the oboe, flute and clarinet, and stating that the clarinet did not entirely double the first violins. A few candidates did not name the instruments in the correct order.

#### **Question 3**

This question was also generally well answered, with many correct identifications of the bar numbers.

#### **Question 4**

There were many points that candidates could make for this question; the most common correct answers included the timpani roll, horn pedal, and the strings being echoed by the woodwind. Those who answered in detail often gained full marks, and most candidates gained at least some credit.

### Question 5

Answers ranged from completely correct to partially complete. Some incorrect answers were pitched significantly too high, but most candidates gained at least some credit.

### Question 6

There was a wide variety of achievement in this question. Many candidates identified both the key and cadence correctly for **part (c)**, but the keys to **parts (a)** and **(b)** were only occasionally correct. The interrupted cadence in **part (b)** was often incorrectly described as imperfect.

### Question 7

Most candidates commented on the use of a single chord in these bars, usually described by those who attempted to name it as a dominant seventh. A small number of candidates identified it as an augmented sixth.

### Question 8

Most candidates gained at least some credit here; the rhythmic error was spotted and corrected accurately more often than the pitch error.

### Question 9

This question was fairly well answered.

### Question 10

Many candidates were able to recognise the generally conservative nature of this music, and there were a number of strong answers which described the extract well within its historical context, making contrasts with the more progressive composers of the mid-century (most often Liszt) and drawing comparisons with Mendelssohn and Schumann (and sometimes Brahms). Some answers considered small details of the music rather than the overall style; these answers often gained some credit but did demonstrate wider contextual awareness and so marks were in the lower bands. A few candidates did not attempt the question at all, or made only the briefest of points, suggesting that they had mismanaged their time.

## **Section B, Topic B2 Vocal Music**

### Question 11

There were many ways to gain credit here, and most candidates correctly described at least some of the elements of orchestration and texture, usually the solo cello with homophonic accompaniment. The best answers described the nature of the accompaniment in detail to gain further marks.

### Question 12

Only a small number of candidates correctly identified the chord as a dominant ninth – most described it as a dominant seventh. However, candidates usually recognised the bars in which it returned, and some correctly identified the use of first inversion in bar 11.

### Question 13

A wide variety of technical terms were suggested.

### Question 14

Many candidates answered well; not all were entirely accurate with their identification of chords, but the brightening effect they were describing was usually expressed convincingly.

### Question 15

Again, candidates generally answered this question convincingly, most often referring to the high tessitura and sustained high note which then descended to the final cadence.

**Question 16**

A wide variety of attainment here; some completely correct answers, but not all candidates attempted the question.

**Question 17**

Again, a wide variety of answers ranging from completely correct to no attempt to complete the melody.

**Question 18**

Most candidates accurately identified the placement of the diminished seventh chord for **part (c)**; answers to **parts (a)** and **(b)** varied in accuracy.

**Question 19**

As with the equivalent question in Topic B1 (**Question 10**) some candidates did not answer this question at all. Those that did generally made comparisons with either Wagner or Verdi; it was rare for any other composers to be mentioned. There was often a fairly good understanding of the style and some convincing answers, although most candidates focused only on orchestration rather than other features of the music, for example the harmonic style.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/12**  
**Listening, Analysis and Historical**  
**Study Sections C and D**

## Key messages

- In the Questions on the Prescribed Works, candidates need to be able to make detailed and precise references to the score in support of the points they make;
- In the **(b)** Questions in Section C candidates need to draw on a range of relevant repertoire to support the points they make. This range of works cited is sometimes too narrow to permit them to write a full enough answer to score high marks;
- Questions in Section D often require candidates to bring together information that draws on different aspects of the course. They often find this difficult and may need additional guidance in developing the skills involved.
- Candidates need to support their arguments with references to music in Section D, whichever Question they choose to answer.

## General comments

The overwhelming majority of candidates this year answered on Topic C3: *Innovation and Exploration in 20th-Century Music*, although several chose Topic C2: *The Baroque Concerto*. Only a few answered on Topic C4: *Jazz*, although Topic C1: *Latin Church Music in Continental Europe during the Late Renaissance* was by some way the least popular.

There were some very good answers in Section C, especially from candidates who had studied the Bartók Prescribed Work in detail. Answers on the other Topics were generally less good.

In Topic C3 most candidates answered the **(b)(i)** Question about Schoenberg. In Topic C2 answers were evenly divided between the two **(b)** options. In Topic C4 everyone answered the **(b)(i)** Question about the Big Band and in Topic C1 everyone answered the **(b)(ii)** Question about the Council of Trent.

In Section D, **Question 5** (about the performer's job) proved to be the most popular, closely followed by **Question 2** (about literature as inspiration for Romantic composers). The other Questions attracted roughly similar numbers of candidates.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section C**

#### **(a) Question C1 (a)**

Although candidates could provide a fairly detailed description of the Sanctus and Benedictus, the second part of the Question, which asked them to draw attention to interesting or unusual features of the polyphony and the relationship between the voice parts, proved to be extremely challenging. The very low Altus part at the words *Pleni sunt caeli et terra* was not noted, for example, nor were the consecutive 5ths between Cantus and Tenor in bars 50–51.

**(b) Question C1 (b)(ii)**

Candidates knew quite a lot about the aims of the Council of Trent, especially about the requirement that words should be audible in musical settings of liturgical texts. They knew less about the extent to which such requirements were put into practice (especially in centres such as Venice or Munich), or about the techniques used by those composers who tried to be conscientious in their observation of the principles.

**(c) Question C2 (a)**

Candidates who answered this Question almost all found it difficult to describe the structure of the movement concerned. No one fully understood the quasi-palindromic tonal scheme through which the structure is articulated, although the candidates who drew attention to the bass part, in quavers almost throughout except at the main cadences, came closest. If they had gone on to list the keys in which these cadences occur, they would have effectively shown how the movement is designed. Several attempted to fit the movement into a strict binary form, or even classical sonata form. On the other hand, the thematic content of the movement was generally well described.

**(d) Question C2 (b)(i)**

The candidates who answered this Question had a good general grasp of the main points. Most of them knew about the two types of sonata, and that contemporary concertos often followed the same pattern. Definitions of the two types were also mainly accurate. Where candidates had more difficulty was in making specific references to particular concertos. While most of them knew some general facts about the Corelli *Concerti Grossi*, they were not so confident in writing about relevant concertos by a second composer.

**(e) Question C2 (b)(ii)**

Answers to this Question focused primarily on *The Four Seasons*. Although most had a good general understanding of these four concertos and knew that they demand considerable virtuosity on the part of the soloists, they found it more difficult to give accurate examples of the kinds of demand that Vivaldi's violin writing makes. References to other concertos (although there were some) were altogether more vague.

**(f) Question C3 (a)**

Many of the candidates who answered the Question on the first movement of the Bartók understood the dual nature of its structure. They described the fugal entries at the start of the movement quite well, although some had not fully grasped the significant alternation of entries a 5th higher and a 5th lower. Several drew attention to the Golden Section implications of the movement, but these points were sometimes a little overstated. Some candidates lost marks because they described only the first part of the movement, when the Question demanded an overview of the whole.

**(g) Question C3 (b)(i)**

Most candidates who answered this Question had a good general grasp of the main stages in the development of Schoenberg's style. There were some misconceptions about the difference between the 'free atonal' music and the beginnings of the 12-note period, with works wrongly attributed to both periods. *Pierrot Lunaire* was cited in most essays, although relatively few candidates appeared to understand its seminal importance.

**(h) Question C3 (b)(ii)**

There were relatively few answers to this Question. Most of the essays focused on Britten, with Copland and Shostakovich prominent among the second composers cited. Candidates had a good grasp of the outline of their lives and careers, though they found it more difficult to link their innovations to the expression of national identity (except in the case of Copland, where the relationship is perhaps more obvious).



**(i) Question C4 (a)**

Answers to the Jazz Questions were often rather better than they have sometimes been in the past. In essays about *Birth of the Cool* there was a conspicuous lack of precise references to the music, and few candidates demonstrated an understanding of its harmonic innovations. Among the best answers were some in which the quartal harmony and atonal passages were correctly identified.

**(j) Question C4 (b)(i)**

While some candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the history of the Big Band, other answers were rather vague and confused, especially about the reasons for the decline of the Big Band in the 1950s. There was relatively little evidence of a close knowledge of the music; several candidates ignored such key figures as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Charles Mingus or Stan Kenton. A wider range of listening is essential to provide candidates with the knowledge required by Questions of this kind.

**(k) Question C4 (b)(ii):** there were no answers to this Question

**Section D**

One essential requirement of essays in Section D is that candidates should back up their arguments with relevant references to music, whichever Question they choose to answer. In this year's answers there were fewer such references than in almost all previous years, and they tended to be much less precise. This was especially true in Question D4, where several candidates referred to no music at all, even though they could have drawn on their own experience of composing within the Pre-U course.

The clarity of candidates' arguments and the quality of the language they use are taken into account in the marking of this Section. Although the best of the answers amply fulfilled both of these considerations, there were some very poorly planned essays and some of the written English left a lot to be desired. Colloquialisms, in particular, should not be used in an essay of this kind.

**(a) Question D1**

There were some quite good essays about the influence of early 19th-century opera, especially from the point of view of Verdi's indebtedness to Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini. Candidates knew much less about operatic developments in France and Germany, so their attempts to show what influences were relevant to Wagner fared much less well. Only a few mentioned Weber, fewer still Meyerbeer; instead some candidates attempted, in various convoluted ways, to make tenuous links between Bellini or Donizetti and the Wagner of the *Ring* or *Tristan*. The operas of Meyerbeer may not currently be very fashionable, but they remain extremely significant from a historical point of view.

**(b) Question D2**

Some candidates overlooked the word 'literature' in the Question and wrote a general but largely irrelevant essay about the nature and history of musical Romanticism. The better answers mentioned Shakespeare as the source for works such as Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture or Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*. Some gave examples from Goethe (Liszt's *Faust Symphony* in particular), while a few extended their definition of literature to cover folklore. Some candidates did not manage to mention the minimum of two works required by the Question.

**(c) Question D3**

This Question related mainly to the background history of Topic A and revealed a disappointingly vague and general understanding of both the development and influence of Classical Sonata Form. A substantial number of candidates appeared not to know what the term Sonata Form means, which was a rather disturbing observation at this level.

**(d) Question D4**

A wide range of opinions was presented in answer to this Question, with most candidates trying to propose a different quantification of the balance between inspiration and hard work. Very few mentioned the kinds of technical challenge that require time and effort, such as counterpoint, imitation or development of material. No one addressed the abstract nature of composition, or described it as a form of problem-solving. Very few candidates referred to any music at all in support of their point of view.

**(e) Question D5**

This was the most popular Question in Section D and most candidates who answered it treated it as a straightforward performance practice issue, referring mainly to music of the Baroque period. There was much discussion of pitch, instrument design or the assumed size of the rooms in which such music might originally have been performed. There was some discussion about ornamentation, but no single candidate mentioned the use of treatises as a source of valuable information about the performance of music from the past.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/41**  
**Dissertation**

## **Key messages**

- The inclusion of a CD with short audio excerpts is very beneficial to candidates
- Candidates should follow the advice contained in proposal feedback
- Work submitted should not be annotated by the teacher-assessor

## **General comments**

The standard of dissertation submitted this year was generally high, and more consistently so than last year. Marking by Centres was usually lenient to varying degrees, as has been the case in previous years, with occasional instances of very slight severity, mostly within the appropriate bands for each criterion and sometimes outside the appropriate band. The most helpful submissions explained clearly how and why marks had been awarded; in some cases, perceptive comments were made, but these observations were not reflected in the marks awarded, and very occasionally, comments were not appropriate descriptors for elements of the dissertation. Dissertations themselves should not be annotated with teacher-assessor comments.

More specifically, there could be an improvement in the application of some criteria, as was the case in previous years. Criterion 3 (Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary) was often marked generously; Centres should consider the accuracy and fullness of analysis in reaching a mark for this criterion. Similarly, criterion 4 tended to be marked leniently, although this was more consistent than previous years; *musical* examples should substantiate the candidates' independent judgements.

The best dissertations delved quickly and directly into the music; it is most effective to weave contextual understanding into conclusions based on musical evidence. It should be noted that Contextual Understanding (criterion 2) can include context *within* a larger piece, or between pieces, where appropriate, for example in dissertations that are primarily analytical.

Aural perception was most convincingly proven where candidates included a CD of excerpts (not whole tracks), and more importantly, where candidates were able to comment imaginatively, informatively and specifically on the effects that particular musical features created; this also demonstrated an ability to focus on *significant* features. It remains the case that a CD of excerpts tends to strengthen candidates' dissertations, although it is not strictly required. All dissertations at least included some manuscript examples, and these were most effective when the examples were fully explained, sometimes with annotations on the score. There was a good balance between score and aural analysis, the latter of which is particularly to be encouraged.

Centres are reminded that the Assessment Objective of this component is primarily Critical Thinking, and this should be kept in mind when drafting proposals and providing feedback on drafts. Some candidates did not pay due attention to advice given in proposal feedback, which usually meant that dissertations were unable to meet the criteria for the highest bands.

It was pleasing that almost all candidates adhered to the spirit of the word limit (with some reasonable tolerance allowed above and below 3500 words) although there were still some slightly short dissertations this year. This demonstrated candidates' ability to be selective, to focus on significant features, and to evidence critical thinking. No dissertations exceeded the reasonable bounds of the word limit. Shorter dissertations could have delved more deeply into careful analysis of music to reach the recommended word count and convey a more convincing argument.

Sources were generally well-acknowledged, both in-text and in bibliographies, thereby avoiding the charge of plagiarism, although in many cases this needed to be done more thoroughly throughout the text. Footnotes were mostly used correctly; they should include the author's name, publication title, year of publication and page number/s. If not using in-text referencing – e.g. (Jones, 1998, 12–13) – then the conventions of Harvard style could be consulted as a guide for footnotes and bibliographies, although it is not expected that candidates will necessarily follow these conventions faithfully.

All dissertations included a bibliography, although some few were too short to constitute a wide range of sources.

It is always worth repeating advice to teachers regarding the monitoring of work. The signed declaration is an important document, which states that the Teacher has verified that the candidate's work is their own. Whilst it is clear that many teachers closely monitor the work of their candidates as a matter of course, it is recommended that teachers hold regular meetings with candidates to ensure that work is the candidate's own, and that the dissertation is on the right track in engaging sufficiently with *music*. The declaration may then be signed with confidence.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/42**  
**Advanced Recital**

## **Key messages**

- Programmes were usually well chosen, but more attention is needed to expressive details
- The recorded extracts to support the written project were not always well chosen or well presented

## **General comments**

The moderators enjoyed listening to and watching the advanced recitals, which featured programmes performed on a range of instruments (including voice) and in a variety of musical styles. There was a wide range of achievement, with the very best recitals demonstrating a level of performance at the highest level that might be expected for candidates of this age. In most cases, the repertoire was well matched to the candidates' abilities, although in less successful recitals the chosen pieces sometimes seemed too difficult for the candidate at the time of the performance. Despite the occasional and inevitable small mishaps of live performance, the majority of candidates clearly knew the pitch and rhythm of their pieces well. As in previous years, the areas which most often need more work are intonation and tone quality, diction in vocal recitals, and attention to the expressive details that allow for stylistic performance. Dynamic contrast in particular was often ignored, including in pieces which contained comprehensive dynamic markings.

## **Written project**

The written projects were somewhat variable in quality. As always, the best projects focused on the 'bigger picture' of the chosen performances, discussing the most significant differences between the performances and explaining how these contributed to the overall style. They also made clear the candidates' own performing intentions, which could clearly be heard in the recital itself. Extracts of music on the supporting CD were well chosen, comparative, and well referenced in the text. Less successful projects usually displayed one or more of the following characteristics:

- The comparison of the performances focused on small and unimportant details in the music, which did not really contribute to an understanding of the main stylistic differences
- The links to the candidates' own performing intentions were not clear
- The recorded extracts were not comparative (i.e., they only featured the music of one of the performers for the feature being discussed, and therefore did not fully support the judgments in the text. There may be a few cases in which this is appropriate, but the majority of the extracts should demonstrate a direct comparison between the two performances)
- The recorded extracts did not provide any aural evidence to support the differences described in the text
- The recorded extracts were not presented in a logical order, or were not well referenced, making it difficult to match the recordings to the text

There were some examples this year of projects which had clearly been written after the recital had taken place. The intention is that the project should support and enhance the candidates' recitals, by allowing them to focus on and make decisions about important details of their own performances; the project should therefore be worked on at the same time the recital is being prepared.

## Marking

Any adjustments which were made were to ensure a common standard across all centres, and feedback on the individual marking has been sent to centres as appropriate. The most common tendency was for marking to be lenient, particularly with regard to the written project. In the areas of technical control, realisation of performance markings and aural and stylistic awareness, there was extensive use of the top band box when marks in the second (and sometimes third) band would have been more appropriate. Centres are asked to consider the descriptors carefully, and are reminded that any marks above 70 will still represent achievement at distinction level. In most cases, the marking was found to be more accurate where centres had fully completed the comments boxes on the working mark sheets.

## DVDs

Centres are reminded of the importance of making an audio recording on separate equipment from the video camera, so that there is a back-up in case of equipment failure. The audio CD can also be used to clarify issues of tone quality which occasionally arise from the DVDs. While the majority of the DVDs worked well this year, there were some less than ideal choices regarding camera position. The ideal camera angle is one which shows the recital as a whole, rather than being zoomed in too closely on the candidate – but please ensure that the instrument (particularly the keyboard for piano recitals) is fully visible. There is no need to be too creative with the camera-work – it is not necessary (and is often distracting) for the camera to zoom in and out as the recital progresses.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/43**  
**Free Composition**

## General comments

The entry for this component was relatively small, but there was a wide variety of pieces submitted. These included choral pieces, solo instrumental pieces and compositions for both small and large ensembles of various types. Some compositions were in a popular style, and some had been written to accompany film scenes. All candidates satisfied the syllabus requirements, submitting two contrasting compositions supported by a recording, and a commentary. The most successful pieces had clearly been worked on for some considerable time, being refined and developed and then presented to a high level with impressive accompanying recordings and detailed commentaries. In some cases, however, it did not appear that the submission represented a body of work which was commensurate with one quarter of the marks of the entire syllabus. Whilst no minimum length is stipulated for the compositions, one or two compositions were so short that they could not adequately demonstrate the compositional skills needed to access the higher mark bands.

There was a mix of live and synthesised recordings submitted; whilst it is not an absolute requirement to submit a recording made with live instruments and performers, the syllabus does say this should be done 'wherever possible'. The Moderators felt that a number of the pieces submitted with synthesised recordings could reasonably have been recorded live. Some of the live recordings, particularly of choral pieces, were very impressive and the Moderators appreciate the effort that had gone into making these. As in previous years, some of the assessment was rather generous; there was extensive use of the top band box when marks in the second band would have been more appropriate. On a number of occasions, the comments on the work made by the centre (which were usually accurate) clearly implied a mark in a band lower than the one awarded. Centres are reminded that any marks above 70 will still represent achievement at distinction level, so marks in the high 90s should only be given if realistic in this context.

All Centres are asked to complete the supporting comments boxes; not all did this fully or at all. Further feedback on assessment has been sent to individual Centres.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/44**  
**Music Technology**

As in previous years, there were only a very small number of submissions for this component so the feedback in this report can only be very general. All of the candidates fulfilled the syllabus requirements by submitting an arrangement and a composition, using sequencing and recording technologies, accompanied by a written commentary. There was some outstanding work, which displayed a high level of creativity and imagination in addition to competence in its use of the technology. Other submissions were more modest in achievement, particularly some arrangements which did not demonstrate any significant new compositional input but were essentially the original material presented on different instruments. The commentaries generally addressed all of the required points, and it was pleasing to note that there were fewer pages of screen shots this year. Feedback on assessment has been sent directly to Centres.