

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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

Key messages

- In **Section A**, candidates should spend their time listening and responding to the important differences in the performances, not writing out lengthy pre-prepared paragraphs into which only the most basic differences are inserted
- Recognition of keys and chords was extremely variable

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Comparisons of the two performances were often very good; many candidates approached this methodically and with impressive detail. The best answers dealt with overall decisions affecting the whole extract as well as isolated moments of interest, such as the differing accents in the hemiola at bars 35–38. Weaker responses tended to spend a lot of time on one or two aspects of the interpretation, often articulation or dynamics (important though they are) in individual phrases, and this tended to be at the expense of really significant aspects of instrumentation and interpretation. The majority of candidates correctly identified the differences in pitch and tempo, but many fixated on details which were a consequence of the different tempi, such as how long notes are held, speed of scales, shortness of staccato, and so on, perhaps making a little too much of these. Many candidates observed the harpsichord in performance 2, but often incorrectly stated that there was not one in performance 1. Some candidates noted the absence of timpani in performance 2, but fewer commented that the trumpets also did not play in this performance.

Awareness of performance practice issues varied greatly, from no comment apart from mentioning period pitch to supporting every observation with a quotation. In some cases, candidates wrote lengthy, pre-learned paragraphs about performance practice, clearly following a given formula. These answers demonstrated some factual knowledge, but rather ignored the fact that this is a listening paper and consequently did not observe or comment on a large number of the important differences in interpretation. Of particular irrelevance was lengthy discussion of the invention of trumpet valves, given that one performance omitted the trumpets altogether. The question requires a comparison of the performances, not an explanation of why the music was written in the way it was.

Some candidates discussed issues surrounding microphone placement and other recording issues; these sections were very rarely relevant to answering the question.

On the whole, the level of writing was good and many candidates made use of an extensive musical vocabulary. Some of the handwriting, however, was very poor.

Section B

Topic B1: Orchestral Music

Question 2

This was well answered: most candidates accurately noted the start of the forte and piano passages, and many gave further detail, gaining full marks.

Question 3

Answers here were more variable; not all candidates observed the key textural feature of the passage, i.e. that it was contrapuntal and imitative.

Question 4

A number of candidates correctly observed the difference in tonality, but fewer commented on the more frequent imitative entries. Some answers focused on very small details, rather than comparing the whole of the passages.

Question 5

- (a) This was often very well answered, with impressive perception of keys and chords.
- (b) Similarly, this was often well answered, with the best answers often being the least verbose. Some candidates gave the impression that they wrote as soon as they heard the music, rather than listening and making a judgement about the most significant features, and often ran out of space. In most of these answers, however, the main points were still usually present.

Question 6

Most candidates made a good attempt at this, although many misjudged the length of the first note, often writing a whole extra bar of dotted minim C.

Question 7

The mistakes were spotted by most candidates, although the rhythmic error was not always accurately corrected.

Question 8

There were many correct observations here, most commonly spotting the use of the melody from bar 29 and the motif from bar 42/47.

Question 9

There were some impressive responses to this question. Some candidates made clear comparisons with the extract and showed knowledge of a large amount of repertoire. A few were less pertinent or significant, overlooking aspects of the structure, harmonic language and orchestration that could have yielded some good comparisons with other works. The mark scheme always refers to the *relevance* of comparisons, and this held a few candidates back in that they did not always show how their chosen repertoire corresponded or compared to this extract.

Topic B2: Opera

Question 10

This was largely well answered, with many candidates spotting the rubato and portamento (although the term melisma was often used incorrectly here).

Question 11

Most candidates answered this well, noting the most prominent instruments. The best answers were very specific about exactly where the feature occurred.

Question 12

Responses here were more varied. Many candidates correctly identified the opening and closing keys and the rising bassline, but others struggled to identify any keys at all. The chords presented problems for some.

Question 13

There were some fully accurate answers here, but a common error was to omit the D flat. Some candidates completed a significantly longer passage than the question asked for, which must have compromised the time available for other questions. Not all candidates attempted the question.

Question 14

- (a) This was very well answered; most candidates gained at least some credit, and many achieved full marks.
- (b) Relatively few candidates spotted the distinctive change to the E major chord, but A major was often correctly identified.
- (c) Most candidates observed that the chorus repeated the music of the soloist, and many gave considered suggestions for the dramatic reason for this.

Question 15

Most candidates identified the placement of the piccolo run, but correct location of the chord was rare.

Question 16

This was generally well answered. Some candidates noted the discrepancy between the A natural and A sharp in bars 81 and 82 but corrected the wrong one.

Question 17

Many candidates chose Wagner's style as a point of contrast with this opera, and some also mentioned the Italian repertoire. Knowledge of repertoire and trends within the genre was often very good. The best answers tended to cover a range of issues pertaining to orchestration, harmonic language, role of voices and operatic genre, even if only comparing this extract to one other example. A few answers focused only on the dramatic themes of the operas in question, and neglected to mention any aspect of their musical style.

MUSIC (PRINCIPAL)

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 most popular topics this year were C2 (Choral Music in the Baroque Period) and C3 (Nationalism in the Twentieth Century), but there were also several answers to C4 (George Gershwin and the Great American Songbook). Very few candidates answered on Topic C1 (The Madrigal in Italy and England).

The questions about the Prescribed Works in **Section C** were generally answered quite well. Candidates had evidently found these works interesting and rewarding to study and many of them were well equipped to address the specific issues raised.

There was a marked increase in the number of candidates who did not answer either of the **(b)** questions in **Section C**. It was unclear whether this was because of poor time management or lack of knowledge. In general it was apparent that the exploration of repertoire beyond the Prescribed Works had been very limited indeed, restricted in several cases to the most obvious composers and works. Although the examiners recognise that no one will be able to cover every composer mentioned in the Teachers' Guide, it is nevertheless expected that the main areas of each topic will be covered, but this had not always been done quite as thoroughly as it might.

In **Section D** there were some well-informed answers to all five questions, although references to specific music were sometimes very sketchy.

Comments on specific questions

Section C

Topic C1: The Madrigal in Italy and England (c.1530–c.1638)

Only a very small number of candidates had studied this Topic. Their knowledge of the Monteverdi Prescribed Work was quite detailed and the answers to both the **(b)** questions revealed a commendable grasp of the general history and repertoire.

Topic C2: Choral Music in the Baroque Period (c.1660–c.1759)

Most candidates were able to write convincingly about the dramatic aspects of the *St John Passion*, often describing the function of the Evangelist and Christus in some detail. The role of the chorus as a protagonist in the drama was often overlooked, however, although its function in commenting on events in the chorales was quite well understood. Some candidates found themselves digressing too far towards a discussion of 18th-century Lutheran theology, leaving little time to write about the music.

In the answers to **question (b)(i)**, there was fairly widespread confusion about the distinction between Anthems and Odes: several candidates wrote about only one Verse Anthem (typically *Rejoice in the Lord alway* or *O Sing unto the Lord*) and then moved on to discuss an Ode (most often *Hail, Bright Cecilia*). Most did, however, understand the historical background to the music written for the Chapel Royal, and could explain the use of strings in imitation of the *Vingt-quatre violons du roy* of the French court.

Several answers to **question (b)(ii)** focused primarily on Handel (and on *Messiah* in particular). The earlier origins of the oratorio were less often discussed, although some candidates were able to write a little about Carissimi; there were some who also referred to Charpentier. A significant number of essays compared Handel's *Messiah* with Bach's *St John Passion*, which was not the real point of the Question.

Topic C3: Nationalism in the Twentieth Century (c.1914–c.1965)

Most candidates were able to write in some detail about the opening of *Appalachian Spring* and about the variations on *Simple Gifts*. Some could also point to ways in which features of the opening material can be related to the Shaker tune. The best answers traced some of the unifying features (triadic shapes and anapaest rhythms in particular) through the whole work. The weakest resorted to telling the story of the ballet and hardly addressed the issue of thematic unity at all.

Most candidates who chose **question (b)(i)** were fairly well equipped to write about Shostakovich and the withdrawal of *Lady Macbeth* and the Fourth Symphony. Some could also write convincingly about Khachaturian and Kabalevsky, although it was not always clear that they knew very much of the actual music, even when they knew about its background. There was some confusion about composers such as Prokofiev and Stravinsky (when they went into exile, or when – if at all – they returned) and there was a lot of muddle about the chronology of composers and works.

The most frequent composers cited in answers to **question (b)(ii)** were Bartók, Vaughan Williams and Britten. Those who wrote about Bartók knew that he had collected folk songs, but found it altogether harder to explain the effect that this had on his music. From this point of view, those who wrote about Vaughan Williams fared rather better, although their knowledge of his music was again rather vague. Several of those who wrote about Britten tried to argue a case that the *War Requiem* is a patriotic piece; some of them thought that it is the boys' choir that sings the Wilfred Owen settings.

Topic C4: George Gershwin and the Great American Songbook (c.1918–c.1965)

Essays about *Rhapsody in Blue* were generally quite good. Almost all candidates took issue with Bernstein's description of the work and set out to show that it is better constructed than his comments suggested. They could trace the use of the themes identified in the Cambridge Music Handbook and in many cases could write about tonality as well. There was a strong sense that those who had studied this work had enjoyed doing so.

Question (b)(i) was not a popular choice and only those who know enough about the use of songs in the movies could make a convincing account. Some weaker candidates were able to write only a single, short paragraph with little real content.

Although there were some very thorough answers to **question (b)(ii)**, it was not always clear which versions of the songs they were writing about. In a repertoire where arrangements, alternative harmonisations and cover versions are commonplace, it is essential that candidates explain whether they are writing about an original version, or about one or other of various alternatives.

Section D

Question D1

Most candidates knew a little about the symphonies of the Mannheim School, although there was little detail in the majority of answers. Very few knew of composers other than Stamitz (and it was often very hard to tell whether they meant Johann or Carl). They did know about the famous special effects found in some of the works of Mannheim composers and could give accurate explanations of sky rockets, birdies or steamrollers. Many candidates stated that Haydn was influenced by these works, whereas the more appropriate composers to have mentioned would have been J C Bach or (especially) Mozart.

Question D2

Candidates answered this question fairly well. Most of them knew that Beethoven was taken as a model by both progressive and conservative composers of the 19th century and could point to works which demonstrate aspects of this legacy. They knew, for example, that Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* was in many ways modelled on Beethoven's *Pastoral symphony*, although very few could describe the exact ways in which this is true. Similarly, they knew that Brahms's First Symphony is sometimes known as 'Beethoven's 10th' but assumed that the melody in its last movement is a direct quotation from Beethoven's 9th. There were some good accounts of single-movement works, especially Liszt's tone poems, which encapsulate aspects of a four-movement symphonic plan.

Question D3

Answers to this question revealed a better knowledge about political ideas in 19th-century opera than about philosophical ones. Relevant works cited included Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Weber's *Freischütz* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Although several candidates could write convincingly about the mythological origins of the texts of Wagner's Ring Cycle, no one described the significant influence of the philosophy of Schopenhauer on *Tristan*, for example, or the closing scenes of *Götterdämmerung*. Only a few were aware of the political implications of some operas by Verdi.

Question D4

There was a widespread belief that 'tradition' in musical performance means the same as 'historically informed' performance. There were several essays which focused on pitch, instrument design (especially gut strings) and the social contexts in which music was played in the 18th century. Candidates could also have considered how traditions of performance had developed during the 19th century to a point far removed from 18th-century practice, and that the revival of 'authentic' approaches in the mid-20th century was a way of challenging tradition, rather than upholding it. A few candidates wrote about tradition in terms of Asian (especially Indian) music, where the skills of performing are learned through oral and aural traditions, passed down from master to pupil.

Question D5

The best answers to this question addressed issues concerning the rapid development of technology and social media, with plenty of references to works lasting in excess of an hour which are still very much part of the living repertoire. Contrasts were drawn between popular music and 'classical' pieces, but several candidates made the point that some pop albums are intended to form large works to be heard continuously. Weaker candidates took this question as an opportunity to express their opinions, with little or no references to music to back up their arguments.

PRINCIPLE COURSE MUSIC

<p>Paper 9800/02 Performing</p>

Key messages

- Recitals which are too short limit the marks candidates can achieve
- Improvisations must make clear use of the stimulus material

General comments

The examiners enjoyed visiting centres and listening to a wide range of well-prepared performances, on a variety of instruments and in different musical styles. The vast majority of candidates performed programmes which consisted of repertoire appropriate to their ability. Last year's report noted that an increasing number of performances were too short in both **Section A** and **B**; it was pleasing to see that this advice was noted, and timings were generally much better this year. A very small number of recitals were significantly below the minimum time limit, impacting on the marks that those candidates could access.

A number of candidates offered improvising this year, and the approaches to this were often very creative, with some outstanding examples. It was notable, however, that some improvisations only made the briefest use of the stimulus material. Whilst preparing for this component is important, and the introduction of contrasting material is necessary to create a satisfying performance, candidates must take note that the assessment criteria reward the use of the original stimulus. Of particular concern was a small number of candidates who chose the chord sequence, but only selected certain chords from it, often taken out of order. Candidates should be reminded that the chord sequence should be heard in its entirety for at least some of the improvisation.

Administration was invariably efficient, sheet music was supplied as expected and there was some outstanding accompanying. The only real point of concern is that already raised in reports over the last couple of years concerning centre availability. Candidates should be ready to be examined at any point during the examining period for this component; expressing a preference for a particular date range is perfectly acceptable, but this is not the same as being unavailable on other dates. The examiners will always try to accommodate requests, but these cannot be guaranteed; in particular, only offering a couple of days a week for the entire examining period for the convenience of part-time staff is not reasonable given the complexity of arranging a large number of school visits.

MUSIC (PRINCIPAL)

Paper 9800/03
Composing

Key messages

The Key messages remain identical to last year's.

- All exercises in the Stylistic Exercises (Coursework) section must provide an incipit in which the texture is given in its entirety. This includes Chorale exercises, where the first phrase (up to the first *fermata*) should be given as a model for candidates to follow.
- The incipits provided to candidates must be correct, free from wrong notes and missing bars.
- Coursework exercises should be chosen to permit clear progression through the course, but should also be appropriately differentiated for individual candidates of differing abilities.
- All Coursework exercises and the chosen Examination exercise must always be handwritten.
- In Option 4 of the Commissioned Composition, the given cells must be used in the *primary* materials of the piece.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Stylistic Exercises (Examination)

Most candidates chose the Chorale, whether or not that was the most appropriate exercise for them. There were very few really idiomatic harmonisations. Most candidates completed the exercise in a simple, note-against-note style with few passing notes. The potential for modulations was often missed, with the cadence at bar 4/5 commonly treated as plagal in B flat rather than perfect in F; similarly, the cadences at bars 7/8 and 8/9 were usually both treated as perfect in E flat (missing the possibility of moving to C minor for one of them). A surprisingly large number of candidates ended one or other of these cadences on a dominant 7th in B flat.

Candidates who chose the String Quartet exercise managed reasonably well when the 1st violin part continued in a similar fashion to the incipit. They found the moments when it was more static much more challenging, although the given fragment of the 2nd violin part in bars 24 and 25 helped some to devise a suitable ending.

In the Two-part Baroque counterpoint exercise, candidates were happiest adding a bass part to the given treble. They found the melodic invention required in bars 13 to 20 much more difficult.

The Keyboard Accompaniment exercise was attempted by only a few candidates. Although most could continue the given texture without too much difficulty, the implied modulations and the need for chromatic harmony were elusive and few could manage to compose an idiomatic postlude.

Even fewer candidates chose the final exercise, Music in Jazz, Popular and Show Styles. It was often true, here as in the Coursework submissions, that their understanding of the relationship between chord symbols and actual sounds was a distinct weakness and it was often quite difficult to follow what they thought they were writing.

Section B: Stylistic Exercises (Coursework)

Selection of Coursework Exercises

In some cases exercises with the same mistakes as last year had been given to candidates again, unaltered.

Some of the exercises submitted fell substantially short of the minimum length required: in all genres except the Chorale, the *minimum* number of bars prescribed in the Syllabus for candidates to complete is 16 per exercise (equating to a total of at least 80 bars spread across the five exercises). In some cases, candidates had completed as few as 45 bars in all, barely more than half of the minimum.

It is essential that the *incipits* provided for candidates should be easily distinguishable from the continuations written by the candidates. Ideally the incipits should be computer-generated so that they can be seen at a glance to be different from the candidates' handwritten continuations. Simply annotating a handwritten exercise is not sufficient.

Candidates should be encouraged to include at least one draft of each exercise they submit. Multiple preliminary drafts, however, are not required. The drafts should be working copies of the exercise that have been seen and marked by the teacher; they should not be fair copies, but should show the teacher's comments and annotations. They should illustrate for the examiners the process of learning that has led to the final version and are used by the examiners to inform positively their assessment of the work. Annotations by teachers should be helpful to candidates, identifying specific strengths and weaknesses in the work.

Observations on Individual Styles

Chorales

The range of examples included in the Coursework submissions was sometimes rather narrow. A variety of keys should be represented, including both major and minor, and there should be examples in triple time as well as quadruple. The first phrase should always be given in its entirety; thereafter, as noted above, only the treble part should be given.

While most candidates, with a number of exceptions, were able to identify appropriate cadential progressions in a variety of keys and apply them correctly in context, they often fared less well in linking one cadence to the next. In phrases where modulations occurred, candidates often found it difficult to judge where the modulatory procedures should begin, typically leaving it until the very last moment before the cadence.

String Quartets

The aspects of this genre that candidates found most difficult were (a) judging the pace of the harmonic rhythm and (b) recognising appoggiaturas or accented passing-notes (though some of this year's candidates did better than usual on the second of these). There were frequent issues with devising an appropriate harmonisation, even in instances where the texture given in the *incipit* was followed quite closely. Several candidates found it difficult to use the alto clef, with the result that viola parts were often too low.

Many of the exercises set by centres were rather simple, giving candidates few opportunities to use chromatic harmony (augmented 6ths, Neapolitan 6ths and even simple modulations were scarce). Candidates ought to be given opportunities for invention within the style, but most exercises demanded little more than a basic continuation of the given texture.

There were several exercises in which the *incipit* and/or the given part contained serious mistakes, which made the candidates' task much harder than it should have been.

Accompaniments

Most exercises this year came from the music of early 19th-century composers, with fewer instances of music by composers from later in the century.

Some of this year's candidates demonstrated an ability to handle chromatic harmony. It was still true, however, that many of the exercises set were rather simple in their demand, making it difficult for candidates to access the higher bands of marks. 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.

There were assorted inaccuracies in some of the exercises given to candidates in this genre as well as in the String Quartets. It is essential that the correct titles of the songs from which exercises are taken should be shown, in the original language, on all the work that is submitted. When the examiners notice a mistake in a given part, they will need to check the original, which is unnecessarily difficult if the correct title is not given.

Two-part Baroque Counterpoint

There were some very good workings among the small number of submissions in this genre. The comments made above about examination exercises applied more generally to the Coursework submissions.

Music in Jazz, Popular and Show Styles

The number of submissions in this genre was very small. Most candidates were better at fitting a bass and chords to the given melody than they were at composing melody above the given bass, where they often needed to be more inventive. Maintaining consistency with the style of the incipit was another common problem.

Section C: Commissioned Composition

The popular choices were Option 1 (Art Song), Option 3 (pieces based on Dance) and Option 4 (pitch or rhythm fragments – with more choosing the pitches than the rhythm). The best candidates produced really imaginative work, and those who had been taught how to expand their initial ideas into longer paragraphs of music were often able to compose well-structured, coherent pieces that fully justified the pride they took in their work.

Option 1

The poem by W H Auden elicited a wide variety of interpretations, from the wistful and plaintive to the humorous. There were many attempts at word-painting (particularly of the frog) but candidates found it difficult to match in their music the slightly surreal images of the third stanza. Most were able to find a way of treating the refrain without simply repeating the identical music; there were some ingenious solutions to this specific feature of the poem.

Option 2

The pop song lyrics were chosen by a relatively small number of candidates. Most of the music was serviceable if not particularly memorable, and some candidates found it surprisingly hard to mould the lyrics into a standard pop song structure (even though there was a fairly obvious chorus section).

Option 3

Candidates were apparently very comfortable with the idea of composing in dance styles: there were many waltzes, but also several Latin American dances (including Rumba, Tango, Salsa and Bossa Nova). The most challenging part of the brief was the requirement to combine aspects of the previous three sections into a coda with a quiet ending. Here many candidates fared less well, although there were a few effective backward glances at earlier music, recast in a different mood.

Option 4

Candidates who chose the rhythm often found it hard to maintain interest without departing radically from the 5/8 metre of the given cell. This meant that the cell did appear clearly at the outset, but seemed to be almost forgotten as the pieces developed. Some candidates played around with the possibilities of the metre (2 + 3 or 3 + 2), or extended it to 7/8. Others found themselves getting bogged down with repetitions of the same material, resulting in pieces that perhaps started well but became over-reliant on their initial ideas.

Those who chose the pitches approached the brief in a wide range of different ways. Almost all, for understandable reasons, pitched their pieces in E minor, but hardly any thought to transpose the cell in order to provide some welcome tonal variety. Some candidates disregarded the all-important C, concentrating instead on the two superimposed perfect 5ths. There were several pieces in which the given cell was not

used as part of the primary materials of the piece, but was introduced (sometimes very briefly) somewhere in the middle. This does not satisfy the requirement that the cell must be used in the primary materials of the piece.

There were some impressive recordings of live performances. Synthesised performances, although helpful to the examiners, do not bring the music to life in the same way as even an imperfect live performance. This is especially true of songs, where the use of the ubiquitous 'Choir ahs' is a very poor substitute for a voice singing the words. It is often true, too, that songs with synthesised performances have errors in the underlay of the text that could have been avoided if the composers had worked with a real singer.

PRINCIPLE COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/41
Dissertation

Key messages

- Musical examples need to be explained clearly and explicitly
- References need to be made clear, and a balanced range of sources consulted
- Teacher-Assessors should ensure that comments match the marks awarded and vice versa, avoiding the direct quotation of mark band descriptors

General comments

The general standard of the dissertations was high and many candidates submitted work on imaginative subjects that were interesting and engaging to read. A wide range of topics was addressed, such as Machaut, Bach, Mozart, the Beatles, Fleetwood Mac and The Beach Boys. Most centres were objective in their application of the assessment criteria. In some cases, marking tended to be lenient in assessment of criterion 2 (Contextual Understanding); as an example, a dissertation based almost entirely on material sourced from unreliable internet sources does not demonstrate the same range of scholarly reading shown by an essay citing academic articles in journals, printed texts and reference works, and specific recordings of source material in a methodical format, either in the bibliography or footnotes and references. Similarly, in assessing the substantiation of judgements (criterion 4), a few centres awarded high marks for the inclusion of printed/recorded examples without appearing to consider their relevance or the clarity of the citation/reference.

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. Therefore, centres are advised not to quote the generic mark bands directly when writing comments and awarding marks.

The best dissertations addressed a specific question or presented an argument. Dissertations that presented more of a survey-style piece of writing tended to be less convincing on the whole.

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. Many dissertations included an appropriate number of musical examples, either as printed extracts from source material or recorded extracts or sometimes (helpfully) in both formats. Some presentations included very few extracts, and in these instances it proved difficult for the candidate to write convincingly or analytically. Some dissertations included more printed and/or recorded material, but needed to draw more explicit conclusions, rather than leaving the reader to make the connections.

Almost all of the dissertations were of an appropriate length but there were a few short dissertations and occasional instances in which the candidate had exceeded the word count significantly, making it more challenging to maintain a style of writing that was focused. The length of a dissertation in and of itself did not affect the marks awarded, but to varying degrees made it difficult for the descriptors for the higher bands to be considered appropriate.

Most presentations followed the scholarly practices of acknowledging citations, adding an appropriate bibliography or reference list. However, in some cases references needed to be made clearer. Some bibliographies included significant amounts of printed material, internet sources and scores/transcriptions, whilst others included very short bibliographies, offering little or no insight into how the candidate had conducted the investigation or analysis. In a few cases, candidates appeared to have relied almost exclusively on internet sources of variable reliability; for certain topics, this may be unavoidable, but on the

whole, candidates should look for a wider range of sources in order to demonstrate well-informed contextual understanding. 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.

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

<p>Paper 9800/42 Further Performing</p>

Key messages

- Programmes should be long enough to extend the technical and musical skills demonstrated in component 2
- The CDs of supporting extracts for the written project were often poorly presented

General comments

A large number of the recitals were very impressive, and the majority of candidates performed repertoire appropriate to their ability in recitals which were clearly well rehearsed. With reference to the recital length, the syllabus deliberately does not specify a lower time limit, in order to allow sufficient flexibility for appropriate programming. For example, some students performed a concerto with their school orchestra as their recital, which typically lasted around 20 minutes. Adding further pieces to such a performance would clearly be both impossible and musically undesirable. The technical and musical accomplishment in the examples of this type the moderators heard this year was quite extraordinary – not only from the soloist, but from the accompanying orchestras too. Within the 20 minutes of such programmes the candidates clearly extended the skills demonstrated in component 2, allowing them to access the higher mark bands. However, some of the recitals, which were made up of a number of individual pieces, were really rather short. Recitals of this type, unless on an instrument for which stamina is clearly an issue, should expect to fill most of the 30 minutes to gain the highest marks.

Some of the recitals were recorded on iPad – the sound quality could have been enhanced significantly by the use of a dedicated external microphone.

Written project

Attention to the projects this year was rather less consistent, and less assiduous. The CDs with supporting extracts were often very poor; referencing in the text was frequently haphazard, with odd out-of-sequence timings dotted about the text, in rather random order. Some candidates simply submitted the whole performance with reference to timings within the tracks, which is not acceptable. Those who did produce clear tracks often did not assemble the discs with any gaps between the tracks, so that it was difficult to separate one track from another. Some tracks were just too short to make their point and a surprising number of examples did not seem to illustrate the point at all; it was not always evident whether this was by error in compilation or through poor aural acuity. As has been commented on in a number of recent reports, many of the projects focused on tiny details which did not substantially contribute to a genuine understanding of the differences in interpretation. There was a notable increase in the number of recordings taken from Youtube, in which the compressed sound quality (particularly affecting the dynamic range) was not sufficient for a really good comparison.

Marking

Any adjustments which were made were to ensure a common standard across all centres. As in previous years, the most common pattern was for marking to be somewhat lenient in all categories with regard to the written project. The recital itself was usually marked more accurately, although again with a tendency towards leniency. Sometimes the comments made by the marker were entirely appropriate, but the mark subsequently given did not match. Centres are reminded that there is a large mark range which comprises distinction; marking should not start from a preconceived notion of what might constitute a high mark, but should be clearly referenced to the descriptors in the mark scheme.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/43
Further Composing

Key messages

This component is designed to give candidates largely free rein to explore their enthusiasms and interests in composing, and to spend time developing their compositional technique and reflecting on their work, and it is very pleasing to see the wide range of creative approaches submitted, from single-page solo instrumental pieces to major orchestral and choral scores. Work submitted ranges from pastiche through a broad range of styles and approaches, frequently with considerable originality and ingenuity, and often with real enthusiasm.

General comments

It is essential that the syllabus requirement of two *contrasting* compositions is noted, as the element of contrast is an important part of the assessment criteria. Several candidates this year submitted pieces which displayed only very limited stylistic contrast, and so could not access the higher mark ranges in this respect, and this was not always recognised in the marking. Whilst there is no specified minimum time-limit for compositions in this component, it is also important that candidates submit a quantity of work which is commensurate with approximately 25 per cent of the learning time over the whole course: it is unlikely that a relatively straightforward one-page piece will be able to access the higher mark ranges.

Comments on specific matters

Presentation of scores this year was often exemplary, with great care having been taken to produce a final document which was worthy of the large quantity of work which had gone into the compositions themselves. Some work was submitted as loose sheets and, if this is the case, it is vitally important that pages are numbered, and all pages marked with the candidate's identity. All scores submitted this year had been computer-set, but there was often scope for further editing to ensure that the desired information was always unequivocally communicated. The most common shortcomings were in score layout and standard order of instruments/families, in grouping of notes and rests, and in inconsistent detail of phrasing and articulation, though there were many submissions where great care had been taken with editable parameters to produce scores of professional quality.

The commentaries allow the candidates the opportunity to explain the rationale behind their compositions and to demonstrate their enthusiasms, and their understanding of the composition process. They are also most useful in helping them reflect upon the finished work and, as such, are a vital part of the submission. Many extensive commentaries this year not only gave great insight into the candidates' intentions, but revealed the extent of listening which had been undertaken in preparation for the task. Many candidates included clear and thoughtful appraisals of their work, and it was encouraging to be able to see and understand what they had learned from the process, and the skills that they intended to further develop.

It was a great pleasure to listen to the compositions and, particularly, to the many superb live performances which had been organised by centres. Whilst this may be relatively simple to arrange for a solo piece, to do so for a full orchestral composition, or for an unusual instrumental or vocal combination, is highly commendable. Candidates were fortunate indeed to have the support of their teachers and peers in realising their compositions in this way, in some cases enabling them to understand and make further refinements to their work in the light of practical considerations.

In the context of large orchestral and/or vocal scores, a warning should be sounded that the effects achieved on playback from notation software cannot effectively recreate the textural and balance considerations of live forces, and what works in the software realisation may not be effective in live performance. Some textures in

large-ensemble works tended to be too full, with excessive use of doubling, especially in large brass and woodwind contingents, and string writing sometimes rather unimaginative in long-held chords.

In terms of the marking of this component, there remains a tendency for centres to use only the upper mark ranges, and this is not universally appropriate in terms of the range of work submitted. It is important that the full range of marks is used, and to remember that any mark of more than 70 is likely to represent work of a distinction level: there is considerable headroom between this and the maximum mark in which to reward exceptional work. For a coursework submission, the marks awarded must be supported by comments which explain the marking rationale, and these should refer specifically to the work submitted, as well as to the individual marking criteria. It is not expected that the work itself will be annotated by assessors as presentation is part of the assessment, but the working mark sheets should show evidence of the assessment process. Many centres included extensive comments which were most helpful in the moderation process.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/44
Music Technology

General comments

This component continues to attract only a very low level of entries, so that it is not possible to provide detailed feedback as this is provided on the report to those centres entering candidates. The submissions received covered a range of approaches to both arrangement and composition. In terms of the arrangement, candidates are advised to select the original with care so that it offers adequate scope for further development as an arrangement, and to ensure that a complete copy of the original is included with the work, so that the process of development can be understood by the Moderators.