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Paper 9483/11
Listening
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Key messages

In **Section A** candidates need to be able to use technical musical terms, including Italian tempo markings, types of cadences and in particular the difference between melodic and harmonic devices. These terms and techniques, which are found in the set works, should allow candidates to identify similar instances in unfamiliar works.

The number of marks available for each question, together with the space provided for the answers on the question paper gives candidates a good indication of the length of response and level of detail required for each question. Many candidates did not write enough in their answers to be able to access the full range of marks.

When writing essays either in **Section B** or **Section C,** candidates should ensure that they remain focused on music at all times, rather than being distracted by non-musical elements.

Many candidates did not give a response to one or more questions on the paper. Even if they really do not know the correct answer, they should be encouraged to give a plausible response e.g. a type of cadence or harmonic device.

Handwriting was sometimes difficult to read. Candidates should make sure that everything they write is legible.

General comments

In **Section A**, it appeared that some candidates were not familiar enough with the set work being played and were therefore not able to answer the questions in detail. Listening to several different recordings of each set work and comparing them would provide good preparation for **Question 3**, where they have to do the same with an unfamiliar piece.

Similarly, in **Section B** some candidates did not know their set work in sufficient detail to be able to write a convincing response to a question, focusing on the features outlined in the question. Many essays simply gave a chronological account of the work, explaining how the composer(s) told the story, rather than focusing on the question begin asked. The Teachers' Guide to Set Works, available online, provides an excellent starting point for the study of the set works in both **Sections A** and **B**.

Responses in **Section C** showed wide variation, from short, one-paragraph answers to long and detailed essays presenting a balanced argument with reference to a wide range of works. A few candidates did not realise that only one essay in **Sections B** and **C** was required, instead attempting to answer every single question.

Section C answers often made good references to music in pop and rock styles and to various pieces of Western classical music. However, there was less reference to music from different traditions around the world.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

(a)   Many candidates gained the mark available for this question, for knowing that the tempo marking of the movement is andante. Incorrect answers included other Italian tempo markings, time signatures and even BPM suggestions.

(b)   Fewer candidates were successful with this question compared with **(a)**, with only stronger candidates identifying that the key of the movement is C major.

(c)   The three marks available for this question suggested that a reasonably detailed response was required. There were many ways to gain marks, but very few candidates were awarded all three. There was most often reference to the soloist playing the melody and/or the ensemble accompanying. No credit was awarded for 'homophonic'.

Question 2

(a)   The majority of candidates gained the mark for noting that the music is an octave lower. No credit was awarded for simply 'lower'.

(b)   Many candidates correctly identified the cadence as perfect.

(c)   Very few candidates even mentioned the word pedal (for one mark), meaning that a very small number gained both marks available for this question. Other harmonic devices suggested included circle of fifths, but many candidates put ascending sequence for both this and the following question.

(d)   This was answered more successfully than **(c)** with more candidates gaining at least one of the two marks.

(e)   This question was one of the most frequently omitted in this section, with many candidates not gaining one of the two marks available for their suggested answers.

(f)   There were many answers to this question which did not make any reference to the texture of the music, describing instead the dynamics, melodic shape or articulation. To be awarded the full six marks candidates needed to make three musical points, identifying with bar numbers where these are heard.

Question 3

(a)   Some candidates wrote in detail about features other than dynamics, so did not gain any credit. Three accurate musical observations with bar numbers were sufficient to gain all the marks available.

(b)   The most successful answers to this question covered a wide range of features (instrumentation, pitch, tempo, ornamentation, articulation and the overall sound), reflecting on both performances. These candidates then went on to use this evidence to suggest which performance may or may not have been using Baroque instruments (or copies) and which was therefore the more historically informed performance. Some answers contained information about dynamics, which was specifically excluded from the question as it had been covered in **(a)**.

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

Some candidates looked at the first two themes heard in the work as a whole and then discussed how they were used in the first and one other movement. Other candidates chose two movements and looked at the first two themes used in each one. Many candidates spent a great deal of time explaining the narrative, rather than looking specifically at the musical aspects. This sometimes meant that although they wrote a great deal, not many marks were awarded. Sometimes a lack of complete familiarity with the music was

apparent, and it was unclear exactly which part of the work candidates were referring to or there was confusion between different presentations of the same themes.

Question 5

Some candidates focused much of their answer on outlining the stories behind the two works. The most successful answers noted that Debussy had just a piano to use while Grieg had a whole orchestra, going on to explain how the two composers then used the instruments. References to the narratives were then used appropriately to strengthen musical points.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

Some candidates spent too long discussing what tempo was rather than specifically referencing changes in tempo. There were some good examples from pop and rock music, but fewer in other genres. Some candidates extended the scope of the question to include differences in tempo between adjacent tracks on an album. This was taken as a valid interpretation and awarded credit.

Question 7

Those candidates choosing to answer this question often took the opportunity to write about how silence can build tension and expectation. Referenced genres often included pop, rock and EDM and film music. Some candidates also mentioned the gaps between movements in Western classical music. There were also some specific film music examples mentioned, giving weight to the essay's argument.

Question 8

Answers given to this question included some very good responses, often reflecting on candidates' own experiences of playing arrangements. Points made included changing the instrumentation to suit the performing forces available, simplifying the music and creating a version in a different style. Responses achieving the highest marks gave specific musical examples, rather than simply writing generally about why an arranger might choose to do something.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/12
Listening

Key messages

In **Section A** candidates need to be able to use technical musical terms, including Italian tempo markings, types of cadences and in particular the difference between melodic and harmonic devices. These terms and techniques, which are found in the set works, should allow candidates to identify similar instances in unfamiliar works.

The number of marks available for each question, together with the space provided for the answers on the question paper gives candidates a good indication of the length of response and level of detail required for each question. Many candidates did not write enough in their answers to be able to access the full range of marks.

When writing essays either in **Section B** or **Section C,** candidates should ensure that they remain focused on music at all times, rather than being distracted by non-musical elements.

Many candidates did not give a response to one or more questions on the paper. Even if they really do not know the correct answer, they should be encouraged to give a plausible response e.g. a type of cadence or harmonic device.

Handwriting was sometimes difficult to read. Candidates should make sure that everything they write is legible.

General comments

In **Section A**, it appeared that some candidates were not familiar enough with the set work being played and were therefore not able to answer the questions in detail. Listening to several different recordings of each set work and comparing them would provide good preparation for **Question 3**, where they have to do the same with an unfamiliar piece.

Similarly, in **Section B** some candidates did not know their set work in sufficient detail to be able to write a convincing response to a question, focusing on the features outlined in the question. Many essays simply gave a chronological account of the work, explaining how the composer(s) told the story, rather than focusing on the question begin asked. The Teachers' Guide to Set Works, available online, provides an excellent starting point for the study of the set works in both **Sections A** and **B**.

Responses in **Section C** showed wide variation, from short, one-paragraph answers to long and detailed essays presenting a balanced argument with reference to a wide range of works. A few candidates did not realise that only one essay in **Sections B** and **C** was required, instead attempting to answer every single question.

Section C answers often made good references to music in pop and rock styles and to various pieces of Western classical music. However, there was less reference to music from different traditions around the world.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates correctly identified this as the first movement. Allegro and allegro moderato were also accepted, but not allegro assai as this is the tempo marking for a different movement.

(b)   Nearly all candidates correctly identified the keyboard instrument as the harpsichord.

(c) (i)   Few candidates made any mention of the word 'episode' in their answer to receive credit. Some mentioned solo section, but this was only given credit if it was specifically identified as the first (or S1). Answers such as 'Section B' were not awarded the mark.

(ii)   In common with many questions requiring candidates to describe the music, this question was often not answered in enough detail to gain any marks. There were many ways to gain the two marks available. Successful answers often referred to the circle of fifths and the descending sequence.

Question 2

(a)   Many candidates were able to correctly identify the harmonic device as a pedal, with a considerably smaller number going on to gain the second mark for tonic. Other commonly suggested devices included sequence.

(b)   Many candidates gained the mark for stating that the F major chord is in first inversion. Second and even third inversion were sometimes suggested.

(c)   The answer of monophonic was seen far more frequently than in octaves or unison, but all were awarded credit.

(d)   Some candidates correctly noted that the harmonic device is suspension in the two solo violins. This was a question which was fairly frequently omitted.

(e)   Many candidates gave the correct answer of 3/2. Other incorrect suggestions included 3/4, 2/4 and 12/4.

(f)   Many candidates correctly named the key as F major and identified it as the subdominant of C major.

(g)   To be awarded the full six marks candidates needed to make three musical points, identifying with bar numbers where these are heard. Answers referring to the swapping of roles, imitation and playing in thirds were most frequently seen.

Question 3

(a)   This question was reasonably well answered, with candidates gaining at least partial credit. Answers which referred to features other than ornamentation were not awarded credit. Three accurate musical observations with bar numbers were sufficient to gain all the marks available. Many candidates were able to state that Performance A was generally more ornamented and then most mention was made of trills. Occasionally candidates referred to the harpsichord arpeggiation.

(b)   The most successful answers to this question covered a wide range of features (instrumentation, pitch, tempo, dynamics, articulation and the overall sound), reflecting on both performances. These candidates then went on to use this evidence to suggest which performance may or may not have been using Baroque instruments (or copies) and which was therefore the more historically informed performance. Some answers contained information about ornamentation, which was specifically excluded from the question as it had been covered in **(a)**.

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

Most candidates were able to make some valid points, often referring to the instrumentation (particularly the percussion and wind) and the modal influences. Some candidates spent a great deal of time outlining the narrative behind the movements, which did not help them to gain any marks. The most successful answers chose a particular element (e.g. rhythm) and discussed its use in both works, before moving on to a different element to compare.

Question 5

Again, some candidates spent far too long outlining the narrative and not dynamics. Points made about musical elements other than dynamics could not be awarded credit. Chronological accounts of the movements one after the other came across less strongly than accounts which provided an ongoing comparison. The strongest points made included pointing out that the Debussy has an overarching crescendo and diminuendo while the Grieg has sudden dynamic contrasts, partly made possible by the fact that Grieg had many more instruments available to him, which he could use alone or tutti. Some candidates were not familiar enough with the music as they did not give the correct dynamics and/or instruments at times.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

Nearly all responses broadened out the definition of solo to include instances where instruments are accompanied by other instruments and many candidates also included the voice as an instrument. There were many references to pop and jazz and some to Western classical music, but there were few references to styles and traditions from all over the world. The strongest answers included reference to solos in specific pieces of music, indicating that candidates were very familiar with the piece of music being cited.

Question 7

Responses to this question were generally not strong. Candidates often quoted huge sections of lyrics from songs, without making very many, if any, musical points. As in **Question 6**, most references were to jazz and pop music.

Question 8

Candidates referred to their own personal experience in answers to this question, for example, stating that learning and practising a piece has to be taken seriously, even if the piece itself is relatively light-hearted. However, many candidates omitted to cite specific examples of music to support their arguments and therefore reduced the number of marks they were able to achieve. References to music in religious and ceremonial contexts were also frequently seen, together with many mentions of national anthems.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/13
Listening

Key messages

In **Section A** candidates need to be able to use technical musical terms, including Italian tempo markings, types of cadences and in particular the difference between melodic and harmonic devices. These terms and techniques, which are found in the set works, should allow candidates to identify similar instances in unfamiliar works.

The number of marks available for each question, together with the space provided for the answers on the question paper gives candidates a good indication of the length of response and level of detail required for each question. Many candidates did not write enough in their answers to be able to access the full range of marks.

When writing essays either in **Section B** or **Section C**, candidates should ensure that they remain focused on music at all times, rather than being distracted by non-musical elements.

Many candidates did not give a response to one or more questions on the paper. Even if they really do not know the correct answer, they should be encouraged to give a plausible response e.g. a type of cadence or harmonic device.

Handwriting was sometimes difficult to read. Candidates should make sure that everything they write is legible.

General comments

In **Section A**, it appeared that some candidates were not familiar enough with the set work being played and were therefore not able to answer the questions in detail. Listening to several different recordings of each set work and comparing them would provide good preparation for **Question 3**, where they have to do the same with an unfamiliar piece.

Similarly, in **Section B** some candidates did not know their set work in sufficient detail to be able to write a convincing response to a question, focusing on the features outlined in the question. Many essays simply gave a chronological account of the work, explaining how the composer(s) told the story, rather than focusing on the question begin asked. The Teachers' Guide to Set Works, available online, provides an excellent starting point for the study of the set works in both **Sections A** and **B**.

Responses in **Section C** showed wide variation, from short, one-paragraph answers to long and detailed essays presenting a balanced argument with reference to a wide range of works. A few candidates did not realise that only one essay in **Sections B** and **C** was required, instead attempting to answer every single question.

Section C answers often made good references to music in pop and rock styles and to various pieces of Western classical music. However, there was less reference to music from different traditions around the world.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

(a) Many candidates correctly identified this as the first movement or overture. Allegro was also accepted.

(b) Most candidates correctly named the cadence as imperfect.

(c) Many candidates were able to gain two of the three marks available, usually for noting that the tempo is slower and it is in the relative minor/D minor. Some candidates mentioned the presence of the oboe solo and/or the time signature change.

Question 2

(a) Many candidates gained the mark for this question. However, this was usually for the fact that it has an ascending sequence.

(b) Fewer candidates correctly identified the harmonic device as a circle of fifths. Many candidates choose to write 'sequence' when anything about a device is asked.

(c) Some candidates were able to gain both marks for this question, usually by mentioning the imitation and that it was (a perfect fifth) lower.

(d) The correct answer of perfect and the incorrect answer of imperfect cadence were both frequently seen. The key was less frequently correct.

(e) Candidates did not score well on this question, with only a few gaining the mark for pedal and very few going on to be awarded the second mark for dominant. Again, many candidates suggested sequence.

(f) To be awarded the full six marks candidates needed to make three musical points, identifying with bar numbers where these are heard. Answers referring to the descending sequence, circle of fifths and imitation were most frequently seen. A few candidates chose to comment on the interpretation rather than the music itself.

Question 3

(a) Three accurate musical observations with bar numbers were sufficient to gain all the marks available. Answers which referred to features other than ornamentation or decoration were not awarded credit. Many candidates were able to state that there was more decoration in the solo parts in Performance B, including trills and ascending scalic runs, whilst A includes only trills. Few candidates referred to the harpsichord decoration.

(b) The most successful answers to this question covered a wide range of features (instrumentation, pitch, tempo, dynamics, articulation and the overall sound), reflecting on both performances. These candidates then went on to use this evidence to suggest which performance may or may not have been using Baroque instruments (or copies) and which was therefore the more historically informed performance. Some answers contained information about ornamentation, which was specifically excluded from the question as it had been covered in **(a)**.

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

Candidates who spent a great deal of time outlining the narratives did not achieve high marks. A few candidates tried to talk about contrast between the two works, rather than within one work. The most successful answers chose an element to discuss and then described examples from both works, with clear explanation of exactly where and what in the music they were referring to. Some answers were quite confused, and it was difficult to identify exactly where in the music candidates were referring to.

Question 5

Stronger candidates made frequent reference to musical features, and it was clear where in the music candidates were writing about. Understandably, Arabian Dance was not often chosen to discuss contrast, but Solveig's Song and Peer Gynt's Homecoming were often cited.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

Stronger candidates made frequent reference to specific pieces of dance music and a few candidates even further strengthened their argument by citing examples of music that would not be suitable for dancing. If candidates feel that there are not many points to make (for this question the strong pulse, consistent tempo and possibly a catchy melody were key) then they should give even more examples which evidence the points they are making.

Question 7

Some candidates spent a great deal of time outlining the development of jazz, with very little material that was related to the question asked. Stronger responses discussed a range of solo voice functions and techniques such as different voice types, styles, extended techniques and interactions. There was a great deal of reference to jazz and pop but few examples of music from traditions around the world.

Question 8

Many candidates made some very good points in responses to this question. These included the fact that in the money-driven pop market, if consumers are not given what they have come to expect they will not buy new music from an artist. However, many candidates mentioned Taylor Swift and her albums covering a range of styles of music. As with **Question 7**, there was little reference to music from various cultures or traditions.

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Paper 9483/02
Practical Music

Key messages

- In Element 1, musicality is more important than the difficulty of the repertoire.
- The Element 2 written statement should include information about relevant listening influences. This should be used to inform the marks awarded for Assessment Criteria A and D.
- Assessors are encouraged to support the marks awarded with brief comments in the boxes on the working mark sheets.
- Copies of the repertoire performed in Element 1 should be included in hard copy in the submission.

General comments

Most candidates were very well prepared for Element 1, and there was an impressive range, quality and diversity of the repertoire chosen. Voice and piano/keyboard were the most popular instruments, but there were compelling performances from every instrumental family and voice type, as well as numerous examples of folk and ethnic instruments. Candidates should perform at least two contrasting pieces. This enabled many performers to demonstrate that they were comfortable in a range of musical styles. Most candidates were ably supported by excellent accompanists and/or technicians and in general, performers were relaxed and clearly used to being recorded. The camera should be fixed consistently on the candidate, so ensembles may have to be recorded more than once, and teachers should ensure that hands, feet and face are not obscured. For kit drummers, organists or harpists, this may mean that the camera needs to be placed at the side of or above the candidate rather than in front of the instrument, and care should also be taken with the placement of music stands. Singers do not have to perform from memory, but neither should they hide behind their copies. Eye contact with the camera invariably improves the performance, and the mark it can be awarded.

Most candidates demonstrated that they could play accurately and fluently, with good technical control, and therefore achieved good marks in Assessment Criteria A and B. Some candidates were more challenged by Criteria C (Realisation of performance markings and/or performance conventions) and D (Interpretation and aural awareness). Building practice recordings into the scheme of work will help candidates to hear and see that the intentions of the composer need to be convincingly conveyed to achieve high marks. For example, what sounds like a crescendo to the performer may not be as evident to the listener. This aspect of performance preparation should not be neglected or taken for granted if candidates are to achieve high marks. Pieces included in the submission can be recorded more than once, and candidates should be encouraged to be reflective and self-critical in their approach to both practice and eventual performance.

To demonstrate a range of skills, candidates should play at least two contrasting pieces in Element 1 but should avoid playing at the absolute limit of their technical ability. However, teachers should not award very high marks, particularly in Assessment Criteria B and D, to candidates playing repertoire that is at beginner level. The descriptors in Assessment Criterion B (Technical control) use words such as 'wide', 'adequate' and 'limited' to help assessors to gauge the difficulty of the music performed. The bullet points at the top of page 28 of the syllabus (relating to Assessment Criteria D) are similarly related to the demand and scope of the chosen repertoire and should be considered in relation to the level descriptors when deciding marks. Many assessors supported the marks they had awarded with comments on the Working Mark Sheets. The most helpful examples referred to the assessment criteria descriptors to give a first-hand appraisal of the performance.

Most candidates coped well with Element 2, and there were some imaginative compositions, in a very wide range of genres and styles. Candidates are not expected to be totally original at this level (pastiche is perfectly acceptable) and common inspirations included programme, film, or gaming music, set works, Element 1 repertoire, or a particular composer. Whatever the starting point, the compulsory written statement

(which informs Assessment Criteria A and D) should cite relevant listening influences and explain the context and musical purpose of candidates' intentions. A bar-by-bar analysis of the piece is not necessary; neither is too much extra-musical detail. A few written statements were very brief, and perhaps not written until submissions were complete. The best examples gave an informed flavour of the piece, identifying specific works and sometimes linked them to the structure of the piece through reference to specific compositional devices.

The length requirement for Element 2 compositions is quite short and therefore candidates are encouraged to work to a defined structure that enables them to control their ideas through a range of compositional techniques. The assessment descriptors make frequent reference to the basic elements of music (such as pitch, rhythm, harmony, tonality and texture) and the best examples showed proficiency in handling several of these in the course of the composition. If candidates write in a style such as minimalism, it may be difficult for them to demonstrate a range of appropriate techniques in a submission of only two minutes. Candidates must write for at least two instruments. Some candidates were very ambitious and, with the help of music technology, wrote successfully for large orchestral resources. However, bigger is not necessarily better and some of the most original and memorable compositions were written as duets or trios, and then recorded live by the candidate and other musicians. If compositions include improvised elements, then full details of the input of the performers must be included with the submission.

Most candidates included a score, but for some musical technology programs, a written account of the compositional process is more appropriate. The best of these were as easy to follow as a score, with timings, screen shots and even audio clips informing the process, and the finished products (not necessarily using expensive software) demonstrated high production values. However, some candidates failed to provide enough information about the processes and technological input, which sometimes limited marks in Assessment Criterion D (Communication). Many candidates recorded their work using a score-writing program. This is not necessarily a quick process, and the finished product will only be as expressive as the detail included on the score. It is nearly always possible to mix down so that the status of the parts (particularly solo lines) is clear, and time should be devoted to this significant part of the creative process. Although the work must be entirely that of the candidate, it is acceptable for teachers to monitor progress closely and intervene at this stage if they feel it appropriate.

When assessing submissions, the page 26 syllabus guidance on using a levels-based mark scheme and the bullet points which inform each assessment criterion are particularly helpful, In Element 1, assessing fluency and accuracy and realisation of performance, marking should be undertaken with copies of the music. The most common reason for mark adjustments was that the work was placed in the correct band for each criterion, but not at the appropriate level within it. If centres have enough candidates to send a sample of 10 candidates' work, they should include candidates at the top and bottom of the range and try and spread the others as evenly across the mark distribution as possible. If the lowest-marked folio is incomplete, then it may be appropriate to send the work of an additional candidate in the range. With very large entries, it is useful to provisionally assess, then place candidates in rank order before finalising marks.

Other administrative points

- There is a checklist for submissions on page 24 of the syllabus.
- Introductions to Element 1 performance should be limited to name and candidate number. These can be captions on the video, if preferred.
- A sound check before recording Element 1 will ensure an appropriate balance between candidate and accompaniment. Please send copies of the music performed – these will be requested if not included.
- Check that composition printouts are complete, with the written statement included and the pages in the correct order.
- Check the addition of marks on the WMS and their transfer to the CASF and the MS1 mark sheet.
- Ensure that recordings have burned to the DVD or CD (if used) and retain a copy of the files in case further copies are required.

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| Paper 9483/03 |
| Extended Performance |

Key messages

- The repertoire chosen for the performance should reflect a consistent musical focus.
- One piece from the performance programme should be discussed in detail in the research report.
- The judgements in the report should be supported by carefully chosen audio excerpts, recorded on USB or CD.

General comments

Examiners marked performances from a wide range of musical styles and traditions, and most candidates made appropriate repertoire choices. Piano, voice and guitar were the most popular disciplines, but orchestral, jazz and ethnic instruments were also well represented. Most candidates coped well with performing for an extended period, and there was much evidence of excellent support from accompanists, technicians and fellow ensemble performers. Standards of recording were generally very high, but centres are encouraged to undertake a thorough sound check to ensure an appropriate balance between candidate and accompaniment. Singers are welcome to use microphones, but teachers should ensure that the ambient sound is a true representation of the candidate's voice, without excessive reverb or other effects.

The syllabus requires candidates to choose music that represents a 'single focus from any tradition'. In assessment criteria D and E, candidates are credited for their ability to perform with contextual understanding within the chosen performing focus, and to make interpretative connections between research elements and performing outcomes. High marks in these criteria are only possible when candidates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of a specific style. Appropriate themes included those linked by a particular composer, style period or specific genre: for example, 'the songs of Alan Menken', 'movements from Mozart piano sonatas', or '70's rock music'. Teachers and candidates should be wary of 'development of' themes, or those in which the focus is extra-musical, or driven by lyrical or biographical content. Performances with an inconsistent focus are unlikely to reach the top mark band in Assessment Criterion E, and may also be adversely affected in D, where they are credited for performing with contextual understanding of conventions within the chosen performing focus.

The research report requires candidates to compare two performances of **one** piece that they have included in their Extended Performance programme, supported by carefully selected audio extracts. The key word here is extracts – merely citing complete YouTube performances in the bibliography does not enable candidates to adequately demonstrate what they have heard. The report should be appropriately referenced, with footnotes if appropriate, and the audio examples should be carefully linked to the relevant passages in the text. Some candidates provided suitable audio but failed to document it appropriately in the text. The best examples made relevant interpretative points (often with score extracts) and then referenced audio clips to exemplify the point made. Assuming that the Examiner will search the internet to find the relevant recording, listen to all of it, and then work out what part of the track the candidate is referring to, is not appropriate for the task.

However, many reports had lengthy and varied bibliographies, and Examiners were pleased to see that, in some cases, video interviews, documentaries and podcasts had proved a useful source of information. Some candidates compared all the pieces in their programme, and therefore (in a report of 1500 words or fewer) failed to demonstrate the depth of detail required at this level. Others subjectively critiqued performances, rather than comparing them. Candidates should be encouraged to limit their analysis of the chosen piece to interpretative matters, rather than a bar-by-bar technical discussion of structure, harmony. and tonality. Biographical details of composers and performers should be avoided unless they are directly relevant to the chosen repertoire. Many candidates write about the positive effect that a particular interpretation has had on their own playing, but it is also fine to take an opposite view when reflecting on their own performance

choices. Candidates should be encouraged to develop an appropriate technical vocabulary for their instrument or voice, and to be aware of contextual matters, for example the impact of historically informed performance styles, or the merits of studio versus live performances in popular music.

Most candidates were very well prepared for their extended performance, and there was usually a palpable sense of occasion evident in the recording, often aided by a small audience. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria: it is not enough just to play or sing the notes accurately; Examiners are looking for good technical skills and an informed understanding of the interpretative conventions appropriate to the chosen style or genre. It is worth experimenting with recording levels or microphone placement to ensure that subtleties of dynamic and expressive detail are audible in the submitted video. There is no requirement to perform from memory, but music stands must be placed so that the candidate is in full view of the camera. Some singers never looked up from their music, and sang into the stand for the entire performance, thus impeding their musical communication – particularly significant in relation to assessment criterion E. Sometimes candidates may need to re-tune after an item – this is fine, but the camera should be left running while this takes place. Examiners are looking not only for an accurate and technically secure performance, but also one that conveys a sense of informed engagement with the repertoire. Candidates who convey this usually score well in assessment criteria D and E

Finally, a few administrative points:

- Please use the checklist on page 36 of the syllabus when preparing submissions for despatch. Centres are contacted if essential items, including copies of the music performed, are omitted. Please include a signed cover sheet for each candidate and include details of the work submitted for 9483/04 or 9483/05 as appropriate. Centres are reminded that there should not be any duplication of work across components.
- Please check that all files will open, play and are relevant to the examination. Audio excerpts should be cross-checked against the text of the research report before burning to CD.
- Please check that the music copies are in the same order as the actual performance.
- Please send all components separately and not on the same USB or DVD.

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Paper 9483/04
Extended Composition

Key messages

- Candidates must fully explain all composing resources and tools used, digital or otherwise.
- A 'taught' component of the course might enable candidates to appreciate the vast range of score/audio editing possibilities in the technology packages used for their work and to improve their skills in this area.
- Each candidate should take responsibility for the submission of audio evidence (research tracks) and their own composition recording on a single CD or USB. Centre compilation of tracks has sometimes resulted in the omission of vital evidence.
- Please do not combine materials for different components in a single package or on the same USB.

General comments

The general level of achievement was good with candidates taking the opportunity to explore music that had stimulated their curiosity.

Centres with good systems in place for examined coursework were able to support candidates well. Candidates were able to rely on teachers for advice and guidance in the research process and could reflect on progression and achievement in their creative work. A wider sphere of friends, musicians and academic/practical teaching staff were able to provide critical feedback in simply listening to the work at various stages of composing.

Comprehensive completion of the Cover Sheet for each candidate is essential. This includes providing information where required about the alternative component taken by the candidate. Centres are reminded that there should be no significant overlap in the content of different components. The syllabus encourages breadth of subject focus and repertoire between the options 03, 04 and 05.

Comments of specific tasks

A   Research report

Candidates who understood the value of the research journal approach as outlined in the syllabus were able to construct meaningful research reports, having consistently logged the details of their discoveries in a systematic way. The most successful reports carefully addressed each of the assessment criteria stipulations.

Given the highly individual nature of composing work, each research report was correspondingly unique.

- Some candidates recognised their own weakness in matters of harmony for example and used their analysis of relevant music to improve their ability to work effectively with the language of tonality/jazz harmony/modal traditions or minimalistic harmonic practice, for example.
- Other areas where candidates gained expertise via an analytic research approach included the construction of textures, exploration of the possibilities of composing for a specific instrument or improving understanding in the use of certain notation or recording technologies.
- Audio examples in support of the research report were often edited but illustrated rather basic sources of elements such as trill, pedal, use of fortissimo. Audio evidence of moods without sufficient musically analytic reasoning were too vague to be of value.
- Focused audio examples illustrating the effective use of modulation, the successful shaping of melodic or harmonic materials, or the developmental aspects of rhythmic invention within a motif, for example, evidenced more in-depth evaluation.

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- Some candidates did not include any reflection as part of the research report. Teachers have a vital role in explaining what reflective practice is and how candidates might express their personal reflections on the genesis and process of their work, its challenges and opportunities together with reflection on outcomes by means of post composing analysis.
- References to research sources were often not detailed enough. A bibliography will almost always be an expected element of research. A discography might demonstrate wider general listening but the track list must be fully and clearly documented with academic protocols followed in terms of performer details, dates, record label etc.
- Some candidates mistakenly described their composition rather than the process: the how and why.
- Some candidates did not understand the weighting of the research report – 20% of the overall marks. By submitting a brief half-page commentary with no reference to music studied, they limited their access to the full range of marks.

B/C   Shaping of ideas; structure / Working with ideas; compositional techniques

An important indication of engagement with the task was the provision of a title for the composition. A title often provided an overall indication about the composing intention for the listener.

There were some exceptional compositions where candidates took great care in the selection and crafting of their initial ideas. As to be expected, the range of possibilities in terms of genre, resources, style and tradition was extensive. Film music and songs of a fairly predictable nature were popular choices. Composing music for an already well-known film score such as Star Wars or Spiderman often produced scores with too much similarity to the original. More successful candidates imagined music for pre-existing silent movies, for example, or composed genuinely programmatic music that portrayed a narrative in a cinematic way.

Composing music of at least six minutes duration presented a considerable challenge for some candidates. Many found it essential to think carefully about structure: how to section their work. The submission of some multi-movement pieces was successful where the sections/movements were linked by theme or material. Candidates should always have, as a principal focus, a demonstration of extended writing in their composing rather than the presentation of multiple, often unrelated snapshots. Candidates are required to demonstrate how to use techniques to manage and develop their ideas. In weaker submissions, there was a lack of clear focus or literal repetition with only a change of instrumentation (a valid option if used in moderation) to represent development.

Modulation was an underused compositional technique with many tonal pieces never moving from the tonic key or centre for the entire duration of the music. A small number of candidates mentioned a purposeful plan for varying their use of keys. They understood the need for variety of tonality (including using minor key or modal options) in a composition of 6 – 8 minutes duration.

D   Use of medium and texture

Some highly successful submissions used acoustic or electronic resources or a mixture of both. Some candidates pointed to the weakness of the technology in not representing the sound of ethnic or historic instruments authentically, for example. Choice of sonic resources are often made early in the composing process. Candidates must research and use technology that will support their aims.

Candidates choosing to compose for chamber ensembles should be careful to distinguish between string sections and solo voicings. This is important for experiencing an authentic sound for composing and recording purposes.

There was some successful, imaginative use of large orchestral forces but others that were not as successful in the use of resources of this size. Here again, some use of the research element of this component could include attention to aspects of orchestration/use of medium, in the music selected for analysis.

In the use of digital resources, candidates must give a full and detailed account of the use of any automated processes and account for the creative processes used to manipulate and transform existing samples or loops, for example.

E   Communication

The presentation of scores for assessment was varied. Successful candidates considered the following points to help them produce a high-quality product:

- Scores printed on both sides.
- Although a full scoring of page 1, with every instrument fully named, is a standard requirement of professional scores, candidates should subsequently use abbreviated instrument names and make use of the hide stave facility when instruments have prolonged passages of rests.
- The page layout should be sensible in terms of the numbers of bars per pages, but fonts must not be so small as to produce barely legible scores.

Many candidates had only experienced their acoustic work aurally via Sibelius or MuseScore for example and did not have the opportunity to discover the possible shortcomings or successes of live realisation. Some sequenced recordings demonstrated that candidates had worked hard to present an authentic aural experience for the listener with close attention to expressive realisation of the score markings (dynamics, articulation and tempi changes, for example). Candidates working in an electronic medium or with electro-acoustic possibilities often showed skill and understanding of the more sophisticated use of technology programmes and where a separate report in place of a score was submitted, took care to add detail.

Final comments

Many aspects of the composing of music across several decades have made use of automated processes from digital software that notates and replays the composer's ideas to Digital Audio Workstations that incorporate possibilities for creating, manipulation, editing, mixing and much more.

It has always been a requirement that the research report or the document in place of a score adequately explains how these resources are used. Provision of initial samples, for example, to then compare with a candidate's edited/manipulated version, is vital. This has its parallel in the world of acoustic composition where candidates might use a borrowed theme or chord sequence, for example, to write a series of variations. Candidates are required to present the original materials (notated or in audio) and credit is awarded for candidates' inventive use of the materials within the broader context of their own work.

There is no place within this composing component for the use of artificial intelligence to simulate human thinking. The syllabus is centred on the principle of human creativity. Any ambiguity in the presentation of material, information and explanations risks a candidate not receiving credit for their work.

MUSIC

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Key messages

- Music and its analysis must be the focus of the Investigation.
- Submissions should be clearly presented with pages attached and should include a signed cover sheet.

General comments

There were some well-planned and supported work from candidates who started from a point of curiosity and enthusiasm. The development of their research over the year's work was well communicated in the reflective statement.

Centres did not always fully understand the mandatory requirement to fully complete the Cover Sheet. Some sheets were simply signed without providing the additional information requested. Candidates must provide concise but meaningful details of the focus and repertoire where 03 Extended Performing is the chosen option in addition to 05 Investigating Music. Similarly, if 04 Extended Composition is chosen, candidates must complete the Cover Sheet in the specified box giving details such as the title, medium, influential music analysed, style etc. The instructions for completion of the Cover Sheet make it clear that overlap between the options must be avoided.

Please ensure that documents for different components are not packaged together. Audio materials in support of the work for Extended Performance, Extended Composition or Investigating Music must be compiled separately. Although some centres acted to minimise the use of multiple USBs by combing audio material on a single devise for all candidates, this unfortunately led to omitted tracks for some candidates. Too often, references made to tracks in the text were not included on the USB/CD.

A significant minority of submissions inappropriately interpreted the syllabus requirements. Candidates must not submit an additional e-version of the essay on USB, with instructions to access listening clips via URLs, as this method does not replace the need for carefully selected and edited audio extracts. Submission of whole tracks with timings is also an unacceptable method of presentation. Candidates should make use of editing software to provide focus and clarity for the reader via a short, edited audio extract.

Choice of research title/question

Taking time to carefully consider the scope and possibilities within a research title or topic was crucial to eventual success. Many candidates benefitted from a range of advice as they sought to establish and frame the parameters of their work.

There was wide range of submissions across a broad spectrum of musical possibilities. Examples of these included a focus on music of a period/composer/genre/artist/tradition. Many candidates started from a point of existing enthusiasm and looked to deepen their knowledge and understanding, but some candidates deliberately set out to investigate unfamiliar music, convinced of the benefits of widening their own musical knowledge and horizons.

Some investigations successfully focused on a musical individual and framed their research in terms of who had influenced them/their influences on others. They produced sufficient analysis of carefully chosen pieces of music in their narrative to meet the syllabus requirements. Some examples were Stravinsky, Sondheim, Hendrix, Zimmer, Clapton and Kanye West but a common mistake in this approach was to focus on contextual information and the personal life of artists with insufficient information and in-depth analysis of carefully selected music.

Leitmotif was a popular topic this year, particularly in its perceived relevance to film and video-gaming. Many candidates relied on the numerous websites that give detail of tracking motifs through musicals, film, or video-game music, and there was some evidence that some candidates had copied from these sites. Some candidates successfully used a range of resources to develop a good understanding of the historic context of leitmotif in the hands of Liszt, Wagner, Elgar, or Korngold, before moving into the world of Anime: the use of leitmotif in the music of Joe Hisaishi, for example.

The research statement

The important element, sometimes completely missing, was to include reflection. Teachers might find it useful to raise the question with their candidates from the outset, 'What is reflective practice and what does it mean in a research context?'.

Many candidates found it easy to talk about the process of their work and provide a description of the various aspects of their research but did not address important questions such as 'What were the challenges?' 'How did I overcome them?'; 'Why did I have to re-think my focus?'; 'Looking back, how would I critically evaluate my work?' Also of relevance are the questions, 'What skills have I acquired?' 'Are there any lessons learned for future research work?'

Resources

When so much information of variable quality is available online it becomes even more important to equip candidates with the skills to test and verify the statements they read from all sources. Candidates should be advised about reputable authors within specific fields and encouraged to explore a wide range of books, podcasts or talks presented by significant scholars or experts in their specialities. Candidates should be aware of the concept and importance of peer review. Candidates may have access to the personal expertise of professional musicians via interview or questionnaires. Findings can be summarised in the body of the essay but transcriptions or other evidence can be included in appendix material where it does not contribute to the overall word count.

References and tracks

The assessment criteria headings make it clear that evidence of Listening and Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary account directly for 40 per cent of the marks awarded. A further 20 per cent of marks are awarded for Communication and substantiation of judgements. It is therefore vital that candidates maximise their potential to access the full range of marks in the following ways:

- Reference all audio and research materials according to academic research conventions.
- Provide a clear and detailed audio track list (a discography often points to wider listening; a track list accounts for the specific audio selected to illustrate the essay text).
- Make precise references to aid the reader's understanding of an analytic observation by providing edited audio extracts.
- Occasionally, it may be necessary to include longer audio extracts, (particularly of more obscure repertoire) to provide a wider contextual picture.
- Communicate a balance of findings, crediting the comments of others alongside independent judgements, explaining, evidencing and substantiating opinions expressed.
- Evolve a personal writing style that avoids presenting a combination of quotations of the work of others.
- Check and recheck, read and reread to ensure that all in-text references connect accurately to citations and audio materials presented.
- Check that the USB or CD can be accessed and contains all the materials intended.

There were several exceptional submissions this session that communicated the outcome of curiosity-led research, in essays that were both exciting and informative to read.