

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01
Listening

Key messages

- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant and focused

General

The general standard was broadly in line with previous sessions, although the November series usually has a smaller number of entries. The strongest responses were of a high standard, and there was some very mature thinking and extensive musical experience in evidence in the best work. Some candidates had diligently and keenly studied the Prescribed and Core works, knew them in fine detail, and were able to construct intelligent and focused responses. Some candidates would have benefited from including more detail in their answers by expanding their musical experiences to better inform their responses.

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others included lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not contribute significantly to the response.

Introductions, especially where they contained material not directly relevant to the question, tended to detract from the quality of a response, not least because the time taken to write them could have been more productively spent providing more detail in examples; responses were generally more successful when they were efficiently expressed, entirely relevant and non-repetitive. The quality of a response and its suitability against the criteria is what dictates the marks awarded.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good.

This session had a reduction in the number of responses which included an unasked for chronological commentary, with candidates focusing on highlighting significant features instead. **Section A**, with its requirement for a more detailed familiarity with the set works, was sometimes less well-answered than **Section B** and **C** questions, although there was generally more consistency across the three sections compared with previous sessions. In a small number of scripts, the brevity of responses (e.g. fewer than three sentences) prevented candidates from being able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity; there were also some longer responses which avoided relevant points.

The quoting of track timings is not required, as Examiners do not have access to the same recordings used in any given examination session. Tempi vary wildly between interpretations of the set and core works; it is more sensible for candidates to refer to the structure of a piece of music when locating examples, and/or describe the music clearly and chronologically where appropriate.

All candidates answered the correct number of questions, though occasionally the correct question number was not written on the script.

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the strongest responses provided vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Some responses seemed to be written on a first or second hearing of the set work, and needed to provide more formal detail, as well as describe with more clarity what was being heard.

Question 1

This question was generally well handled. A good number of candidates began with a broad definition of Sonata Form, and a few went little further after that. The focus of the question was specifically on Mozart, but this was not always the case in the responses. Few candidates discussed much beyond the essential chronology of events, and the presence of the introduction in Mozart 39 caused some difficulties in understanding its place in the Sonata Form context. The Development section was not generally well-known. A few appreciated Beethoven's coda and tried to contrast his almost monothematic approach.

Question 2

This question was not chosen by very many candidates, but was generally answered well. There was much description of the themes themselves, so that variation technique was often relegated to the latter, and less well-focused, parts of the responses. There was a general feeling that candidates knew the opening of the prescribed works, but many answers became generalised in the later stages. Some candidates struggled to select just one variation from the Trio, most offering some rather general comments once their description of the symphony had stopped.

Question 3

Although it was the most popular choice in **Section A**, this question was not as well answered as others. Again, the later stages of the movement were often described in less detail, as was the middle, with some very vague descriptions. There were a few examples of a 'prepared' essay on the keyed trumpet, which did not fit the question well.

Section B

Although close familiarity with Core Works is to be commended, the strongest candidates showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question. Here, examples should still be clearly located, but it is also important to explain *how* effects have been achieved, which demonstrates understanding. The most successful responses were firmly focused on the question and did not make reference to extraneous matters.

Question 4

This was the most popular choice in **Section B**, and candidates generally answered well. Some candidates drifted too often from a focus on dancing; such observations indicated familiarity with the music, but could not contribute to evidence of understanding in relation to the question. Most candidates could select the ballroom scene and the village wedding (and sometimes the nymphs) as appropriate examples of dance, but were rather more hard-pressed to establish what it was *musically* that created that effect. There was much talk of 'mood', vague suggestions of atmosphere, and implications of specific orchestrations. Occasionally the river danced too, which was acceptable where it was convincingly described.

Question 5

This question was the least popular choice, but only by a little compared with **Question 6**. 'Slow, quiet, high' were the recurrent answers here, exemplified to a greater or lesser extent from the music. Some commonly-offered features (dissonance, changing rhythmic emphasis, etc.) did not seem to suggest calm.

Question 6

It was clear that few candidates had studied examples of 'night' music *with* words. Quite a few stated categorically that the freedom from imposed text was always more successful in portraying 'night', but without offering anything *with* words to support or challenge their contention. Several seemed to misunderstand the question, and referred to poems on which they claimed the music was based (or titles of pieces, or other commentaries), forgetting that audiences are generally not aware of such texts. 'Music with words' (i.e. vocal music) was mostly absent from the discussions. The strongest responses discussed a range of night-time moods.

Section C

The strongest candidates organised their thoughts logically and presented them in an orderly essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters, drawn from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience. Stronger responses drew upon a wide range of examples, showing excellent contextual knowledge. To be thorough or even comprehensive, candidates need to consider questions from multiple angles; for the top band, arguments must be logical and convincing, with no confusion. Weaker responses were extensive, but somewhat confused, with the question not being properly addressed or understood.

Question 7

This was the least popular choice in **Section C**. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of modern day issues, but this was generally not effectively supplemented with knowledge of historical matters. Very few addressed how critics can be of value to all **three** of audience, composers and performers.

Question 8

Relatively few candidates chose to answer this question. A limited understanding of texture was in evidence, with some un-focused responses. Specific musical examples were most helpful in illustrating different textures.

Question 9

This was the most popular choice for **Section C** by a large margin, and most candidates answered it well. Most responses listed many contemporary software/apps and thought it was 'a good thing'. Sometimes, historical perspective opened up the live vs recorded debate, and there were some instances of discussion of printed music, but the idea of 'access' mostly did not penetrate beyond the ubiquitous availability of music for *listening*. Candidates expressed some concerns, more about piracy and loss of earnings than loss of quality in either creative or audio fields. The idea of 'free' access seemed to ignore the cost of all this technology.

Question 10

This question was not very popular, and was not generally well-answered. Most candidates who responded could recognise timpani, but many did not address the difference between tuned and untuned percussion. Stronger responses included a wide range of specific musical examples to illustrate points.

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

Key messages

- Read the published 'Notes for Guidance', which are available on the website.
- Make sure that the two disciplines in Element 2 are different, and a true extension of the skills demonstrated in Element 1.
- There must be 3 assessments and recordings of each discipline for Element 2 and copies of the music for the final assessment should be included in the package of coursework.
- Element 4 commentaries in place of a musical score should be a detailed and vivid account of the composition process rather than a discussion of the context in which the piece came to be written.

This season, Moderators were pleased to receive some excellent submissions across all four Elements. Most work arrived in good time and was well organised, with all attendant paperwork present and correct (including copies of the music for Elements 1 and 2) and DVDs that were easy to navigate and play. Occasionally, discs arrive damaged: it is always worth packing them particularly carefully, preferably in the middle of the coursework, which does some afford extra protection. Prompt replacement of damaged discs, if requested, is always appreciated. There is a wealth of useful information about preparing and assessing coursework in the current Teachers' Guide, available on the website. Assessors are also reminded that each centre receives a Moderators' Report on publication of results, which will detail the specific reasons for any adjustment in the marks originally awarded.

Nearly every candidate submitted Element 1 work and there were some outstanding performances across a wide variety of musical genres. Almost invariably, the most successful recitals were those where the candidate was not playing at the absolute limit of their technical ability, and centres are reminded that there is no added value in the mark scheme for particularly challenging music. Moderators were pleased to see an audience present at a number of recitals and it is clear that many candidates do rise to the occasion when playing to a sympathetic and appreciative crowd. Unless the repertoire is specifically intended to be performed solo, performances should be accompanied, especially if there is a discrete part for an accompanying instrument, and failure to do this may well result in a downward adjustment in the Category E (Stylistic Understanding) mark. Centres are also reminded that the complete performance should be recorded in one take. The majority of assessments were accurate in this Element, but teachers are reminded to consider the published criteria carefully to ensure consistency, regardless of the tradition, the mark range, or the overall standard of the centre's submission.

Element 2 was, as ever, a celebration of varied music-making across the world and many recordings revealed multi-talented candidates who are highly committed to practical music-making, both in and out of the classroom. Many candidates scored highly in this Element, but in a minority of submissions the marks were rather generous and had to be adjusted, usually because there were fewer than three assessments for each discipline, or insufficient extension of skills between the discrete activities undertaken. Assessments should be over a period of not less than six months, so that progress can be accurately gauged. Moderators were pleased to see some ensemble performances recorded at concerts (occasionally conducted or accompanied by other candidates), and were particularly grateful when centres ensured that the candidate being assessed was both visible and audible. Copies of the music for the final assessment should be included in the coursework package.

Submissions in Element 3 were generally of a very high standard and most teachers evidently put a great deal of effort into constructing a course which plays to candidates' strengths. It was particularly pleasing to see submissions that, as well as chorale settings, included 2-part counterpoint, Classical and Romantic-style song accompaniments and string quartets. Occasionally, the marking was a little lenient, particularly so if the assessor's comments and corrections regarding each piece of work were not included in the submission. Whilst teacher comments are not taken into account in the actual marking, they are invaluable when assessing progress.

Element 4 compositions adopted a wide variety of genres and approaches, and it was good to see many versatile candidates who can compose in more than one style. Centres are reminded that, whilst a musical score is not mandatory, recordings and commentaries are essential. The latter should be a particularly detailed and vivid account of the composition process if a score is not submitted. Failure to do this may well result in a downward adjustment of the marks for Category E (Notation and Presentation). Moderators appreciated very much the live recordings of compositions produced by a few centres, and it is clear that candidates derive considerable benefit from hearing – or even playing – their own work. One or two assessments were rather lenient, particularly in Category E. A mark in the highest band is not appropriate if a score produced using music technology is devoid of essential musical detail such as marks of expression and tempo, phrasing and articulation.

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<p>Paper 9703/03 Performing</p>

Key messages

- Candidates should select focused repertoire appropriate to their technical capability
- In their spoken introduction candidates should demonstrate understanding of their chosen focus

General comments

Candidates had prepared well for this component, with some demonstrating a high level of accomplishment and all reaching at least a good standard. There were outstanding performances on flute, clarinet, violin, 'cello, guitar, piano and voice.

Almost all candidates selected repertoire which enabled them to demonstrate their capability in the full range of performing skills demanded by the syllabus. A few chose music which was beyond their current technical ability, thus limiting their access to the higher mark bands across the assessment criteria. They were often too concerned with getting the notes right to be able to demonstrate wider skills such as realisation of performance markings, aural awareness and stylistic understanding. Candidates are advised to choose a programme of music with which they are comfortable, rather than testing their technique beyond its limits.

Candidates are required to identify a focus for their performance in this component and a wide range of suitable repertoire choices were made this session. Some candidates explored the music of a single composer: examples being arias from Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas', Bach keyboard suites, Beethoven violin sonatas, music for 'cello by Saint-Saëns and the guitar music of the metal band Pantera. Others considered a genre of music: examples included classical piano sonatinas, French solo flute music of the 1900s, the saxophone in 1960s jazz and contemporary musical theatre.

Almost all candidates explained aspects of their focus in their spoken introduction. Most gave some insight into the features of the music, though some did little more than name the pieces they were about to perform. Candidates need to demonstrate understanding of their chosen focus in their spoken introduction if they are to access the higher mark bands in assessment criterion E, Stylistic Understanding.

Centres provided suitable venues for the performances to take place. Most candidates played/sang to an audience, large or small, and presented their recital in a manner appropriate to a true performance. Centres provided able accompanists, and backing tracks, when used, had been well chosen. Some candidates played with a live combo of musicians. In this instance, particular care must be taken to ensure that there is a good aural balance between the candidate and combo players. On the whole, microphones, cameras and music stands had been suitably placed to enable the Examiner to hear and see the candidate clearly. In some cases however, cameras were rather distant, giving only a general view.

DVD recordings were of good quality and almost all centres provided copies of the music performed, as is required.

Centres are reminded that submissions for the different components of the examination should be packaged separately as they are needed by different Examiners.

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<p>Paper 9703/04 Composing</p>
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Key messages

Centres are encouraged to take care with the checking that all documents and audio submissions are complete and fully accessible

Candidates should remember to refer to and explain the importance of relevant listening in their commentaries.

General comments

There were many successful and interesting submissions this session, once again demonstrating a very wide variety of styles and approaches with a small but significant proportion incorporating cultural influences from the candidates' own experiences.

The commentary required for each composition

We continue to encourage candidates to listen widely and to refer to composers and their work in their commentaries. An interest in the craft of other composers is a long-established means of investigating, analysing, questioning and being generally more curious about the way creative sound tasks can be approached.

Concise commentaries, which are informative about the *process* of composing rather than a description of the composition itself, assist the examiner in understanding the context of a candidate's work.

The commentary in place of a score

There are circumstances in which compositions cannot be notated by conventional scoring using notation but candidates are reminded that where this type of notation is possible it must be used to communicate the composer's requirements and intentions. When a commentary is used in place of a score, the fullest details of sounds, manipulations and realisation must be given. This is particularly important when technology is used as a creative resource in the composing process.

An audio performance of a composition in a jazz or popular music style, for example, where a candidate has chosen not to submit a correlating score to accompany it, must provide a commentary of full details,

explaining who the performers are in a recording: have the tracks been layered by the composer performing all parts? Have friends / family / teachers / others been used as performing resources for some of the parts?

providing an explanation of how the composer's ideas and intentions have been communicated to a soloist / drummer, etc.

Listening influences

Whilst listening influences have been flagged as an important part of learning to compose, candidates should understand the importance of not modelling their own ideas too closely on the ideas of others. They may learn a great deal generally about various elements of the creative process by a thorough investigation of established music. They must, however, avoid the direct use of ideas of others.

Materials

A starting point can be as simple as, 'What are my ideas?' 'What resources shall I use?' 'What stylistic / cultural ideas are influencing the direction I might go in?'

Occasionally, it may be musically and artistically desirable to 'borrow' music from another source as part of a submission. This must always be fully acknowledged in the commentary and candidates will not be credited with the creation of this material. They can gain credit for the way the material is used, transformed or developed. Examples of this might include the use of a theme in a variations structure or reference to a small amount of 'borrowed' material for specific historic or cultural references in a narrative composition.

Some candidates included the use of sound effects such as crying or explosions in their composing. Candidates should consider whether this approach enhances or undermines the musical integrity of their work. An alternative would be to consider how the music itself might achieve such effects metaphorically; this can be more powerful than a literal sound effect: composers often trust the music to achieve more than literal realism can.

The scope of candidates' ideas this session included:

- pieces for a single instrument and accompaniment
- programmatic composing, having been inspired by the study of set works
- the use of electronics to create ideas, perhaps linked to genres such as video-game or film sound tracks
- compositions where the ensemble of specifically chosen timbres formed an essential part of the idea generation, e.g. prepared piano and tuned percussion; string quartet; mixtures of ethnic and western sound sources

Candidates should not attempt to submit what amounts to unscripted free improvisation without a score in the guise of 'composing'. The composing skills of planning, development, use contrast and continuity, unfolding, structuring and craftsmanship etc. are almost all absent from work of this type, whatever the level of skill in a performing context.

Use of Materials

When presenting and developing materials, candidates should be wary of exact repetition of material already stated. A study of the works of composers will quickly reveal the often subtle but intricate ways in which they alter the presentation of ideas using rhythmic augmentation, pitch elaboration, instrumentation changes, motivic focussing, etc.

Structure

Candidates should be alert to the issue of length. The quality of ideas and their use is of prime importance; a shorter but fast-moving composition often contains more substance than a longer slower moving piece. A submission that is substantially shorter than the syllabus guidelines is unlikely to be able to demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the technical and artistic processes required in creativity at this level.

The structure of theme and variations is consistently popular with some candidates but they should ensure a comprehensive range of approaches to the theme. Shortcomings in the use of this structure included insufficient harmonic variety with a tendency to remain in the original key throughout. Candidates' melodic manipulation and further invention can often benefit from persistent re-working and refinement.

Use of Medium and Texture

Candidates are reminded to fully identify and name the various sounds they might be using in compositions using digital or manipulated sound sources. Several submissions made creative use of a range of effects pedals or finger / hand techniques for electric guitars in their work but these should always be clearly named and indicated on the score.

A number of submissions showed informed understanding of the woodwind timbres they had selected with outcomes demonstrating highly effective use of the timbres in solo use and in combination.

Notation and Presentation

The use of articulation markings in woodwind writing is one of the ways candidates can show that they understand the very different sounds produced in tongued / staccato passages in contrast to legato phrases. Some candidates give adequate attention to tempi, expression marks and similar details but did not use any phrasing indications at all.

Candidates must always check their scores when they move from a recording software tool to a notation software programme. Some scores had parts that were left in impossible ranges because all the music was transferred to treble clef instead of taking account of the relative pitches of instruments. The final editing is an essential part of enabling the full range of marks to be available to candidates.

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Paper 9703/05
Investigation and Report

Key messages

- Candidates should seek out good quality, authoritative information and performances using a range of resources
- Avoid duplication of material with other components, such as the prescribed and core works for the listening paper
- A cover sheet must always be included, verifying the authenticity of the work and allowing the candidate (not the teacher) to explain 'the link'
- CDs must always be labelled with indelible ink (not a paper sticker) and checked thoroughly before despatch

General comments

Centres are asked to talk to their candidates in detail about the scope of the authentication statement and the seriousness of the explanations of plagiarism. Candidates cannot be credited for any information that is merely copied and pasted from on-line websites. Additionally, such copied material, particularly if it is unacknowledged will always be seen as an attempt to present the work of others as the candidate's own and this could have potentially serious consequences for the candidate.

Candidates are reminded that although the set-works for study in the Listening paper may provide an initial prompt for thinking about this component, they should not duplicate material from their learning in the Listening paper and its context. They cannot receive any credit for observations that clearly overlap in this way. Some candidates included analysis of the Smetana / Debussy / Berlioz / Haydn pieces. It is possible to make a link with the performance of Romantic period repertoire, for example, but different pieces to those in the Listening component should be used.

Aural familiarity

The required, edited CD is an important and essential means by which the candidate can demonstrate and provide evidence of the ways in which they are *hearing* the music. The identification and selection of pieces and the specific portions of music that underline a point being made, are best presented as a short clips of edited music – each example as an individual track on a CD.

Contextual understanding

Although there was some improvement in the quality of sources used by some candidates, centres should continue to encourage and advise their candidates to evaluate their sources before accepting them as authoritative. Experience is gained through exposure to the world of writing and talking about music and teachers can act as effective guides.

Analytic / technical vocabulary

Learning to talk about music with a growing technical vocabulary is a process that can be facilitated by close acquaintance with the writing and presentations of specialists in the field. Well-established performers and composers can be found on-line, talking about their work and this can be a further source of information for candidates.

Candidates often include scores of their performance pieces or related repertoire. Annotating scores with analytical observations, whether linked to the structure and composition of the piece itself or performance interpretation in a range of recordings they may have studied, is a valuable way to communicate findings

succinctly. This is fully taken into account by examiners alongside the information presented in the prose presentation of the report.

Demonstration of link

Candidates should make the link clear in their writing and references to it – how the work of the investigation and report has been relevant to their approach to performing / composing – would be expected in the course of the text. Candidates' attention can be drawn to the assessment criteria where marks are specifically allocated in this area.

Communication of findings and acknowledgements

Stronger responses not only presented carefully selected and edited tracks of relevant music but they also gave full details of the sources with performers / directors / recordings etc. fully credited in the discography. Also mentioned in the discography was wider listening that was relevant more generally and which may not have been used in the CD presentation. With this in mind, the track list and discography will almost always be presented as separate items in the submission.

Referencing source materials can be done in any way that is clear to the examiner and gives all the necessary details. Some candidates used footnotes so that references can be viewed on the same page as the quotation made. Others used a clear system that directed the reader to a reference list at the end of their report. A comprehensive bibliography will include all sources of research, including more general reading but specific references will include page numbers to pinpoint them in a precise way. Candidates should always include full source information for pictures, score extracts or diagrams when they are presented as inserts from the work of another author.

In the presentation of CDs there were a number of submissions where only a few seconds of a longer track was audible and the candidate had clearly intended a longer extract. If a CD is blank or simply contains a single track of the performing recital, for example, this can receive little or no credit.

Concluding remarks

Centres are building good practice into their support of candidates on many levels, enabling them to channel their curiosity appropriately. Occasionally a topic for which no literature exists is chosen and in this case listening and personal insight assumes a larger proportion of the work to be done. This, however, is rare and candidates should not avoid digging into the literature that does exist in books, periodicals, good quality on-line materials and other resources.

The conclusion of the candidate's own submission should above all leave the reader in no doubt as to the significance and merit of the study for the writer, and is a further opportunity to underline the link between the report and the chosen practical presentation.