

MUSIC

<p>Paper 8663/11 Listening</p>
--

Key messages

Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable
Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant and focused
Choose appropriate repertoire for comparison, focusing on music and not lyrics

General comments

The general standard has shown a continued improvement. The best responses were certainly of a very high standard, and there was some very mature thinking and extensive musical experience in evidence in the best work. Many candidates had clearly 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 could have provided greater detail in the discussion questions in particular. These candidates' musical experience also required expanding to better inform their responses.

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response. Where candidates answered a question with a response more suited to a different question, it was not possible to give full credit.

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.

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

The tendency for unasked-for 'blow-by-blow' commentaries was somewhat reduced this session, with candidates managing to highlight 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, and there was often a lack of consistency across the three sections. In some cases, 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 helpful, 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.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used 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.

- 1 This question was generally well handled. The accuracy of the commentary was important, as well as the balance between detail and what was significant.
- 2 Some candidates missed the crucial wording of the question, which asked for a comparison between the Menuet and the Trio in Mozart's movement, and only briefly a comparison with Beethoven's. Some chose to compare the whole of Mozart's work with the whole of Beethoven's. Most candidates knew the essential points for comparison, with a few covering all significant similarities and differences.
- 3 Candidates answered this question quite well on the whole. The piano's role in the three variations was well understood, as was its relationship to the other instruments. Less successful was candidates' ability to relate the variations to the Theme.

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.

- 4 Questions about Berlioz are usually very popular with candidates. Generally, there was a good understanding of the effects of dynamic contrasts, and an ability to locate significant examples. Some candidates drifted too often from a focus on dynamics, referring as well to instrumentation, tempo and texture; such observations indicated familiarity with the music, but could not contribute to evidence of understanding in relation to the question.
- 5 Usually, candidate responses to this question were a little uneven, with either the Debussy or the Smetana known better than the other. It was necessary to offer an opinion, which needed to be supported by the musical understanding; the most successful responses were more logical in this regard.
- 6 This was a less popular question, as tends to be the case with questions that do not specifically mention a Core Work. It was not well answered on the whole, with weaker responses not considering a variety of night-time moods or scenes.

Section C

The best 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.

- 7 Most candidates went for the obvious reference to patronage, which was more or less successful depending on the accuracy and depth of historical understanding. Comparisons with the modern day were generally stronger, with candidates able to draw on their own experiences.
- 8 Relatively few candidates chose to answer this question. A limited understanding of syncopation was in evidence, and surprisingly little reference to World Music styles. Specific musical examples were most helpful in illustrating different syncopations.

- 9** The interpretation of 'authenticity' tended not to relate to historically accurate performance, although candidates were able to do well even without this understanding. The better informed candidates were able to give especially pertinent examples to support their points about authenticity.
- 10** Those who answered this question were generally well informed about the trumpet, its development and its various roles. Occasional confusion arose over dates, as well as the distinction between, and chronology of, the keyed and the valve trumpets. Stronger responses included a wide range of specific musical examples to illustrate points.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 8663/06 Investigation and Report</p>

Key Messages

Candidates should be reminded that the investigation and report should involve study of pieces of music, not just a subject loosely associated with the theme of music in general.
The report should be accompanied by a CD of recorded examples of the music being investigated.

General comments

There was a wide variety of reports, with both a range of subjects and levels. A few candidates failed to note that there should be no overlap in the music chosen with Paper 1 (the 18th and 19th century Viennese tradition or music associated with Night).

Many reports did not reach the suggested length of approximately 2500 words with some very short reports. There were also cases of plagiarism, despite both the candidate and teacher signing a declaration that the work was that of the candidate. Candidates varied in their quality of referencing, some providing a detailed bibliography, noting in the text when referring to a specific source, while others referenced little or nothing and did not provide a bibliography at all.

The most successful projects were often those where the candidate had a personal link to the music they were studying. This was sometimes via the instrument they played and could involve solo or ensemble repertoire, or music from a particular culture, representing their family background. They then carefully selected pieces of music in order to illustrate the judgements they wished to make.

Weaker investigation and reports often had titles such linking music with specific areas of life and made very little reference to actual pieces of music. Candidates here were sometimes able to gain significant marks for B: Contextual understanding, but could be awarded less credit in all the other areas. Several candidates decided to investigate video game music, with varying results. The more successful investigations had a clear focus and included many carefully chosen examples to illustrate this focus.

Other candidates began promisingly. However, initial promise was sometimes unfulfilled, as candidates only briefly mentioned specific pieces of music, with perhaps just one or two points on each, or only mentioning the titles of the pieces in passing.

Finally, candidates for whom the primary mode of investigation (syllabus page 14) was listening, were consistently more successful than those candidates who had read about music on various websites.

Candidates and teachers are encouraged to read through the reports carefully before submitting them to ensure they are clear, free of error and meet all of the requirements for the task.