

# MUSIC

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Paper 9703/01

Listening

## General comments

The range of achievement was wide. Many well-prepared candidates understood and answered all the questions relevantly. Too many others, though, had come armed with a set of ready answers and did not read and answer the questions carefully enough: some seemed to have in mind a question along the lines of 'Write all you know about this piece of music'. A pleasing proportion, however, earned very good marks, the majority were solidly satisfactory, and there were only a very small number of candidates who seemed not to have covered the Syllabus in sufficient depth to reach the standard required to pass.

The Examiners were again disappointed to note the continuing trend towards treating the Core Works for **Section B** as a narrow set of 'Prescribed Works' i.e. without much evidence of having explored the wider range of repertoire that the Syllabus encourages. This impression was confirmed in the choice of questions in **Section C**: by far the most comfortable choice for most candidates was **Question 10**, i.e. the one that referred directly to contextual background to the Prescribed Works in **Section A**.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

Most answers showed a clear understanding of the changing role of the 1st violin in Haydn's second movement. Explanations were supported by recognisable references to convincing details. There was widespread understanding of technical terms such as descant, counter-melody, syncopation, chromaticism, homophony/polyphony, and these were mostly applied appropriately. Answers which focused on the role of the cello were generally less good, some very vague.

### **Question 2**

Very few candidates attempted this question. Their answers were rather weak, showing little close familiarity with the music of Schubert's third movement.

### **Question 3**

The question was posed in a straightforward way but few candidates addressed it head on. Most assumed that a comparison of the two concertos was required and many focused almost exclusively on Beethoven's innovations without explaining what the usual principal features were. Some interpreted Beethoven's concerto in terms of the French Revolution. The details offered frequently suggested considerable familiarity with the music of both concertos but the understanding of them as examples of the genre was implied rather than clearly demonstrated.

## **Section B**

### **Question 4**

Comparatively few candidates chose this question. One answer was outstanding in the insights it offered into how Mussorgsky unifies his set of pieces, identifying in detail musical techniques far more subtle than just the simple restatement of the *Promenade* theme between pictures. The majority of answers, however, dwelt too long on explaining individual pictures which was not always directly relevant. As their other example, most candidates chose the movements by Vivaldi and/or Holst that they had studied – none of these formed a 'set', which was what the question asked. To answer the question fully candidates needed to know at least one other complete set of programmatic pieces, such as Schumann's *Carnaval* or Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. Either of these would have offered a straightforward, easy to explain, contrast with the Mussorgsky.

### Question 5

Although this was a popular choice, on the whole it was not answered well. A few candidates were able to argue a view sensibly but the 'range of examples' was often narrow or lacking in specific detail. Only one candidate referred to music that lay outside the Core Works. A number of candidates answered a quite different question by comparing only what a solo piano can do with the potential of an orchestra. Many misused the word 'tonality' i.e. as a reference to instrumental 'tone-colour'.

### Question 6

There were few convincing answers to this question. Several candidates limited their discussion to arrangements, again comparing the piano and orchestral versions of *Pictures at an Exhibition* in detail. Some discussed influences, such as that of *Mars* on music for films such as *Star Wars*, but few mentioned direct use in advertisements.

## Section C

### Question 7

Very few answers addressed the question in terms of what makes a good tune, Most interpreted it as a question about the performance of melodies, the instruments used, the accompaniment, the vocal style, taking the existence of the melody itself for granted. Several asserted the need for a melody to be 'catchy' but nearly all avoided the task of defining how this could be achieved.

### Question 8

This was the least-favoured question in this section of the paper. It was usually answered in terms of those composers who have natural talent and have, apparently, no need to learn, *versus* those for whom hard graft is required.

### Question 9

Although there were some interesting accounts of different traditions few candidates went on to wrestle with the issue of contemporary influences on them.

### Question 10

This was by far the most popular question. Most candidates understood the essential differences – live/recorded music, employed/independent musicians. Some were able to explore these issues in greater depth, often showing a good knowledge of social conditions and mature reflection on their implications.

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**Paper 9703/02**  
**Practical Musicianship**

## General comments

There were some outstanding submissions for this Component, both in the various aspects of performing, and in composing. Many candidates obviously relished the opportunity to demonstrate their interpretative and creative skills.

As is usually the case in this Component, all candidates offered **Element 1**. Most chose an appropriate variety of repertoire, which enabled them to demonstrate their ability in a range of instrumental/vocal techniques. A few instrumental candidates performed just one, often short, piece and this did not always give them the opportunity to show their true capabilities.

Many singers chose to perform popular songs or songs from the shows and some these performances were excellent. However, care should be taken to ensure that songs are appropriate in terms of range and tessitura for developing voices. Several candidates disadvantaged themselves by performing repertoire that was not comfortable for them to sing, thus meaning they were straining at either the top or the bottom of their range.

For **Element 2**, many candidates had been well prepared for the two disciplines they chose. However, there were several syllabus infringements within this element. Candidates should prepare two separate disciplines, each distinct from their Element 1 performance, and their progress in each should be recorded and assessed on three separate occasions during the course. All these audio/video recordings should then be submitted together with the completed working marksheets. In this Element, the Centre assessor's comments are particularly important as the mark awarded is a reflection of the amount of effort and progress the candidate has made. This is difficult, if not impossible, to moderate if the only evidence is a mark, and a final recording. The following table, first printed in a previous Report might assist Centres in the administration of this Element.

| Date   | Activity                                 | Evidence required   |
|--|--|---|
| At start of course – at least six months before submission | Decide the two disciplines to be studied |   |
| During the course  | First interim assessment                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record audio/video evidence of work in each discipline</li> <li>Complete relevant sections on p.2 of Element 2 Working Marksheet – copy in Syllabus and Guidance for Teachers – include title/composer, candidate's role, evaluative comment</li> </ul>    |
| Later in the course  | Second interim assessment                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record audio/video evidence of work in each discipline</li> <li>Complete relevant sections on p.2 of Element 2 Working Marksheet – copy in Syllabus and Guidance for Teachers – include title/composer, candidate's role, evaluative comment</li> </ul>    |
| At the end of the course                                   | Final assessment                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record audio/video evidence of work in each discipline</li> <li>Award mark for each discipline</li> <li>Complete Working Marksheet p.2-3 making comment in support of the marks awarded</li> <li>Submit all recordings and documentation to CIE</li> </ul> |

On this occasion, there were no candidates for **Element 3**.

The number of candidates offering **Element 4** continues to rise slightly. Outcomes were very similar to last session. Where candidates used instruments they played and understood, they showed the ability to develop their ideas to create compositions of appropriate length which demonstrated good understanding of medium and texture. There were several outstanding live composition recordings, which gave candidates a real opportunity to understand how effective their music was. It is, of course, not always possible to achieve live performance in the Centre environment and there were some exemplary sequenced recordings. Other candidates, however, chose to compose for a large number of instruments of which they had little or no first hand understanding and produced sequenced recordings and scores which showed lack of attention to detail. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their composing skills through the completion of a range of short tasks before undertaking work for final assessment so that some of these problems can be resolved at an early stage.

Most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork – please remember to include the Moderator copy of the MS1 computer form and the Summary Marksheet – and provided CDs/DVDs of good quality. It is essential that a track list is provided so that candidates' work can be correctly identified.

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| <p><b>Paper 9703/03</b><br/><b>Performing</b></p> |
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Once again, it was a delight to listen to a range of very accomplished young musicians performing in their Component 3 recitals.

Almost all candidates chose repertoire of suitable length, and which was appropriate to their current ability, with music ranging from that composed in the Renaissance period to a piece commissioned especially for the performer.

A very small number of candidates selected works which were, for the present, beyond their technical capacity. They experienced difficulty in merely getting around the notes and were, thus, not able fully to demonstrate their ability to perform expressively and with aural awareness. In these instances, candidates would be well advised to choose less challenging music, which would give them greater opportunity to score highly in all the elements of the assessment criteria. The ability to produce a successful *performance* with attention to details of performing conventions and style are important parts of the examination and there is little to be gained by playing/singing music which cannot be fully accessed.

Most candidates had given due attention to the focus of their recital, which is a requirement of this Paper. However, as in previous sessions, some had clearly first chosen their repertoire and then searched for some tenuous link between pieces that might then act as a focus. This then made it difficult to present a convincing spoken introduction and often lead to marks being lost in Assessment Criterion E – Stylistic Understanding. Some Centres' candidates did not present a spoken introduction at all to their recital and so were unable to access the full range in Assessment Criterion E, which requires candidates to link the pieces they are about to perform to their focus.

Most candidates demonstrated that they had had sufficient opportunity to rehearse with accompanists or ensemble members during their preparation for the examination. Most Centres provided able accompanists – this makes a real difference to the candidates' ability to demonstrate the full range of their skills during their performance.

Audio CDs and DVDs were, for the most part, of good quality, with Centres taking care to ensure that all performers were clearly identified.

# MUSIC

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| <p><b>Paper 9703/04</b><br/><b>Composing</b></p> |
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This report contains comments and appropriate feedback on the work and assessment of candidates from this season's examination. It will focus on the positive achievement of candidates and provide guidance for the future preparation of candidates' work in composition.

## **Administration**

The majority of submissions were carefully presented portfolios containing the required elements. It is important that centres label work carefully so as to accurately identify the chosen option. Centres are reminded of the need to submit a separate recording for each candidate; in the presentation of the entire cohort from one centre tracks and titles were muddled across two CDs. The implication here is that the presentation of the recording is seen as the responsibility of the centre rather than the personal evidence of coursework documentation from an individual candidate.

## **General Comments**

It was pleasing to see an increase in the number of candidates choosing to specialise in composition and that standards achieved were generally higher, particularly at each end of the mark range. There was also clear evidence that candidates understood more fully the potential of the syllabus. Reports in previous sessions have identified the difficulty many candidates have shown in composing a relatively longer piece of approximately 8 -12 minutes. This session, however, only rarely did a candidate present a piece that was felt to be 'underweight' and it was encouraging to note that skills of variety and development seemed to be more secure in this session's submissions.

Again, as in previous years, it was highly appropriate for some candidates to include a concise written explanation of their compositional ideas or processes, particularly where a programmatic element or more complex technique had been employed that the candidate did not want to pass by without full appreciation. Whilst the inclusion of such a document in addition to the score is not a syllabus requirement it is nevertheless extremely helpful to the assessment process in some instances.

## **Materials**

A wide range of ideas provided the basic 'building blocks' for candidates' submissions. Some examples are:

- A piece for solo guitar
- A set of 3 Christmas songs for SSA and piano accompaniment
- Funk piece for Baritone sax, Fender Rhodes, lead guitar and rhythm section
- A Programmatic piece for two pianos
- A Piazzolla-inspired Tango composition
- A Jazz –style song cycle / Three Songs in a Popular style
- Mixing East and West – a meditative piece
- An orchestral film score

These examples serve to demonstrate how a single instrument, instrumental grouping, style, structure or an extra-musical idea can provide a strong starting point from which multiple ideas can flourish.

## **Use of Materials and Structure**

The way these materials are treated by candidates is often highly dependent on structural thinking. Whilst candidates frequently chose to present compositions in distinct sections or as a group of smaller pieces, thereby helping them to approach their composing in 'bite-size' pieces, many were nevertheless, highly successful at finding ways to link and develop ideas across smaller units. Some candidates were very

successful in their use of a single, through-composed structure where they made use of a range of techniques to explore their ideas more fully.

Candidates should take the syllabus directive of a composition lasting between 8 and 12 minutes as a wise guideline when issues of quantity, quality and content given different tempi possibilities have to be considered in the context of the complete submission. Musical considerations must always take precedence over precise length. One composition came to the point of a final *rallentando* at 7' 45". Repetition of the motif followed, then augmentation of the motif to half time, followed by a drum roll with a crash of the cymbal at precisely 8.00 minutes. It was disappointing that a perception of the need for meeting a 'minimum' time requirement had led to a musical compromise – there were justifiable and fully acceptable reasons for finishing the piece at the earlier point.

### **Use of Medium and Texture**

It was pleasing to see a range of instrumental resources, including those of world musics and electronics, employed with such skill, enthusiasm and knowledge by candidates. Some candidates had clearly made the connection between their own ensemble experiences performing in a string ensemble, for example, and their ability to construct idiomatic textures in composing in addition to writing imaginatively for individual voices or instruments.

### **Notation and Presentation**

There was a good range of skilful presentation in both scores and recordings including some highly effective live performances. Occasionally candidates had become dominated by the use of technology in their work, to a detrimental effect. A piece for two guitars, for example, had a middle section in triple time notated in endless dotted demi-semi-quavers. Looking away from the complexities of the written page it was very clear that the ears could hear a steady four beat pulse. An attempt at a live recording might well have alerted the composer to the fact that the piece was rhythmically much more straight-forward than the notation suggested.

In a small number of cases, candidates' aural, intuitive composing skills were not matched by their ability to capture ideas in staff notation. In one composition, a part for Fender Rhodes piano had been 'played' into the computer programme producing an unedited scoring on many ledger lines, on one staff only. Happily the quality of the composing had not been adversely affected by the relatively weaker notation skills. Composing integrity and imagination should never be compromised by an inability to use particular software programmes; in order to access the full range of marks, teachers and candidates should take into account the amount of time that may be needed during the course to acquire the necessary notation skills whether working by hand, at an instrument or at a computer.

Candidates are reminded once again of the need to be meticulous in the provision of thoughtful performance directions in scores. Marks of tempi (avoiding the standard 'default' position of notation programmes, where crotchet = 100), articulation, expression and phrasing as well as instrument / voice-specific directions are all vital to a well notated piece.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Composing is a complex process. A programmatic submission for two pianos was presented in three movements – the first in sonata form, the second as a theme with three episodes and a final movement in binary structure with coda. The presence of a clear plan was a significant factor in the success of this piece; programme and structure were outlined side by side. This is just one example amongst many where candidates had approached their coursework with planning, method and imagination, giving themselves time to improve and refine their initial thoughts, try ideas out on instruments or in a live performing context or allow sufficient time for really well-crafted sequenced recording.

Yet it is also true to say that some of the most effective pieces grew from relatively humble beginnings.

Praise is due to staff and candidates alike who have actively engaged with a 'work-in-progress' approach with correspondingly successful results.



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**Paper 9703/05**  
**Investigation and Report**

The most common issue with regard to this component this session lay in how Centres had understood the need for a 'link' to whichever of Components 3 or 4 candidates were also taking. In a large number of cases the link was never made explicit, it being left to the Examiner to deduce it from the subject matter. In some cases this proved impossible – no link with composing or performing could be discerned. Candidates should be told that this is a requirement, reflected in the marks for the fourth set of descriptors in the Syllabus (D, p.36).

While it is important that the relationship with the candidate's work in their other component be explained briefly, preferably in their Introduction, it should also be stressed to them that an extended 'programme note' is not appropriate. Component 3 already has a requirement for a spoken introduction to the performing programme – Component 5 is not the occasion for amplifying what is said there - and if those submitting a composition feel that it needs explanation in a commentary, then this should be enclosed with Component 4. Several Reports set out to explain the performing techniques that their pieces needed, often amounting to little more than 'what I found difficult and how I practised it'. More relevant were Reports which explained how study of one or more other traditions, or a large body of already familiar repertoire, had influenced and been drawn on in the composition, demonstrating independent study of a different but relevant body of music from that studied for Component 1.<sup>1</sup> The most successful Investigations were those which had been stimulated by a particular trigger in work done for Component 3 or 4 and then taken off in a new direction. The assessment is a measure of how much more the candidate has learned.

At the AS Level (8663) a different sort of problem emerged: in some cases candidates submitted work that was clearly the product of a taught course which all members of the group had followed in common. This goes against the principal aim of the Component: that candidates show how far they are able to investigate independently and apply skills learned studying Component 1 in explaining music of their own choice.

Nonetheless, several candidates produced very convincing Reports that reflected extensive and thoughtful Investigations carried out over a sustained period of time. A few were outstandingly mature in breadth of repertoire known and depth of informed discussion. These were usually the candidates who had used the component as an opportunity to explore, and immerse themselves in, a body of music which they already knew well and had been keen on for some time. Their first-hand knowledge of the music was evident in the detail of their discussion of a wealth of examples, each carefully chosen for the significance of the technique or effect being demonstrated.

A few candidates, however, wrote (very coherent) whistle-stop tours of the history of a genre or tradition, which they had gone to great lengths to illustrate with copious short audio examples. But these musical examples were only *incipits* that identified e.g. a song from a 1920s musical – they were not discussed and had not been selected to demonstrate specific features of the music of that time. Others who had tried to cover too much found themselves confused and drowning under the mass of material they had collected. This is now a growing problem, a direct result of the ease of access to and availability of so much information (often of very high quality) on the web. While the Examiners are sympathetic towards candidates for whom English may not be their first language, reproducing phrases and sentences, even whole paragraphs in some cases, from the Internet, because it appears to express more articulately what the candidate wants to say, must be discouraged. At the very least it prevents the candidate demonstrating that they have assimilated what they have read (because Examiners quickly recognise what are the candidate's own words and what is 'borrowed'): at the worst it is actual plagiarism and the candidate risks disqualification. A collage of quotations is not convincing evidence of a secure understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> The Syllabus specifically excludes from 8663/06 the study of any music that overlaps with the Prescribed and Core Repertoires in Component 1 (Listening). While a similar exclusion is not made explicit in relation to 9703/05, Centres should bear in mind that Examiners will always be looking at the extent to which candidates demonstrate further learning and knowledge of wider repertoire – replicating material learned in preparation for the written examination should be discouraged.