

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01

Listening

Key messages

- Read the question carefully
- Plan the time
- Support assertions
- Answer intelligibly and legibly

General

There was a tendency for otherwise well-prepared candidates who had worked hard and learned a great deal to rush into an answer before considering sufficiently carefully whether everything they were about to set down was really relevant to the question asked. Many, by trying to offer a shapely 'essay', spent too long on inessential background information before getting down to discussion of the actual music and on conclusions that added nothing to what had already been said. Some misread completely, e.g. re **Question 1**, where movement three was sometimes not discussed but all the others were.

Expression: the quality of language is not in itself an assessment criterion and Examiners always make a sympathetic effort to understand what the candidate intends, especially where English is probably not a first language. This year, however, there has been a noticeable decline in standards of expression that, in some cases, it became almost impossible to read, in others to understand, what the candidate really meant. Candidates may need stronger warnings that, if a point is unintelligible, no credit can be given for it.

Candidates may also benefit from some guidance on dividing their time sensibly. A number of candidates answered two questions very fully but left too little time to do themselves justice in their third question.

Section A

Question 3 was generally well-answered. Candidates answering **Questions 2** and **3** had more difficulty in pinpointing specific instances in the music.

Question 1

A small number of candidates answered this question of whom few really understood the nature of a Menuet and Trio. Most answered in rather broad terms about features of Classical style to be found in the symphony overall.

Question 2

There was a wide spread in the level of answers. Nearly all were able to describe the opening of Beethoven's concerto in some detail but many interpreted the piano's silence at the beginning of Mozart's as an expression of its fundamentally subordinate role. Only a few were able to identify virtuosic features in either or showed an awareness of the changing nature of the instrument itself. Some focused particularly on the orchestral roles, neglecting the solo part.

Question 3

This was by far the most popular question in this section to which there were a great many well-informed, detailed answers. Weaker candidates often began by rehearsing what they had learned about the earlier variations without relating their account to an evaluation of the last as a 'successful conclusion'. More thoughtful answers were able to explain their view of its effectiveness in relation to the whole movement.

Section B

Candidates had generally prepared the Core Works thoroughly, treating them almost like Prescribed Works. While this led to many well-informed, detailed answers it was disappointing that there was so little evidence of candidates drawing on a much wider range of repertoire in answer to **Question 6**.

Question 4

There were many enthusiastic, appreciative answers to this, the most popular of the questions in the section. Many, however, overlooked the need to be precise in their initial comparison of the make-up of the two orchestras, although a handful of candidates were very clear about the differences between Purcell's Baroque orchestra and Verdi's late-nineteenth-century one. Weaker answers found it hard to get beyond enumerating examples of the effective use of dynamics in *Otello*, and several engaged in irrelevant discussions (although largely correct) about word-painting in Purcell's vocal lines. Most did understand, and could illustrate, more than one function of the orchestras (e.g. continuity between scenes, establishing mood) in ways that demonstrated familiarity with the music. There were a number of very perceptive answers that showed a sometimes sophisticated understanding of the dramatic techniques at work.

Question 5

Candidates who chose this question were generally very confident in their knowledge and appreciation of Schubert's music. Several chose the same combination: *Das Wandern*, *Ungeduld* and *Der Müller und Der Bach*, three well-contrasted songs that offered plenty of scope for comparing vocal lines and accompaniments. There were some outstandingly full, reflective answers.

Question 6

Only a small handful of candidates chose this question and the majority of answers were mediocre at best. Most struggled to describe and comment on just two contrasting songs – a 'range' was rarely offered – and many could not get beyond discussion of mode (i.e. major/minor), tempo and dynamics. The exemplar traditions chosen were predominantly those of the Core Works plus jazz, musicals or popular song. One non-Western tradition was described in knowledgeable detail.

Section C

As in several previous sessions, this proved to be the weakest section in many candidates' scripts. Many seemed to assume that, because the Section has no specific, defined body of repertoire, that the questions are 'general' in the sense that 'generalisations' can be asserted without there being, as in **Sections A** and **B**, a requirement to demonstrate their validity.

Question 7

Very few candidates chose this question. While their understanding of the broad socio/political context was usually fairly clear, discussion of the background to the composition of Haydn's quartet rarely got to grips with any relevant issues, including those of 'chamber music performance'.

Question 8

Many candidates seemed to have been attracted to this question because of the opportunities it offered for them to refer to immediately familiar examples but few managed to make really telling points about them successfully. The general view was that rhythm was important but not as important as pitch. Few answers distinguished clearly between rhythm and beat, tempo or melody, though most considered the last to be the most memorable feature in itself. A handful of answers referred knowledgeably and appropriately to non-Western traditions.

Question 9

There were many enthusiastic answers but most were short on detail. Nearly all approached the question in terms of popular music genres. Some were technically extremely knowledgeable but few even of these discussed specific examples to illustrate their points.

Question 10

Almost all the candidates who chose this question all answered well and knowledgeably. One of two outstanding answers was clear in its definition, offered a well-developed sense of historical contexts and referred to an impressive range of examples to illustrate interpretative points.

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Paper 9703/02

Practical Musicianship

Key messages

- Candidates should present a relevant spoken introduction for Element 1
- Centre assessors should make detailed comments on the working mark sheets for Element 2
- Enough time should be allowed for refining compositions and producing effective recordings for Element 4

General comments

There was a pleasing standard of work produced for this component with most candidates having prepared thoroughly for the various elements. There were several outstanding performances and some accomplished compositions. It was clear that time and effort had been taken by most Centres to ensure that candidates were able to work to their strengths by selecting elements appropriate to each individual.

Almost all candidates offered **Element 1**. The majority of candidates presented appropriate repertoire that allowed them to perform to the best of their ability and which demonstrated their technical skill and understanding, thus enabling them to access the full range of assessment criteria. Singers and pianists predominated, but there were many able drummers, guitarists, string and wind players together with instruments from the Chinese and East African traditions. Most Centres were able to provide appropriate accompanists and suitable venues, though a few candidates were disturbed by extraneous noise from both within and outside the performance room.

The standard of spoken introductions was, on the whole, good, with candidates showing real understanding of the music. Most gave short, but well-focused, introductions, while others spoke in more depth. The majority were able to say why they had chosen their pieces, some information about the background to the music and a little about the instrumental/vocal techniques demonstrated. However, a number of candidates gave no introduction, or merely named their pieces. The introduction puts the forthcoming programme of music into context for their audience and the Examiners, and its relevance and extent to which its context is reflected in the performance is assessed in **section E** of the assessment criteria. Candidates must include a relevant spoken introduction if they are to access the full range of marks.

Centres are reminded that the performance for Element 1 should be completed on a single occasion and that copies of the music performed should be enclosed with the submission.

For **Element 2**, the majority of candidates had worked hard on the two disciplines they chose and Centres had taken considerable trouble to produce detailed comments on the working mark sheets, giving a clear insight into the reasoning behind how the marks had been awarded. Most submissions were clearly documented and there were audio/video recordings of all three assessments for each discipline. Detailed comments on the working mark sheets are particularly helpful in enabling Moderators to understand how marks have been awarded by the Centre and where mark sheets are not completed, it is difficult for Moderators to make their assessment. Ensemble performances should be submitted on DVD, so that it is possible to distinguish the contribution of individuals. Care should be taken to ensure that the camera is placed so that candidates and their instruments are not obscured.

Only a small number of candidates prepared **Element 3** and the work presented was of a good standard. This element requires candidates to submit a set of six to eight exercises demonstrating understanding of techniques in an established tradition. The work should be dated and presented in chronological order and teachers should give a clear outline of the course undertaken – this is particularly important where the tradition studied is not western tonal harmony. The candidate's level of progress should also be shown. Actual repertoire should be chosen for the exercises. Candidates are not expected to present full texture without any given material and at least one part should be given throughout. The course should give

candidates an opportunity to develop their understanding of ONE established tradition. Whatever the chosen tradition, the work submitted should be carefully notated and marks should be awarded for the accuracy of the notation.

A large number of candidates presented compositions for **Element 4** this year and a good overall standard was maintained across a variety of styles and genres. Most Centre assessors applied the assessment criteria accurately and completed the paperwork in an organised manner, although some were rather generous in their marking of candidates whose work fell into the lower middle mark bands. While the majority of compositions demonstrated a good level of understanding of techniques and instruments, some were too long for the amount of material they contained and it continues to be an issue that some candidates who worked at the computer and produced computer generated recordings, did not pay sufficient attention to the range and performing conventions of their chosen instruments. A few compositions for large ensembles were very successful and demonstrated genuine understanding of orchestral/band textures, but candidates who wrote for a small number of instruments with which they were really familiar generally did best. Preparatory work on writing for instrumental combinations is essential if candidates are fully to develop their skills in this element.

The majority of candidates produced clear, well-written scores although some were incomplete and appeared not to have been checked before submission. A few scores were hand-written, but most used notation software. Centres are reminded that a written commentary giving details of the composition process is an acceptable alternative to a score for this component. Many were able to make live recordings of their compositions, while other submissions were computer generated. Most were of a good standard, giving a true impression of the musical intentions of the composer, though some sequenced recordings lacked attention to detail.

Most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork for the component as a whole and provided CD/DVD recordings of high quality.

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

Key messages

- Candidates should select repertoire that is appropriate to their technical capabilities
- Candidates should present a focused spoken introduction to their recital

General comments

Almost all performances for this component were of at least a good standard and there were some outstanding recitals. While there were able candidates on a variety of instruments/voice, it is pleasing to note that some exceptional string playing was heard from several Centres. Instrumental and vocal candidates offered music in a wide range of styles from Bach and Beethoven to popular idioms and music from the Chinese and Indian traditions. Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performances to take place. Backing tracks were used to good effect where appropriate live musicians were not available. A number of candidates performed to an audience and this often added to the sense of occasion.

The repertoire chosen for performance was, for the most part, well suited to candidates' capabilities and gave them an opportunity to demonstrate the full range of musical skills required by the assessment criteria. Many candidates clearly relished the prospect of performing and entered into the whole event with great enthusiasm and passion for the music they had prepared.

Candidates had thought carefully about the focus for their performances this session. Almost everyone linked their pieces together in an appropriate way and had clearly learnt much from researching their chosen focus.

The majority of recitals were of an appropriate length. While the suggested timings are only guidelines, recitals which are too short run the risk of preventing the candidate from accessing the highest mark bands because of failure to demonstrate a wide range of techniques.

Most candidates gave appropriate spoken introductions to their performance and, as with Component 2, those who did not, disadvantaged themselves in their lack of ability to access the full mark range in Assessment Criterion E – Stylistic Understanding. Candidates should set the focus in context and give an insight into how it is demonstrated in each of the pieces performed. It was disappointing that some excellent performances lost marks for the lack of a well-prepared introduction.

Most Centres presented their candidates' work on CDs or DVDs of high quality and all had taken care to ensure the candidate could be readily identified. The majority of Centres presented the work in a manner that was easy to manage and enclosed all the required paperwork as well as copies of the music to be performed.

Centres are again reminded that submissions for different components of the examination should be sent separately as they are required by different Examiners.

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<p>Paper 9703/04 Composing</p>
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This report has as its focus, the positive achievement of candidates who submitted portfolios of composition for the November 2011 session. In addition, comments relating to the nature of the work and its assessment will enable centres to prepare candidates effectively in the future.

Administration

Examiners are grateful for the care with which many Centres prepared their work for assessment, allowing easy access to the relevant materials for each candidate. This was not always the case, however, and the following checklist may provide a useful point of reference to ensure that all administrative matters are suitably in place:

- All CDs, not just the cases, should be labelled with centre and candidate number.
- Scores should also be labelled with this information.
- CDs should always be checked to ensure they correspond to the candidate's expectations. Distortion, 'skipping' and CDs that would not play in conventional hi-fi equipment were present in this session's submissions.
- Centres are reminded that WAV / MIDI / MP3 formats are not permitted; DVDs should use a standard multi-platform software format.
- Please ensure optimum layout font size before scores are printed. Landscape rather than portrait format may be more effective for some scores. Page 1 should always show the complete instrumental line-up for the piece but the use of 'hide empty staves' may be a useful option to avoid many bars of rests for subsequent pages. One score seen by Examiners comprised 92 pages, many of which contained only a single bar.

General Comments

Once again, candidates' work reflected a wide range of stylistic variety, entirely consistent with the spirit of the syllabus. Candidates, who utilised their considerable performing experience in conjunction with a sense of curiosity and determined investigation to perhaps explore less familiar territory, were noticeably more successful in their final outcomes. In composing a substantial work of around 8 minutes' duration, the need for careful preparation cannot be over-stated.

For some candidates there was a clear link with Component 5: Investigation and Report, and several included a commentary highlighting the main points of relevance for the composing. Because different Examiners currently assess Component 4 and 5, this is most helpful.

The range of submissions employed conventional, modern, electronic and popular traditions as well those that mixed stylistic references. There were relatively few compositions influenced by world musics.

Some examples of the types of submissions this session include:

- Compositions prompted by programmatic association: the Christchurch earthquake; works of literature; 'emotions'
- 'Absolute' music: A composition for piano trio; a composition for string quartet; two movements of a Sonata
- Theme and variations
- Compositions exploring less conventional timbres including electronic and electro-acoustic options
- Songs – both 'art song' and a contemporary rock / pop approach.

Materials

Candidates frequently chose western tonality as a means of organising harmonic and melodic materials particularly for song writing and pastiche. Candidates sometimes lacked the discrimination to know whether their materials were sufficient to generate the longer composition required or, conversely, that they had produced too many ideas and compromised the integrity of the final work. By discussing possibilities and asking questions of their candidates, Centres can usefully guide candidates as they formulate their initial ideas. Candidates frequently pay less attention to the creative possibilities of rhythmic invention but this can be a fruitful area of exploration.

Use of Materials and Structure

Many candidates successfully used structural devices such as Theme and Variations or Programmatic ideas to allow them to think in smaller sections and to build a larger structure accordingly. Some variations lacked sufficient courage to depart far from the original theme and a much wider range of invention is to be encouraged. Candidates who submitted a set of related songs were generally more successful than those who wrote a single song and clearly had difficulty in extending the ideas to a piece of 8 minutes' duration. To extend a single song that would be highly successful in a typical 3-4 minute format requires a careful and thoughtful approach in order to be as equally successful at double the length.

The length prescribed in the syllabus – 'between 8 and 12 minutes' – is sufficiently flexible to allow for the variation that will inevitably arise depending on whether the chosen speed is fast / slow, the density of writing according to the textures or number of instruments utilised, the style etc. The quality of content, however, should always take priority over duration.

Use of Medium and Texture

Examiners were pleased to see an imaginative range of instrumental, vocal and timbre combinations. Not only did candidates choose from the full palette of conventional instrumentation but there was also a fine range of electronic exploration. Some compositions combined their resources – the following examples demonstrate this:

- 2 vocalists, acoustic guitar, electric guitar and brass section
- Percussion, marimba, lead guitar
- Bass loops, vocal 'hums', 2 pianos, 4 'cellos.

Equally successful were those candidates who chose to explore a world of 'extended techniques' – prepared piano and woodwind multi-phonics, for example.

Some candidates working in a more conventional sound world – string quartet or piano trio, for example, produced pieces which were both mature in their understanding of the possibilities and superbly well-crafted overall.

Writing for piano generated evidence of varying degrees of understanding of the potential of the instrument and candidates are advised to ensure that all music is in fact *playable* when it is intended for performance.

Candidates writing for voice will benefit from the experience of trying out their word setting as they compose. Effective use of stress, metre and rhythm can best be judged when the page is translated into sound. It is always disappointing to see vocal scores that have not been realised in a live context and sequencing programmes cannot do justice to a faithful representation of the composer's intentions in this regard.

Notation and Presentation

This session, effective recordings came in a variety of formats: live; well edited sequenced 'performances'; multi-tracked recordings and those that combined elements of live and sequenced sound.

Candidates are reminded that accepted conventions of staff notation are required in documenting their musical ideas. Some guitar programmes do not include clefs, for example, at the start of each stave. 'Tab' notation is not a universally recognised system of notation and whilst useful for the composing process, candidates should take advantage of the technical facility to relatively effortlessly convert 'tab' to staff notation.

Many candidates are showing a more meticulous approach to the requirement for performance detail on the score. In addition to the expected range of tempi and dynamic markings, candidates must be thoughtful in regard to articulation marks that give clear guidance to string players (bowing) and wind players (tongued and legato notes).

A significant minority of candidates did not include a score with their recording although the music they had written was fully notatable.

The syllabus advice states, *'Although there is provision in the syllabus for a variety of notational systems, or a written account of the composing process, candidates must not interpret this as consent to avoid notation if that is the usual means by which the chosen style is communicated'*.

A type of composing that would require a commentary in place of a score would be, for example, a genuinely conceived 'computer piece' where electronic sounds are created and manipulated. A graphic score might outline the structural dimensions of the work; the commentary would support this, explaining in detail the technology used and the choices made in sound selections and their various processing procedures. A single page Cubase 'screen shot', for example, whilst providing some sense of the overall structure, would be insufficient on its own.

Another example of acceptable alternative notation would be the use of Cipher or numeric notation in Chinese music.

Whilst there is a long history of oral transmission of popular and folk musics in the west, there has also been in recent years a commensurate growth in the availability of highly accurate transcriptions that make the music widely available for performance.

Candidates who opt to avoid providing a score should understand that they automatically forfeit 10% of the available marks.

Additionally candidates must provide full details of the performers on the recording and how this relates to the composing process. If a candidate provides a multi-tracked recording where the composer is also the performer for all tracks then the music can be credited to a candidate in a straightforward way. Where no such information is provided, a live recording, for example, may include drumming and guitar solos and without explanatory information as to how the composer has instructed the performers, it is impossible to distinguish between the composing skill of the candidate and the performing / improvisatory skills of ensemble members. The improvising skills of others cannot be credited as composition to a composer.

Concluding Remarks

Examiners are pleased to commend the many examples of team work that enable candidates to achieve musical and expressive realisations of their notated compositions. Where live realisations were not possible, many candidates received full recognition of the varied approaches which had enabled them to secure a recording that accurately detailed their compositional intentions in the most musical way possible.

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<p>Paper 9703/05 Investigation and Report</p>

Key messages

- Engage with a wide range of listening over a sustained period of time
- Apply what has been learned through reading
- Demonstrate in the Report, by means of audio examples and commentary, what has been learned in the Investigation.

General comments

There was a considerable variety in the nature of the topics investigated this Session, and a wide range of ability and achievement demonstrated. Most candidates linked their study to their performance in Component 3. By far the best Reports, however, were those of candidates whose link was to their composition in Component 4. They showed a keen appetite for listening to as much music as they possibly could, and highly-developed powers of aural perception and critical analysis, both skills that the performers' Reports revealed widespread weakness in. The 'link' in the composers' cases was not simply a narrow formality but strong evidence of a rich inner library of music that had been thoroughly assimilated and which nourished their Compositions.

For many of the Performers the 'link' proved to be a chain that tied them down too closely to the instrument or programme that they had presented in Component 3, rather than a fertile jumping-off ground for a much wider exploration of some aspect of the repertoire of their instrument. While it is valuable for performers to research background to the development of their own instrument, this is essentially 'contextual' information. Once noted and understood, it should have indicated some starting-points for the study of key aspects of the development of the repertoire. If the compass of the piano was extended, who used the extra notes? if valves were added to a brass instrument, how were the wider chromatic possibilities exploited? if keys were added to a woodwind instrument, what did they facilitate that had previously been unachievable? Notes on different stages in the life-cycle of an instrument, with downloaded images, did not in themselves demonstrate understanding and musical skills. Many opportunities were missed e.g. where the sources suggested that a given composer was a significant figure in the development of the repertoire, it is not enough to simply reproduce this generalisation but what it meant should have been explored, i.e. 'investigated'.

Those who pursued some aspect of one or more of their pieces, as a genre, or individually, were generally more successful. Again, though, it was not enough to note down characteristics of a genre and throw in a couple of youtube clips. Candidates needed to demonstrate that they had assimilated what they had discovered and could apply their understanding to examples that they had selected themselves from a wider range of repertoire that they had heard.

Analysis of a substantial piece is potentially a very worthwhile focus for investigation. When advising candidates about their choice of topic, Centres should have taken into consideration whether the technical knowledge and analytic skill was sufficiently developed to undertake the task successfully (i.e. meaningfully), or whether support in developing appropriate generic skills might have needed to be given. In some cases, Examiners felt that candidates would have benefited from closer supervision and support in this respect.

Candidates were generally meticulous in recording their sources in their bibliographies but not always as scrupulous in acknowledging actual words and phrases reproduced in their texts. It was encouraging to see a wider range of more scholarly reading being accessed. Some Centres had made JSTOR available to their candidates. Although this website is a valuable archive of scholarly journals some candidates would have benefited from advice over its use. It was not always appropriate to rely heavily on the first article found to match the search criteria.