

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01

Listening

General

The general level of achievement was high. The Prescribed and Core repertoire had been studied carefully, with close attention to significant aural effects, and candidates displayed a well-developed ability to identify and describe relevant musical techniques.

In **Questions 6, 8, 9 and 10**, however, a lack of preparedness to discuss other repertoire was evident. The Syllabus explicitly indicates the need to study 'Wider repertoire' as an integral part of the **Section B** topic (page 11). All the questions in **Section C** allowed scope for answers to refer, either to music studied in relation to **Sections A and B**, or to examples from a candidate's own general musical experience. The fact that so many cited examples drawn solely from the Prescribed and Core repertoire suggests either a lack of breadth in courses of study, or that opportunities to apply skills and understanding acquired in the study of **Sections A and B** to music encountered in other contexts are not being taken up.

Question 1

Most answers demonstrated a very good grasp of the movement's structure together with a broad understanding of its textural and dynamic contrasts. Knowledge of instrumentation was generally much less secure.

Question 2

Most candidates recognised that the essential difference lay between the soloistic nature of the piano's music in Mozart's concerto and its ensemble role in Schubert's movement. Many answers referred to the latter as 'accompanimental:' although not the most precise description, this was an acceptable distinction when supported, as most were, by reference to appropriate examples. There was a very good level of vivid, descriptive writing that convincingly identified relationships between technique and effect

Question 3

'Use of the orchestra' was rather loosely interpreted by many candidates as 'what sorts of musical material do the two symphonies consist of?' This led to many broad assertions, particularly regarding Haydn's 'conservatism' and 'elegance,' that answers were rarely able to substantiate convincingly. The best were precise about which instruments made up the two orchestras and made strong points about 'tutti' and 'solo' uses. Most candidates appreciated the striking differences in sound, which many then discussed more in terms of dynamics than texture – the best also addressed the effect of the extended pitch range in the Beethoven symphony - but few were able to explain these in terms of the techniques that produced these effects. Nearly all answers gave most space to discussion of the Beethoven symphony, tending to compare Haydn's music simply as 'not the same.'

Question 4

Relatively few candidates chose this question. Those who did showed both secure knowledge of the music and a fine appreciation of how Mussorgsky was suggesting his pictures as he walked through the gallery.

Question 5

This was by far the most popular question in this section. Answers were enthusiastic and demonstrated that it had been well understood. Differentiation showed in choice and range of examples and the extent to which their effects could be related to specific musical techniques, i.e. the second 'how' of the question. Most discussed *Mars* and at least one movement from a Vivaldi concerto but some took all their examples from Holst's or Vivaldi's music only. Reference was less frequently made to Mussorgsky's pieces, the most

convincing of which were observations about *Gnomus*. The few candidates who chose their examples from the Prescribed repertoire, e.g. the *Trout* movement, struggled to make them relevant.

Question 6

A very small number of candidates answered this question but they wrote knowledgeably about music that had fully engaged their imagination and enthusiasm.

Question 7

As 'earlier composers' most candidates cited those represented by the **Section A** Prescribed Works: in this, a notable improvement on previous sessions in the levels of knowledge and contextual understanding was evident. Some outstanding answers showed a much finer, more nuanced, grasp of detail, e.g. of Beethoven's and Haydn's working lives, than has been shown in answers on other occasions. Some were also able to relate these circumstances to examples of the composition of music other than that of the Prescribed repertoire (e.g. Haydn's *London* symphonies, Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony). Although there was generally a broad understanding of the scope of the contemporary aspect of the question, answers were usually much less specifically illustrated. Among the exceptions was one very pertinent contrast with music-making in a non-Western tradition.

Question 8

The question's requirement for a definition was often only partially satisfied by an implied one, i.e. that the candidate actually understood the term emerged gradually in the course of discussion of different contexts. These were most frequently the moment of a cadenza in a classical concerto, and twentieth-century jazz, but few answers got close to describing any techniques in detail. The most detailed examples offered were those describing the process of 'realising' figured bass.

Question 9

Most answers were carefully balanced, acknowledging relevant pros and cons and supporting arguments with reference to relevant examples. Many of these compared Mussorgky's original music for piano with Ravel's orchestrated version. In this respect some very keen aural perception was demonstrated.

Some familiarity with wider, often contemporary repertoire was evident, a few candidates writing knowledgeably and convincingly about modern reworkings of 'classics,' as well as 'cover' versions of popular music.

Question 10

Surprisingly few candidates knew what the term means, although almost all were able to cite drums. Most descriptions were rather vague and knowledge of specific use in any music (apart from very general references to the two pieces by Holst that had been studied) was insecure.

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

Key messages

- All performances for Elements 1 and 2 should be submitted as DVD recordings
- A clear outline of the course undertaken for Element 3 must be submitted with the folios
- Submissions for Element 4 should include a short written commentary
- Centre assessors should provide comments in support of the mark awarded on all working mark sheets. This is of particular importance for Element 2.

General comments

There was a good standard of work submitted for this component, with some outstanding examples of performing and composing. Some Centres chose a range of combinations of Elements, thus enabling individual candidates to work to their strengths.

Almost all candidates presented **Element 1**. Candidates had prepared well and most chose appropriate repertoire which enabled them to demonstrate a range of musical skills. Most candidates gave a spoken introduction, stating something about the background, musical content and technical aspects of the pieces they were to perform. The inclusion of a spoken introduction is a requirement of the syllabus and its content is assessed in **Section E** of the assessment criteria.

Most recordings were of good quality, with the camera/microphone suitably placed, but there were some instances where poor audio balance was detrimental to the overall performance. The recorded balance between the candidate and the accompaniment or backing track should be checked, and corrected if necessary, prior to the performance. Centres are reminded that all performances for this Element should be submitted as DVD recordings.

In **Element 2**, candidates presented two disciplines as required, and most chose repertoire appropriate to their own ability giving them an opportunity to develop and extend their skills. The majority of candidates had worked hard on their chosen disciplines and made good progress. Some Centres provided comments on the working marksheets, with the more thorough giving a clear insight into the reasoning behind how marks had been awarded. The nature of the assessment in this Element means that detailed, precise comments are essential in order for Moderators to make valid judgments. Recordings were generally of good quality, though Centres did not always identify individual candidates in large ensemble performances. Centres are reminded that all performances for this Element should be submitted as DVD recordings.

All candidates who submitted work for **Element 3** had followed suitable courses covering a range of appropriate knowledge and techniques. Candidates may undertake some preliminary work in preparation for more specific exercises, but the final exercises selected for assessment should contain evidence of the range of language and techniques acquired within the selected tradition. The material chosen for submission should be based on actual (identified) repertoire, with the given material clearly distinguishable from the candidate's work. Centres should ensure that exercises submitted are of sufficient length to enable candidates to demonstrate use of the techniques they have learnt during their course. Centres are reminded that it is a requirement that a clear outline of the course undertaken for Element 3 should be submitted with the folios.

There were some good compositions presented for **Element 4** and almost all candidates selected genres and instrumentation with which they were fully familiar. Most candidates demonstrated an ability to develop their ideas and had clearly refined their compositions, though some needed to pay greater attention to these aspects of their submission. Scores were generally neatly presented, though some lacked detail and precision. There were several compositions for solo piano, thus not meeting the requirement that each composition should be written for at least two instruments/voices. Submission of written notes giving details

of the composition process is an acceptable alternative to a score for this component and some candidates found this a more appropriate way to demonstrate their intentions. A number of candidates were able to submit live recordings of their compositions, while others presented well edited sequenced versions. Some created very successful renditions by performing one part live over a synthesised recording of the remaining parts. Centres are reminded that candidates are now required to include a short written commentary explaining the origins of the compositional thinking, listening influences, and the on-going compositional decisions.

For the component as a whole, most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork and provided DVD recordings that were compiled in such a way that the individual items for assessment for each candidate could be easily located and accessed.

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Paper 9703/03
Performing

Key messages

- Candidates should select repertoire appropriate to their technical capability
- Copies of the music performed should be enclosed with the submission

General comments

The majority of candidates had prepared thoroughly for this component and most achieved well, with some recitals being of an exceptional standard. There were outstanding performances on piano, oboe, trombone and electric guitar. Focused repertoire chosen by candidates ranged from Italian and German Baroque to Ravel and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Most candidates performed music which was within their capabilities and which showed their technical ability to good advantage. A few chose repertoire which was too demanding and were thus not able to show thorough understanding or a true sense of performance. Almost all candidates had thought carefully about the focus for their performance. Pieces were linked together in an appropriate way and candidates had clearly learnt much from researching their chosen focus.

All candidates provided a spoken introduction outlining features of the focus and how these were reflected in each item to be performed. The best introductions had been well prepared with candidates demonstrating real insight into the music. Care should be taken to ensure that introductions focus on the music itself, as some vocalists merely related the content/mood of the lyrics rather than discussing the music.

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performance, though a few candidates encountered extraneous noise from both within and outside the performance room. Some candidates performed to an audience, large or small. This often contributed to the sense of occasion.

Work was submitted in a manner that was easy to manage and, as is required, most Centres included copies of the music which had been performed.

Centres are reminded that all performances for this component should be submitted as DVD recordings.

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Paper 9703/04
Composing

Key messages

- Candidates should allow time for critical reflection on and revision of their work.
- Many candidates used music technology in their composing work but should be mindful throughout the creative process of the practical implications of their composing decisions.

General comments

The presentation and packaging of materials for assessment was generally done with care and attention to detail, ensuring that CDs were not damaged in transit.

Centres are reminded to thoroughly check CDs before dispatch to ensure that the recording is present and complete on the disc. If several tracks are presented on a single CD, it is helpful if an accurate track listing is also enclosed.

Comments on specific aspects

Commentaries

The majority of candidates enclosed a useful and relevant commentary to accompany their composing work, as required by the syllabus. Candidates must ensure that all relevant information is included in the commentary, even if this repeats what may have also been written about as part of Component 5 (Investigation and Report).

The most effective commentaries clearly and succinctly outlined the origins of the compositional thinking as well as documenting the on-going decision-making process. The most successful commentaries included important listening and musical models. The commentary should reference any significant preliminary work in preparation for the main composing task.

The scope of submissions

Candidates were motivated to consider programmatic starting points, often evoking images from the natural world for their compositions. The influence of film music was also frequently referenced. Contrasting moods for movements were featured and the strongest work showed an in-depth treatment of this rather enigmatic narrative.

A small minority of candidates wrote 'ambient music' and it was a strength of the work that all aspects of the electro-acoustic processes of compositions were comprehensively documented. Candidates wrote songs using their own lyrics or the words/poetry of other writers. Specific instrumental groupings were a popular starting point, for example, string quartet, wind trio, saxophone quartet, brass groups for ceremonial music. The influence of non-western music traditions also featured in some submissions.

Materials

In the shaping of ideas, candidates gave consideration to a range of factors including motifs, small-scale structure, melodic materials and rhythmic invention. The strongest work showed evidence that a commensurate amount of deliberation had fed into the choice or formulation of a coherent harmonic language. This is a vital element of the musical whole. Confident composers were keen to explore keys beyond C major and demonstrated aptitude in the practice and technique of modulation.

If a candidate chooses to include references to the music of other composers in their own compositions, this must be precisely documented in the commentary. There may be legitimate reasons for this, such as in the context of a theme and variations structure. Marks cannot be awarded for the 'borrowed' materials but the creative use of such materials will be credited.

Some candidates used the harmonic progressions from the compositions of specific pieces/composers and overlaid them with their own melodic and harmonic materials but this was not generally successful; candidates should be clear that they understand where the boundary lies in legitimate quotation of the work of others.

Candidates who had analysed, understood and assimilated the techniques and musical language of composers' works they had studied were often more able to produce an integrated authentic musical voice in their own work.

Candidates learn a great deal about the art of composition in the study of the prescribed and core works. An extended aural familiarity that may come from a wider exploration in relation to the Core works is also important. Thoughtful consideration of techniques and language in the music of candidates' personal listening may also be relevant.

Candidates wrote clearly about the significance of works they had performed in solo or ensemble situations in relation to their compositional processes. They also mentioned the works of a range of composers who were important in helping them to learn useful about composing principles and instrumental/textural techniques. These included Beethoven, Haydn, Shostakovich, Bartók, Schnittke, Lutosławski, Brahms, Copland and Rimmer.

Structure

Effective structuring of compositions was evidenced in different ways. Some chose to use well-established structures such as sonata/sonata rondo form. Similarly in ternary form structures there was attention to the shaping of contrasting themes and pacing; attending to coherence and continuity was also important to provide a sense of the whole. Candidates variously submitted a single piece or a number of smaller related pieces such as movements of a suite or a group of songs. Some through-composed pieces judged the unfolding and transformation of events in a balanced and musically thoughtful way.

Some compositions were considerably longer than the maximum eight minutes allowed. Candidates should focus on the quality of the content rather than its length; pieces which exceed the upper time limit can be self-penalising because they often lack a clear structure and focus. Similarly, candidates should be careful not to produce a single eight-minute piece with material of too little potential to sustain interest for that length of time.

Use of Medium and Texture

There was evidence that candidates had learned about the craft of combining instruments from their studies of the use of the orchestra in the prescribed works. Occasionally there was sensitive use of larger instrumentations where the use of horn and textural doubling, for example, was idiomatic.

For a significant proportion of candidates, the use of very large orchestral forces proved challenging, with insufficient understanding of how to use instruments in family groupings and balance the sounds of various instruments. The playing of important material in the lowest registers of flute and piccolo in the midst of a full orchestral texture, for example, would be ineffective. Candidates often felt compelled to use the full instrumental forces for an entire piece. Careful listening or study of scores will demonstrate that a more sophisticated approach using smaller groups within the orchestra or solo moments allows for a wider range of expressive gesture.

Notation and Presentation

The nature of most compositions required candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the conventions and expected norms of staff notation. Other key points in this area are as follows:

- scores should use correct key signatures and avoid unnecessary accidentals if the music clearly modulates away from the home key;
- a transposed rather than a sounding score is conventionally used in publication and candidates do not need to produce both forms for assessment;

- if candidates write for instruments such as baritone saxophone in a small ensemble context, for example, they should submit a transposed score to avoid excessive and unnecessary use of ledger lines;
- an opening instructive term for performers is found at the start of many scores; a simple metronome marking is less helpful;
- if synthesised sounds are used, for example in a film/video game score, the settings/names of sounds required must be clearly stated and explained;
- staff notation for songs must be as comprehensive as possible – at the very least, candidates should indicate the harmonic basis of the song using chord symbols as well as a description of accompaniment patterns;
- candidates who compose for guitars using tablature should also present a staff notation conversion in their scores – tablature is a specialised rather than universal form of notation;
- candidates should understand in practical terms the difference between slurs and ties in music notation;
- the use of sensible phrasing and clear articulation markings is an essential aspect of a detailed score; articulation of wind parts, for example, can provide evidence of knowledge of the medium;
- candidates should be aware of the way in which the use of technology in notation may produce a form of precision in rhythmic notation that is unreadable in practical terms. Excessive rests should be avoided, for example, where a longer note with a staccato or staccatissimo symbol is a more sensible option;
- in some minimalist pieces composed aurally, for example, the editing of rhythms needs to be consistently accurate and musical throughout the work;
- candidates produced some impressive recordings using sequencing software; balancing a score in some notation packages needs care to avoid distortion in loud sections of brass and percussion, for example.

Concluding Comments

The intricate and often complex nature of composing requires a range of skills, both organisationally and practically. There is evidence of candidates trying out their ideas on instruments or using singing with the assistance of staff, peers and friends. Some compositions were realised in public performance – both conventionally performed and electro-acoustic scores. This practical support and encouragement proved very valuable for candidates and helped them to consider refinements and adjustments that were needed as a result of this experience.

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

Key message

Candidates must include audio examples that support judgements in the text.

General comments

The overall standard of investigations was high.

Many candidates introduced their report by explaining clearly the scope of their investigation and outlined sensible objectives and a manageable methodology. In the better reports, candidates defined two or three significant, central questions to be explored, and kept these firmly in mind throughout their research.

While maintaining a perceptive and consistent focus on the music itself, reports generally showed evidence of appropriate, selective reading which had been assimilated and understood. The less convincing reports were often those that set out a great deal of background information without making it relevant to the study. Assertions about the importance of a particular composer or performer in the development of a certain type of music were sometimes very clearly second-hand judgements and there was no evidence that candidates had listened to any of the music of the composer or performer they were referring to.

The very best reports, whether linked to Component 3 or Component 4, presented evidence of investigations that considerably extended the focus of their link. Topics had been explored with keen interest and energy, and significant learning had taken place. A few reports (both those linking to Composing, and those to Performing) focused more on explaining the process of preparing for the other component, rather than extending beyond the limits of its scope. In some cases, a considerable section of the report relating to the recital or composition was written in the first person. Unless this was made crucially central to the investigation, there was a danger that the focus was too much on the candidate, rather than the music.

Discussions about the history of developments in the construction of candidates' instruments were carefully linked to demonstrating their effects on specific examples of relevant music. A few candidates had actively sought out early instruments and included audio clips comparing timbres and techniques of playing these with the sounds of their modern versions.