

MUSIC

<p>Paper 0978/02 Performing</p>

Key messages

- Candidates are required to perform for at least four minutes.
- Ensemble repertoire should allow candidates to demonstrate the full range of their skills.

General comments

The majority of the coursework fully met the syllabus requirements, was well presented and assessed accurately, making for straightforward moderation. The moderators enjoyed hearing a wide range of performances; these inevitably varied in standard but in most cases, the repertoire chosen was appropriate to the candidates' abilities, which is crucial to a successful performance.

Most performances were of 'classical' music, but the increase of vocal performances in pop genres noted last year continued again. All genres are equally welcome at IGCSE, but it was observed by the moderators that in many cases vocal pop performances seem to have had very little preparation beyond picking a backing track and singing along. Vocal technique and expression are equally important in all styles, and marks must be awarded according to the descriptors in the mark scheme, not against a notional perception of how much like the original the candidate's version is. It should also be noted that the lyrics of some of the songs submitted this year were not appropriate in the context of school coursework.

Centres are again reminded that there is a minimum performing time of four minutes; those candidates who are performing short pieces should add a second solo and/or ensemble piece to ensure they meet the syllabus requirements. Where candidates do not meet the required time they may not have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their skills fully in order to achieve the highest marks. Teachers should be mindful to check performing length when awarding marks, as only in a very few cases were short performances noted in the comments box and marks awarded appropriately.

Solos

The solo performances were usually the most successful part of the coursework, consisting of well-chosen repertoire. Accuracy was usually good and most pieces were performed at an appropriate tempo. Sensitivity to phrasing and expression was often less impressive, and intonation was sometimes poor. As noted last year, where solo music has been written with an accompaniment, this should always be played.

Ensembles

It was in the ensemble performances where most issues arose, although it should be stressed that the vast majority of centres submitted pieces which met the syllabus requirements.

To reiterate, the following types of performance are not acceptable as ensembles:

Solos: pieces described as 'ensembles' but which consist of only one performer. The syllabus does not allow a second solo performance (whether or not on a second instrument) instead of an ensemble.

Accompanied solos: pieces in which there are more than two performers, but the candidate's part is still clearly a solo. Examples often include solo songs in which drums and/or bass have been added in addition to the piano accompaniment; this is still a solo song for the singer. More extreme examples include candidates playing a piano solo to which a bass instrument had been added, for example, perhaps simply doubling the left hand. This does not change the fact that the candidate is still clearly playing solo repertoire.

Vocal 'duets' (usually from musical theatre repertoire): pieces where the vocal parts consist of solo passages alternating between two solo singers – if the candidate hardly ever sings at the same time as the other singer, they cannot be demonstrating ensemble skills. An appropriate vocal duet should allow the candidate to demonstrate the ability to maintain an independent part-singing in harmony with one or more other singers.

Pieces with backing track: these must not be included in an ensemble performance – ensembles must only include live performers.

There were a few examples where centres submitted one ensemble piece with all candidates (typically five or six) performing together. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this in principle – and in fact there can be many positive reasons for doing so during the course of teaching this syllabus – it is essential that the parts are properly differentiated in such pieces. For example, some pianists who had played impressive solos at a high standard were given basic, single-handed keyboard parts in ensemble performances, significantly limiting the marks they could achieve compared to their ability.

Assessment

Most of the coursework was assessed accurately. Where marking was inaccurate it was usually (though not exclusively) lenient, often significantly so. A small number of centres have their marks substantially reduced every single year, and they are strongly encouraged to heed the advice given on their feedback forms, using the examples which can be found on the School Support Hub to help understand the expected standard.

In general, the marks for the range of technical and musical skills demonstrated were usually fairly accurate, although the key word here is demonstrated – the same piece played by two different candidates might get different marks in this category, if it is appropriate for one but too difficult for another.

The mark for choice and control of tempo was also usually reasonably accurate, but for ensemble co-ordination the marks were often lenient, with pieces which were moderately well co-ordinated being given very high marks.

The most common leniency was in the mark for phrasing and expression, where a lack of any dynamic contrast was often rewarded as moderate. Choice of piece is important here, as pieces need to be chosen that give some opportunity for a candidate to demonstrate expressive qualities: this is sometimes difficult for rock or pop styles, but it is possible, with thought. Poor intonation and/or tone quality were factors that most often contributed to candidates not accessing the highest mark for technical control.

Centres are reminded that internal moderation is only expected in large centres where different teachers have marked the work of more than one teaching group independently, and is designed to ensure the application of a common standard. If internal moderation does result in marks being changed, the working marksheets should be annotated accordingly, not just the summary sheet.

Presentation of coursework

Most coursework was presented in a helpful format, but please do not send an individual CD per candidate – it is more helpful for the moderators when the work of the candidates is placed on as few CDs as possible (with an accurate track listing). Please note the following advice:

- The work must be submitted on CD, not DVD or memory stick
- CDs should be sent with a separate track listing, which should not be written on the CD itself
- CDs must be burned as audio CDs which are playable on a CD player
- Please use as few CDs as possible – individual CDs for each candidate are not helpful
- Please package the CD robustly so that it does not get broken in transit
- It is a requirement of the syllabus that copies of the sheet music should be sent, with the sole exception of music which has been improvised. Please label each set of sheet music with the candidate's details
- Please do not staple the marksheets to the sheet music
- Send the performing coursework separately from the composing

MUSIC

Paper 0978/03
Composing

Key messages

- Centres should not award credit for any compositional ideas that are not created by the candidate.
- Candidates should be encouraged to compose pieces which allow them to fulfil the whole range of the assessment criteria.
- Care should be taken to ensure that marks are correctly added and correctly transcribed onto the form submitted to Cambridge.

General comments

A wide range of ability was demonstrated in the compositions submitted this year, with some candidates working at a level beyond the normal expectations of IGCSE. Where achievement was less secure, it was often because insufficient attention had been paid to the full range of skills required by the Assessment Criteria, or because the full meaning of the descriptors had not been taken into account. Some centres awarded high marks to work which was not as strong as these marks indicated.

The standard of administration by centres was mainly quite good. However, there were several instances of incorrect addition of marks and inaccurate transcription of marks from one form to another. In some cases there was missing documentation and assessment materials, including Working Mark Sheets, Computer Mark Sheets, recordings and even scores. Several centres did not comply with the requirement that CDs must be playable on a standard domestic CD player.

Assessment

Some centres marked accurately and consistently showing full understanding of the published criteria. However, there were many cases in which all the candidates in a centre were assessed generously, or where the marking did not match the descriptors. There were very few instances where the internal marks were too low.

Internal moderation of marks must only be carried out when there is more than one teacher involved in teaching the course and in the assessment. If there is a single teaching group with a single teacher, there is no need for internal moderation. A few centres seem to be using this process as a mechanism for changing the total mark without reference to the assessment criteria, which is not permitted. Where more than one teacher is involved in the assessment, they need to be certain that they are applying the same standard, and this is the sole purpose of internal moderation. If marks are changed during this process, the changes must be shown on the Individual Working Mark Sheets as well as on the Summary Mark Sheet, so that the CIE Moderator can see exactly which marks have been changed (whether it was the mark for Ideas, or Structure, or Compositional Technique, etc.).

Compositions

There was a very wide range of styles in the submitted compositions. The strongest were accomplished compositions, reflecting a commendably high level of inventiveness and understanding. A large number of candidates used quite simple structures, with a tendency to use the 'copy and paste' facility on the computer rather too readily. This year there were several pieces in which candidates had tried to use minimalist techniques. Although these were sometimes successful, more often the technique was applied too mechanically, often producing a formulaic result that was not very musical.

A simple structure such as Ternary Form can sometimes be very effective, especially if the sections link together smoothly with some kind of relationship between the A and B sections, and if the return of the A section is varied appropriately, rather than being indicated simply with a DC marking. However, even the

simplest of Ternary Forms should be awarded more marks than a very short piece in a single section. There were several of these, some as short as 16 bars or even fewer, and in some cases these pieces had been given marks as high as nine for their Structure. Pieces in a single section, which allow no scope for linking passages, varied repeats or other structural devices, need to be rewarded with a mark in the lower bands of the mark scheme.

In some centres, it appeared that candidates had not made their own decisions about what to compose, but had been given tasks to complete, set by the teacher. While this approach may be appropriate in the early stages of the course, it should not be used in the pieces that candidates submit for assessment because it often results in unduly formulaic pieces. When candidates choose what to compose for themselves, they are more able to demonstrate the full extent of their creativity.

Candidates' ability to use chords and to harmonise their melodic ideas is assessed under Compositional Technique. Some compositions demonstrated very effective use of harmony, but many were quite limited in this respect. There were many examples of root position chords spaced too closely at too low a pitch (e.g. in piano parts), a general lack of inversions, or the layering of instrumental parts with too little attention to the resulting harmony. Several candidates had difficulty in the use of cadences at the ends of phrases or sections.

Pre-recorded loops (from applications such as Garage Band) should not be used. Candidates must acknowledge the source of any materials in their compositions that they did not compose themselves. This includes any borrowed themes used for sets of variations. Centres are reminded that it is only the candidate's compositional input into such pieces that can be rewarded.

The two compositions produced by each candidate must use different instrumental or vocal forces. If they do not, the mark for Use of Medium in Piece 2 must be zero. This requirement was not always observed. In some cases, candidates had written one piece for flute and piano for example, with the second piece for oboe and piano but with very generic parts for the flute and oboe, which made them indistinguishable from each other. Another example concerns a Piece 1 for solo piano and a Piece 2 also for piano, but with the bass notes doubled by a cello. These combinations do not satisfy the specification for this component, the point of which is to ensure that candidates submit two pieces that are genuinely contrasting.

Notation and Presentation

There were many computer generated scores but there were some handwritten scores. In order to understand how to use a notation program on the computer, candidates need to know how to write their music down by hand, so candidates should consider submitting handwritten scores. Candidates should be encouraged to take care over the presentation of such scores to ensure they are clear and legible. Computer generated scores also need to be presented carefully. Several candidates had trouble with rests, especially if they played in the music in real time, where (for example) staccato crotchets are often represented as semiquavers followed by a succession of rests. The default settings used by the program did not always produce the correct result, and this needed to be checked.

Default settings can also produce an illogical order of instruments in a score. A piece for flute, cello and piano, for example, should have the flute part at the top of the score, then the cello part and the piano should be below the cello. But in an orchestral score, the woodwind are at the top, with the strings at the bottom, and a piano would be somewhere in the middle, usually near the percussion. So it is not uncommon to find this orchestral order of instruments used by default even when it is not appropriate with the flute at the top, the piano next, and the cello at the bottom.

These two aspects of computer generated scores (incorrect rests and an inappropriate order of instruments) are two issues that could easily have been corrected if the scores had been carefully edited. There was little evidence to suggest that this editing had been done at all, except in a minority of cases.

Whenever possible, even if they find it hard, candidates must try to notate their music. If they are writing a song, they should notate at least the voice part. The lyrics alone, with a few chord symbols, are not sufficient.

Some candidates submitted screen shots of the computer program they had used to create their pieces. In the very rare circumstances where this may be appropriate, such screen shots must always be accompanied by a detailed explanation of what it represents, how it should be read and how it relates to the submitted recording.

Candidates should note that if a piece is capable of being notated conventionally, using staff notation, that is how it should be presented. The Syllabus makes provision for other forms of notation to be used, but only in cases where it would not be possible to use staff notation (some forms of electro-acoustic music, for example). It does not mean that an alternative notation can be used if a candidate has not acquired the skills of using staff notation.

Recorded Performances

Most of the recordings submitted were of synthesised performances, often simply the computer playback of the Sibelius or Finale score. The best recordings were almost always of live performances. Centres are encouraged to submit live recordings whenever possible, since they are more instructive to candidates and they also convey the spirit of a composition much more effectively than a synthesiser can ever do.

Recordings of songs suffer much more than instrumental pieces if the performance is synthesised. There were several examples this year of songs where the recording was synthesised and where the number of notes in the melody did not even vaguely correspond to the number of words or syllables in the lyrics. An attempt to perform live (especially at an earlier stage in the course) could have provided an extremely valuable opportunity for teaching about this significant aspect of song-writing, and this could have helped the candidates concerned to gain higher marks.

CDs

Most CDs were formatted so that they played on a standard CD player, as required. Centres are reminded that they must check that the CDs will play on the correct equipment before they are submitted.

Some recordings were submitted with significant instrumental parts entirely missing. Examples included a recording of an orchestral piece where the string parts were entirely omitted, and a piece for flute and piano in which the whole flute part was absent. Such instances demonstrate that the CDs were not checked before being submitted, even though the box on the WMS was ticked to say that they had been.

In centres where there are several candidates, the recordings must be compiled onto a single CD. Separate CDs for each individual candidate should be avoided. There should be recorded announcements on the CD to identify each candidate's compositions, and the recordings should be compiled in the order of candidate numbers, with both pieces for each candidate following on from each other. A separate track list, not written on the CD itself, should also be included.