

# MUSIC

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Paper 9703/01

Listening

## General comments

While the general standard of answers was satisfactory, showing a good measure of familiarity with the music discussed, a growing tendency to rely overmuch on memorised facts was noticeable. This caused many otherwise promising candidates to miss the real point of the question e.g. in answers to **Question 6**, many of which included detailed explanations of Penderecki's notation for specific string techniques without further comment about the effect of the sounds produced by them or any other indication of relevance. Candidates should also be warned that the ability to quote bar or section numbers from memory in itself does not show evidence of an understanding of musical processes.

## **Section A**

**Question 1** was very popular indeed. Perhaps candidates found describing the variation processes in the Haydn work rather more straightforward than dealing with the musical techniques in the concertos and symphony. All the questions, including **Question 1**, however, required more than just straight commentary on the musical events. Whilst a good deal of enthusiasm for the Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven works was discernible, there was less evidence of reflection on the four Prescribed Works as representatives of their genres and the style as a whole. Few candidates chose **Question 3**.

### **Question 1**

There were some very thoughtful answers which showed clear understanding of the distinction between 'development' and 'variation' of a theme and exemplified it well. However, in general, the response to this question was rather disappointing as many candidates treated it as an exercise in showing a detailed account of the music of each variation. Although reference was made to the 'varying' aspect, it was often not really explained. Some answers gave an indication that 'developing' was a different kind of process, but it was frequently not referred to. A few candidates treated the terms as interchangeable. Among those who understood the distinction, there were difficulties in exemplifying it by referring to convincing examples from any of the other Prescribed Works.

### **Question 2**

The question was generally answered with a clear and enthusiastic sense of purpose. Most candidates had a lively appreciation of the different sound worlds of the two concertos. Many were able to explain this knowledgeably, in varying degrees of detail, often making telling points of contrast (as well as, in some cases, useful ones about similarities). Some demonstrated understanding, but left the comparison part of the question implied rather than more explicitly teased out.

### **Question 3**

Of the few candidates who chose this question, most broadened the discussion into one about the 'classical style' in general, with too much focus on the elements of Sonata Form and little reference to the nature, make-up and use of the orchestra in this particular symphony. Most were aware of its 'Mozartean' scale. A handful of answers placed it in its performance context, showing a good understanding of its domestic nature (in contrast to the more public occasions of the two concertos), and explaining the different environment and purpose for which it was composed. There were some telling comparisons with the 'grander' sound of Beethoven's music.



## Section B

There was a great deal of reliance on the Core Works, a clear preference being shown for questions in which detailed commentary on one or more of them was thought to suffice. For this reason, **Question 5** attracted very few answers. Although answers to **Question 6** depended heavily on commentaries on the Penderecki piece, slightly more readiness was shown than in some previous sessions to engage in discussion of wider repertoire.

### Question 4

There was widespread appreciation of the movement, many candidates combining a thoughtful reading of the text with a keen ear for the effects of its musical setting in purposeful attempts to explain Vaughan Williams's compositional techniques. The most obvious techniques of word-painting were generally understood and adequately exemplified. Many candidates went on to discuss, in this case very convincingly, the role of dynamics in the expression of the text. Others gave relevant examples of the use of pitch, intervals, chromaticism/dissonance, antiphony, other choral textures, onomatopoeia and verbal rhythms. Most mentioned the military significance of brass fanfares and the drums at the beginning of the movement, but only a few were able to examine the contribution of the orchestral accompaniment beyond this.

Many answers were of a high standard, most were more than satisfactory, with the least successful being from candidates whose explorations did not extend beyond the first three lines of the text.

### Question 5

'*Beat, beat, drums*' was also the most obvious example from the Core Works for the few candidates who answered this question to refer to, and most did. The first part of the question – explaining 'the general characteristics of a march' – was generally poorly done, with very few candidates able either to define or account for even the most obvious typical features.

### Question 6

Inevitably, prompted by the word 'threnody', most candidates chose the Penderecki as one of their pieces. Many of them, however, took the question as an invitation to describe the composition in considerable detail, often relating its effects to their own vivid interpretations of events, and lost sight of the aspect that asked about 'grief for those lost'. The Britten movement '*Libera me*' was most often the companion piece: again, there was much listing of techniques, such as the tritone and 'free time'. While some candidates recognised a mourning flavour in the recitative settings and many cited Owen's poem '*I am the enemy you killed, my friend*', few related these directly to any mention of 'lament for the dead'. One or two candidates bravely tried to show how Vaughan Williams's '*Beat, beat, drums*' was also a 'threnody'. There was a widespread desire to present all these composers as 'getting their message across'. While this was true, it tended to lead to overlong diversions on the horrors of war. There was a welcome widening of repertoire discussed, including many anti-war songs and pieces. One candidate made a convincing case for Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* as 'a lament for the dead'. There were very few references to any music from other traditions.

## Section C

There was a noticeable improvement in the performance of candidates in this section of the paper.

### Question 7

The best answers were usually those that explicitly pointed out features of 'repetition' and 'contrast' in the music they discussed. Most cited one or more of the classical structures they had learned in their study of the Prescribed Works, quite a few making useful comparisons between Rondo form and the verse-chorus structure of today's popular music. Many contrasted this with the Penderecki piece from the Core Works, considering it wholly 'unstructured', although a few more reflective answers considered it in terms of 'sections' and a 'forward momentum' leading to a climax. A number of candidates discussed improvisation, some showing that cadenzas, for instance, are unstructured, while jazz improvisation occurs within a structured framework.

### Question 8

Few candidates chose this question. Nearly all of those who did were able to discuss patronage in respect of Haydn's working life, some in impressive detail with a clear eye on how this affected the sort of music that he composed, but most were far less clear about the nature of patronage in Beethoven's life. About half the answers mentioned publishing as a source of income.

### Question 9

This was the most popular question in this section. It provoked many thoughtful answers across all levels of ability and knowledge, as well as of musical interests. A wide range of positions was taken, and a similarly wide range of examples was offered, not only from the Prescribed and Core Works, but from candidates' own performing repertoire. Popular, folk and various traditions were also referred to.

### Question 10

Most candidates were able to explain the roles of keeping time and cueing instruments, and many also discussed control over interpretation of dynamics and articulation. Few, however, were able to tease out more complex aspects of interpretation. Hardly any referred to having heard different performances of a work.



# MUSIC

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Paper 9703/02  
Practical Musicianship

## General comments

The overall standard achieved by candidates in this Component was good, with some outstanding performances and compositions produced. The majority of candidates had prepared thoroughly and displayed genuine enjoyment in their work. Many Centres offered candidates the opportunity to work to their strengths with varied elements being submitted within individual Centres.

Almost all candidates offered **Element 1**. Careful choice of repertoire ensured the majority were able to demonstrate an array of technical skill and understanding, thus enabling them to access the full range of marks in the assessment criteria. A few candidates performed just one item, sometimes not showing sufficient stylistic variety and some, unfortunately, attempted music which was either beyond their present technical capability or had not been adequately rehearsed. It is encouraging to report that the standard achieved by the large number of drummers and guitarists was higher than in previous sessions. Impressive performances were also heard from singers, pianists and a wide variety of other instrumentalists. Most candidates were ably accompanied, either by piano or a small combo, and almost all Centres provided suitable venues for the performances.

Although there were some excellent accounts, once again, a number of candidates paid little or no attention to the requirement to present a spoken introduction. This is assessed in **section E** of the assessment criteria and gives candidates the opportunity to put their forthcoming programme of music, and their understanding of it, into context for Centre assessors and the Moderators. It was disappointing that a few otherwise impeccable performances lost marks because of the lack of a spoken introduction.

**Element 2** was offered by slightly less than half the candidature. It was evident that candidates undertook this part of their course with great enthusiasm. Many performed successfully in duets/ensembles or took on an accompanying role, mostly on piano or acoustic guitar. There were also some outstanding instrumental improvisations in a variety of styles. The majority of Centres had taken care with the presentation of their submissions, ensuring that clearly documented Working Mark sheets and audio/video recordings of all three assessments for both chosen disciplines were included. Detailed comments showing why particular marks have been awarded are of great assistance in the moderating process and without them it is often difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain exactly what contribution individual candidates have made. A few Centres submitted only their final recordings, thus making any assessment of *progress* – an integral part of this Element – not viable at Moderator level.

Very few candidates offered **Element 3**. Centres which prepared this Element presented an appropriate range of existing repertoire for the exercises, thus enabling their candidates to develop a clear understanding of the harmonic principles of their chosen genre. It was pleasing to see a high standard of handwritten notation here.

Numbers undertaking **Element 4** have risen in recent sessions and, for the first time, over half the candidates offered this Element. As might be expected in Composing, there was a large range of outcomes, but a good overall standard was produced. There were some very imaginative and exciting submissions with live or detailed sequenced performances. Less successful candidates omitted to identify intended instrumentation or to include performance indications in their scores, often leading to rather bland and poorly balanced audio realisations. It appeared that many candidates had not had time to check their scores/recordings before the final submission. Once again, some candidates tried to write for far too many instruments, the technical capabilities of which they had little understanding. The requirement is to produce two short compositions each for a minimum of TWO instruments. Most Centre assessors applied the assessment criteria accurately, though some were rather generous in their marking, particularly in the areas of *Materials* and *Use of Materials*.

For the Component as a whole, most Centres completed and submitted all documentation in an efficient manner. A few Centres produced CD/DVD evidence which was not clearly organised or labelled, meaning that it was difficult to establish which work belonged to which candidate. It is helpful if clear indication is given of what repertoire is presented for each Element. This also identifies when items are missing from CDs/DVDs, as was the case in more than one submission. Centres are advised to check CDs/DVDs very carefully before they are despatched.

# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9703/03</b> <b>Performing</b></p>
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It was a pleasure to listen to the vast variety of repertoire performed in this Component this year. Among pianists, the music of Chopin and Beethoven predominated and a number of string players included movements from Bach's unaccompanied suites. Jazz and popular styles featured widely in the recitals of saxophonists, drummers, guitarists and string bassists. A number of candidates performed music by composers of their own country, often demonstrating great insight into the stylistic demands.

Almost all candidates reached at least a satisfactory level and many recitals were outstanding, reflecting careful choice of repertoire and thorough preparation. Most candidates chose an appropriate focus and demonstrated in-depth understanding of it in their spoken introduction and in their subsequent recital. As in previous sessions, some candidates performed a programme of seemingly unconnected items and offered little or no spoken introduction. Full marks cannot be gained in assessment criterion E, *Stylistic understanding*, if there is no clear focus and/or no relevant spoken introduction.

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and it was clear that many candidates had benefited from adequate opportunity to rehearse with their pianist in advance of the examination. Disappointingly, there were a few recitals where candidates appeared to be unsure of the length of introductions and unfamiliar with other rests in their music. Some candidates were very effectively accompanied by a small combo and, where this is appropriate within the chosen genre, this is entirely suitable. There were also some recitals which employed backing-tracks and most candidates coped well with the associated constraints.

Almost all Centres provided suitable venues for their performances with many candidates choosing to have an audience present. The quality of DVD/CD recordings was, for the most part, very high. However, care should be taken to ensure that audio/video recording equipment is placed so that candidates can be clearly heard/seen. Some cameras were placed so far back that both audio and visual quality was impaired. This was a particular problem in some large Centres where recording equipment was positioned in the same place for all candidates regardless of their instrument/voice. The recording *is* the examination document and candidates may be disadvantaged if every nuance of their performance cannot be clearly heard. Balance between candidate and accompanist is another important consideration here.

Overall, submissions for this Component were very well organised with all associated paperwork enclosed and material packaged in an appropriate manner. Centres are reminded that photocopies of the music performed should be despatched with the recordings.



# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9703/04</b> <b>Composing</b></p>
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This report contains comments and appropriate feedback on the work and assessment of candidates from this session's examination. It will focus on the positive achievement of candidates and provide guidance for the future preparation of candidates' work in composition. It will also refer to aspects of the syllabus with helpful exemplification in response to coursework submissions. Centres may also find it useful to consult Reports to Centres from previous years.

## Administration

Submissions were clearly presented with the majority of Centres taking care to label scores and recordings with the full details required. Centres are reminded that recordings are to be presented as audio CDs that can be accessed via a conventional hi-fi sound system. Examiners cannot guarantee access to candidate's work if recordings are supplied in a format that can only be accessed via a computer programme.

## General Comments

Whilst a wide range of achievement was seen across the compositions, there were a number of folios that failed to give sufficient evidence of understanding of the demands of composing coursework, given that this component is an elective in the second year of study. Candidates should not underestimate the skills that need to be acquired and developed in order to compose a substantial piece of between 8 and 12 minutes duration whether this be a single piece or a set of related shorter pieces. It is pleasing to see work that clearly made connections with other components of the syllabus and built on prior knowledge. Listening with understanding to the work of established composers and successful music-writers is an essential preparation for the aspiring composer; there is much to be learned from the analytical observation of the music of others.

Some examples from this year's submissions demonstrated a positive response to the syllabus invitation to consider options across the widest possible range of styles and traditions, for any voice, instrument or combination. Included in submissions were:

- A work for strings and piano influenced primarily by the folk music of Hungary (Kodaly) with sections referencing wider geographical influences from Africa / India / China / Spain
- Minimalist pieces – orchestral and contemporary instrumental groupings
- A composition of 'experimental rock' guitar techniques successfully combined with brass instruments
- A soundtrack for a film extract, giving attention to dramatic and synchronisation possibilities
- Composing that demonstrates effective 'pastiche' in conventional tonal idioms
- A range of jazz / funk inspired compositions
- Technology-inspired 'Techno' composition
- Songs in a popular style

## Materials

The mark scheme refers to the concept of aural familiarity – the range of listening that has clearly fed into the shaping of an initial concept or the ideas that form the basis of the composition. Some candidates provided a brief and helpful commentary outlining these influences or made useful reference to their investigations as part of Component 5. The most successful candidates were those who had given plenty of time to considering the potential of their initial ideas and the way in which they could be expanded upon or developed. It is also important that candidates allow themselves a period of reflection as they work – questions can often lead to a greater awareness of the shortcomings or strengths of a composition as it progresses:

*What is the primary focus of my materials – harmony, rhythm, timbre? Is there sufficient contrast of ideas or careful consideration of pace in my work, given that it needs to last at least 8 minutes? Have I explored a*



*sufficient range of the potential of my sound sources? Am I thinking of sounds in combination as well as on their own?*

The role of the teacher is important in the asking of these and other questions in order to lead the candidate to consider alternative possibilities and to be self-critical in this highly constructive way.

### **Use of Materials and Structure**

The ways in which 'building blocks' are shaped and subsequently envisaged as part of the larger whole gives rise to many possibilities of development, connecting and extending of ideas. Candidates writing in jazz, popular or tonal styles may produce an effective harmonic 'turn around' but attempt to stretch the idea to fit the entire piece, seemingly unable to consider the notion of subsequent and perhaps contrasting harmonic material that goes beyond the technique of modulation. In minimalist pieces, the use of technology to copy and paste was too much of a temptation for some. A broader study of a range of techniques employed by the 'New York' minimalists (Reich, Glass, Riley), those following in their footsteps (Adams, Nyman) and their popular music / technological counterparts (e.g. Krautrock band: Tangerine Dream, the music of Brian Eno, Underworld, Aphex twin etc.) shows a far more subtle approach with a sense of pacing that allows for barely perceptible but vital nuances of rhythmic, pitch and textural change.

Candidates who submit several shorter but linked compositions should ensure that enough time is given to fully exploit the potential of each idea.

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

Several candidates were drawn to instrumental composing for various types of guitar, both electric and acoustic and successfully used tab and staff notation together to express their ideas. There was some technically assured demonstration of a range of guitar effects and invention that made the most of the differences between steel guitar, electric lead, electric rhythm, acoustic guitar and bass guitar, for example. Bass guitar and drum kit writing was sometimes repetitive and lacked sufficient creative focus to make the most of their potential and candidates should be encouraged to listen to a range of material in preparation for their composing, where performers who specialise in kit / bass guitar provide exciting insight as to the broader possibilities of these instruments.

Some compositions successfully contrasted solo and ensemble sections but a sense of balance needs to be maintained and attention given to the way in which contrast and continuity contribute to the whole.

Candidates were sometimes adventurous in the combination of timbres: tuba and electric guitar was found to be a very interesting mix and genuine interest in the sonic possibilities avoided a 'gimmicky' approach. A candidate using a more convention medium such as string quartet, nevertheless, fully engaged with use of a relatively simple idea such as writing in octaves, for example, or fully exploiting the range of possibilities in pizzicato writing.

### **Notation and Presentation**

The majority of candidates were able to accurately express their composing ideas in terms of pitch and rhythm. The use of certain guitar notation programmes, whilst useful as a tool, can produce scores that do not adhere to some elementary conventions of notation – the lack of clefs on each new stave, for example, is an 'error' that must be corrected.

Some candidates had difficulty in accurately grouping more complex rhythmic patterns but once again standard, theoretical good practice should be adhered to. Blank bars with multiple rests – often due to deleted ideas – should be restored to a single rest.

A minority of candidates submitted compositions with insufficient evidence to enable marks to be awarded under 'notation'. Centres are reminded that notation of composing ideas is an aspect of basic musicianship expected at this level of assessment. Whilst a range of notational options are possible, some candidates are choosing to avoid notation even though the style chosen is one normally communicated via standard staff notation. Candidates who use a computer programme such as 'Garage Band' or 'Cubase' should understand how useful a tool this is in terms of experimenting with and developing ideas, and hearing them in combination – but that the notation of the musical ideas expressed has to be addressed in addition. If a genuinely electronic / electro-acoustic work is presented then a full account of the processes and techniques involved both in shaping the ideas, creating or refining the timbres and producing the final acoustic 'mix' is required. This is essential evidence to facilitate the assessment process.





Some candidates gave full attention to the range of performance directions required in their scores – not only dynamics and tempo directions but articulation markings that revealed a comprehensive understanding of the idiomatic qualities of that instrument.

Scores which used rests and short rhythm lengths rather than correct use of appropriate articulation markings only served to underline candidate misunderstanding of the distinction between the visual and aural aspects of computer notation programmes.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Those candidates who were at least able to try out some of their ideas for the forces intended often displayed a more secure grasp of the issues facing the composer. Whilst it is often not possible to secure full, final 'live' performances, candidates should nevertheless do all they can to show they have a clear aural concept of their work.

Candidates who may not have fellow candidate-musicians to 'use' might nevertheless be encouraged to seek out performing 'help' from friends / teachers / family. There is no greater encouragement to the composer than to hear the transformation of a technologically assisted simulation to its live counterpart or indeed to learn the vital skills needed for a rich and well balanced final mix of an electronically conceived work.

# MUSIC

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**Paper 9703/05**

**Investigation and Report**

There was a pleasing number of Investigations that fully met the spirit of the Syllabus. Their highly individual enquiries extended the scope of the linking Component in an enterprising way far beyond mere routine background: an aspect of their Recital programme or Composition had prompted them to explore new repertoire. By contrast, several Reports seemed to show that candidates had interpreted the task as little more than producing fuller, written programme notes about their pieces in Component 3 that did little more than amplify points more appropriate to their spoken introductions: the 'analyses' of the music were often little more than disordered thoughts about 'what I found difficult about performing these pieces'.

Some had legitimately chosen to explore the development of one of the genres in their programme, or the music of one of the composers, more widely, usually in the form of a chronological history. This had led the keener candidates to seek out and listen to music hitherto unfamiliar to them. Others confined themselves to a journalistic collage of information derived mainly from websites, with no convincing evidence that they had heard any of the music mentioned. The Report was, at best, no more than a précis of the work of others – no real, active 'Investigation' had taken place – at worst, a second-hand account coupled with judgements that verged on plagiarism. The deliberate cutting-and-pasting of paragraphs downloaded from websites is obviously dishonest but so, too, is the careful transcribing of phrases and sentences, often with an element of paraphrase or substitution of synonyms to disguise the dependency on a source. Almost all the work submitted was accompanied by the appropriate 'Authentication' Form, signed by the candidate and their teacher: both, therefore, could be presumed to have read the very clear definitions of 'plagiarism' given in it. Several candidates, though they had signed, had not heeded the warning implied i.e. that dishonest work risks complete rejection. In cases where the 'borrowing' was only partial, the Examiners were unable to credit the identified passage(s) as the work of the candidate, with a consequent impact on the overall mark. The most 'convincing' presentations (see the Assessment Criteria 'E Communication of findings and acknowledgements', page 35 in the Syllabus) were all 'carefully documented': their Bibliographies gave full details of all sources consulted, including websites and, where applicable, CD liner notes, concert programmes or personal communications and, whenever information or a judgement from any of these was quoted or paraphrased in the candidate's text the source was identified in a footnote.

The best evidence of independent learning was found among candidates who had assimilated what they had read and then gone on to show, through their discussion of relevant musical examples, that they could apply their knowledge and understanding. This was usually done by a mixture of MSS examples embedded in the text and short audio extracts on an accompanying CD. The significance of the examples needs to be teased out in the text (something which the best candidates did well): a few zealous ones had not understood the purpose of an 'example' and had painstakingly compiled CDs with multiple tracks that amounted to little more than *incipits* – no musical points were made about them; a handful of others used MSS examples almost as a way of decorating their pages, breaking up the text. In some cases, these were recognisably copies of other commentators' examples. Frustratingly, some CDs failed to play, reproducing their extracts neither on a stereo player nor on a PC - candidates must check before submission that they will play on standard equipment. Several candidates included no aural extracts but directed Examiners to youtube for examples: this is not acceptable.

Centres are advised to draw candidates' attention to the marks awarded in the Assessment Criteria (p. 34 in the Syllabus) for **(A)** Aural Perception and **(C)** Analytic/Investigative Techniques. Careful reading will show that the higher mark bands for the former require at least a 'wide range' of listening. The appropriate 'Analytic/investigative techniques' applied to the exploration of the music in their listening varied from candidate to candidate according to their focus. For a very few it took the form of a full-blown formal 'analysis' of a substantial piece, the most successful of whom were those who demonstrated by their approach and comments that this was not the only piece of its type with which they were thoroughly familiar. For most, though, a thread was traced – the development of specific performance techniques, the characteristics of widely differing examples of a particular genre or a composer's style, or a comparison of interpretations – these were all legitimate ways of 'investigating' the music.

There were widely differing ways of tackling the task of setting the investigation of the music in its context. The Assessment Criterion ('B' on page 34) is entitled 'Contextual understanding' and it was the distinction between 'chunks' of context (e.g. lengthy biographies which were not thereafter shown to have any bearing on the music, or detailed lists of scale systems to which no reference was later made in commentaries on the aural extracts) and very knowledgeable, 'joined-up' discussions of the music that made timely references to significant contextual matters, which differentiated between candidates. The best 'informed' were those who had read and assimilated, whose 'understanding' permeated and was reflected in the analysis. Many had been assiduous in the pursuit of 'information' but left it as a self-contained body of knowledge – 'background'. The weakest paid lip-service to the requirement by offering a series of notes downloaded from easily accessible (and immediately recognisable) sources.