

MUSIC

<p>Paper 0978/12 Listening</p>
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Key messages

Candidates must answer questions on style/period with reference to the extract they hear in the examination, not by simply writing a list of 'typical' features without considering if these are actually heard. This was particularly evident in Music A2 and C1.

General comments

Many candidates do not write in sufficient detail to achieve the available marks.

Some candidates need to spend more time listening to and learning about their set work and the set world focus, as they gained very low marks in these sections compared to the others. Answers to these questions are expected to be more detailed and show evidence of having spent time studying the work or the music from the particular area. A number of candidates answered questions on both set works, though did not score highly on either: invigilators should be made aware (as per the track listings on the Confidential Instructions sheet) that the candidates only need to hear the recordings for the one set work they have studied.

As was commented on last year, the term 'call and response' was used frequently to describe any sort of repetition or dialogue; aside from the fact that the term was usually used incorrectly, it was also rarely appropriate to the style of the music being described.

Comments on specific questions

Music A1

Question 1

Most candidates correctly identified the voice type as soprano.

Question 2

Almost all candidates correctly identified that there were 2 or 4 beats in each bar.

Question 3

Most candidates gained some credit here, usually for describing the broken chords in the right hand. Descriptions of the left-hand part were mostly inaccurate, often stating that it played chords.

Question 4

This question was well answered, with credit most often being given for describing the faster tempo, the rising melody, the busier piano part, the detached singing style and the crescendo.

Question 5

Slightly more than half of the candidates correctly identified Schubert as the composer; Mozart was a common wrong answer.

Music A2

Question 6

This question was poorly answered. Some candidates correctly identified the whole tone scale, but chromatic scale was often stated, and many candidates named specific major or minor scales.

Question 7

Most candidates gained at least some credit here. The repetition of the melody at a higher pitch was often described, and the addition of instruments/crescendo were the most commonly described features.

Question 8

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the piece as being written in the Twentieth Century.
- (b) Credit was most often given for describing the large orchestra and/or the heavy use of brass. A number of candidates stated features of twentieth century music which were not heard in the extract.
- (c) Less than half of the candidates correctly identified Debussy. Reich was the most common incorrect option, but Beethoven and Vivaldi were also chosen by some candidates.

Music B1

Question 9

About half of the candidates correctly identified the sho.

Question 10

This question was well answered; almost all candidates gained at least some marks and many were given full marks. Candidates did not always describe features under the expected headings but credit was nonetheless given when the meaning was clear. The most commonly described features were the high-pitched melody played with pitch bending in a free rhythm; cluster chords/a drone played by the sho as the accompaniment (which dropped out in the middle of the extract) and the plucked string notes; and notes getting faster on a small drum in the percussion part.

Question 11

The majority of candidates correctly identified Japan. India was a common wrong answer.

Music B2

Question 12

Most candidates correctly identified E minor.

Question 13

Most candidates gained at least one mark here; the most commonly stated differences were the melody being played an octave lower, the change from trumpets to violins, the more legato articulation, and the addition of the trumpets playing stab chords.

Question 14

Answers here were often vague and imprecise, with 'call and response' seen regularly and little accurate detail about the nature of any of the parts. Credit was most often given for the syncopated/walking bass line.

Question 15

Almost all candidates correctly identified Latin America as the origin of this music.

Music B3

Question 16

Most candidates gained at least some credit here, with the ostinato pattern being described frequently. Those who had learned the topic thoroughly often gained full marks, by describing the konkon technique and the vocal phrases which descended to sustained long notes.

Question 17

- (a) Most candidates correctly named the Birimintingo section.
- (b) This question was well answered, with most candidates describing the fast, improvised and virtuosic playing.

Question 18

Answers here were much less strong; there was considerable confusion about the nature of the praise-singing, with a large number of responses suggesting this was a religious tradition. Others had confused the topic with Afrobeat.

Music C1

Question 19

This was fairly well answered; moderato and andante were the most common correct answers.

Question 20

Answers here were often rather vague, although many candidates were able to describe the cello repetition of the main melody sufficiently well to gain credit.

Question 21

Responses varied between completely correct and no attempt to complete the melody.

Question 22

This question was answered poorly, with little precision in the descriptions given.

Question 23

Many candidates correctly identified the ascending sequence.

Question 24

Most candidates correctly named the interval as a major sixth.

Question 25

Most candidates gained at least one mark, usually for identifying the different key or the detached playing.

Question 26

- (a) This was not well answered; some candidates identified the Romantic period, but most suggested Baroque or Classical. It was clear from the answers to 26b that the use of a string orchestra caused most candidates to believe the music was baroque or classical, despite the style of the music clearly indicating otherwise.
- (b) Credit was most often given for describing the lyrical/expressive melody. Many candidates who had decided that the music came from the baroque or classical period gave the use of string instruments as one reason, but also listed features from those periods which were not heard in the extract.

- (c) Some candidates correctly identified Dvořák, but most chose one of the other options.

Music D1

Question 27

Credit was most often given for double-stopping and sequential writing, but candidates rarely mentioned the triple-stopping, use of parallel sixths or suspensions.

Question 28

Only a few candidates gained any credit for this question, with a very small number noting the canon (imitation was also accepted), to receive one of the two marks available. It was rare to see any further detail explaining that the canon was in three parts and a quaver apart.

Question 29

This was very well answered, with most candidates writing the part correctly in the treble clef.

Question 30

- (a) Some candidates knew that this was the ritornello, but episode was a common wrong answer.
- (b) Answers here were usually incorrect, with only a small number of candidates correctly observing that it used a passage from the middle of the original ritornello.

Music D2

Question 31

About half of the candidates correctly identified E minor and that this was the relative minor.

Question 32

Answers to this question were often lacking in detail, and many candidates did not describe the texture at all.

Question 33

Most candidates chose the correct option, circle of fifths.

Question 34

This was fairly well answered; many candidates used the terms concertino and ripieno in describing the contrasting groups within a concerto grosso.

Music D3

Question 35

Only a small number of candidates correctly identified this passage as the transition, and even fewer were able to explain that this version was shorter and did not modulate to the dominant.

Question 36

- (a) About half of the candidates correctly identified the interrupted cadence.
- (b) A similar proportion correctly named the key as E flat major.
- (c) This was generally well answered with most candidates choosing at least one of the correct options, either descending sequence or tonic pedal.

Question 37

Most candidates correctly identified the coda.

Music D4

Question 38

Most candidates correctly named the key as C minor, but fewer explained that this was the tonic minor.

Question 39

This was very well answered, with most candidates writing the part correctly in the treble clef.

Question 40

Many candidates identified that this was the B section, but fewer were able to place it in the overall context of the movement, which has a structure of ABA Coda.

Question 41

This was fairly well answered, with most candidates commenting on the use of 'Turkish' instruments and/or naming them; many also commented on the fanfare in the second movement.

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

Key messages

The minimum performing times were not always met. These are essential in order for candidates to fully demonstrate the skills in which they are being assessed. Performances which are too short do not provide sufficient evidence for candidates to access the higher mark bands.

A number of ensemble performances did not meet the syllabus requirements, which are very clear and have been explained in detail in these examiner reports over a number of years.

General comments

A large number of centres were able to submit a full portfolio of coursework performing this year. The range of instruments and styles was as diverse as ever. A few centres had requested exemption from ensemble performing due to the continuing disruption caused by the pandemic.

There is still a problem with short performances. The minimum performing time is four minutes in total, but a number of candidates' performances did not reach this. For centres which only submitted solo performances this year, the expectation was just two minutes of performing but even so there were still a number of performances which were shorter than this. Centres are reminded that candidates may add a second solo and/or ensemble piece to ensure they meet the syllabus requirements (which must be on the same instrument/voice as the first piece in each category). Centres and candidates are advised to time the proposed repertoire at an early stage so that there is sufficient opportunity to learn any extra pieces needed. Failing to meet the minimum time limits access to the highest marks; centres should be mindful to check performing length when awarding marks, as short performances were rarely noted in the comments box with marks awarded appropriately.

Solos

Solo repertoire was mostly well chosen, and appropriate to the candidate. It was not uncommon, however, for a piece to begin confidently but then become more hesitant and inaccurate as it progressed; candidates should be reminded not to always start at the beginning when practising their solos. The weakest area of the solo performances was usually sensitivity to phrasing and expression; candidates should be encouraged to think about giving a complete performance which brings the music to life, not just 'getting through' the notes.

Ensembles

The majority of candidates submitted appropriate ensemble performances which met the syllabus requirements and demonstrated clear ensemble skills. However, problems still persist; here is a reminder of the types of performance which are regularly submitted but 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.

It is not essential for all candidates in a centre to perform in the same ensemble. Whilst it is perfectly allowable to do so, and can have many positive benefits, it is only advisable if candidates are well matched in terms of ability or if their parts are appropriately differentiated. There were examples where candidates performed ensemble repertoire which was significantly less demanding than their solo repertoire, limiting the marks they could achieve compared to their ability. The other performers in an ensemble do not have to be candidates.

Assessment

Centres have been given individual advice where appropriate via their feedback forms and are reminded that there are marked examples of performances in the Coursework Handbook on the School Support Hub, which help to explain the expected standards.

Common tendencies from previous sessions were found again, and are summarised here:

With regard to marks for the range of technical and musical skills demonstrated, it is important to understand that this is not simply the difficulty of the music itself. The key word here is demonstrated – if the candidate struggles to perform the piece, then they will not have demonstrated the same range of skills as a different candidate who performs the same piece with style and confidence.

Marks for choice and control of tempo were usually accurate, although some of the tempi chosen by candidates were on the slow side compared with the composers' intentions. Marking for ensemble coordination was often very lenient. Centres should consider not only rhythmic coordination, but all the other factors which contribute to a good ensemble performance, for example balance between parts and matching of phrasing and articulation.

The category 'sensitivity to phrasing and expression' was often assessed extremely leniently. Centres must consider factors such as control and contrast of dynamics, phrasing (in both instrumental and vocal performances) and articulation. The crucial question in the syllabus 'To what extent are they able to bring the music to life in their performances?' needs to be considered when awarding a mark here. Choice of repertoire is important, as candidates need to have the opportunity to demonstrate expressive qualities. Marks for technical control were generally accurate, although problems with intonation, tone quality and breath control were often overlooked for singers.

There were fewer examples of inappropriate internal moderation; to clarify, this is only expected in large centres where different teachers have marked the work of more than one teaching group independently. If this is the case, internal moderation should be used to ensure the application of a common standard – for example, if one teacher has marked too leniently, their marks should be brought into line with the other teacher by making an appropriate reduction. In a few centres, the original marks for some (but not all) candidates were changed by a second teacher without any explanation. This is marking, not internal moderation, and the changed mark was not always more accurate than the original. If internal moderation is used and does lead to a change in marks, it is important that the working mark sheets are annotated so that the process is clear.

There were many more clerical errors than usual, mostly with regard to incorrect transfer of marks from the working marksheets to the summary form and/or the final marks sent to Cambridge.

Presentation of coursework

Most coursework was carefully presented with well labelled materials; however, please do not send an individual CD per candidate – it is much more helpful for the moderators, as well as the environment, when the recordings are sent on as few CDs as possible (with an accurate track listing). Please also limit the excessive use of plastic document wallets, as these can hinder the moderation process when over-used (particularly in small centres where organising the materials is less complicated). Paper clipping (not stapling) working mark sheets to sheet music is usually all that is needed. Please note the following advice:

- The work must be submitted as an audio recording on CD or memory stick
- Videoed performances on DVD should not be sent
- CDs should be sent with a separate track listing, which should not be written on the CD itself
- Copies of the sheet music should be sent, with the sole exception of music which has been improvised (in which case please include any lead sheets, etc.). Please label each set of sheet music with the candidate's name
- Please be consistent when using either the candidate's 'official' or 'known as' name
- Please do not staple the marksheets to the sheet music
- Send the performing coursework separately from the composing.

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<p>Paper 0978/03 Composing</p>
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Key messages

- Candidates must submit two compositions, both of which are their own, individual work in every respect.
- No credit may be given 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.
- Recordings must be checked before submission to ensure that the whole of every piece is recorded.
- Recordings must be presented in a format that does not require particular software for playback: if necessary, they must be converted (e.g. to MP3) before they are submitted.
- There must be announcements on each recording, giving the candidate's name and number and the title of the piece that is to follow.
- In centres with several candidates, individual CDs for each candidate must not be submitted. Recordings must be assembled onto a single CD, in candidate number order, with each piece on a separate track and with each candidate's Piece 1 immediately followed by the same candidate's Piece 2. There must be spoken announcements to identify each piece. The same process should be followed if the recordings are submitted on a memory stick.
- A track list should be provided on a sheet of paper separate from the CD or memory stick.
- Internal moderation must not be carried out unless there is more than one teacher involved in the internal assessment.

General comments

The usual 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 still awarded high marks to work of very modest attainment.

The standard of administration by centres was mainly good. There were, however, several instances of incorrect addition of marks and inaccurate transcription of marks from one form to another. Missing documentation and assessment materials, including Working Mark Sheets, Computer Mark Sheets, recordings and even scores, made the moderation of some centres' submissions very difficult indeed. Several centres did not comply with the requirement that recordings must not require particular software for playback. If necessary, files must be converted (e.g. to MP3) before submission.

Assessment

The internal assessment of candidates' work was usually consistent, but in several centres, it was very lenient indeed, with marks in the highest bands being awarded to work of very modest attainment. There were very few instances where the internal marks were too low.

It has been pointed out many times that internal moderation of a centre's marks must not be carried out unless more than one teacher has been involved in teaching the course and in the assessment. In such cases, the teachers concerned need to be certain that they are applying the same standard, which 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 Cambridge moderator can see exactly which marks have been changed (whether it was the mark for Ideas, or Structure, or Compositional Technique, etc.).

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.

Compositions

As usual, there was a very wide range of styles in the submitted compositions. The best 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. These were only rarely 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. Even the simplest of ternary forms, however, ought to be given more marks than a very short piece in a single section. There were several of these, some as short as 16 bars or even less, and in some cases these pieces had been given marks as high as 9 for their Structure. Pieces in a single section, which allows 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 for themselves what to compose, they are usually much better motivated to produce good work and this is without question the best way for them 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.

A candidate’s two compositions must use different instrumental or vocal forces. If they do not, the mark for Use of Medium in Piece 2 must be 0. 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 spirit of the syllabus, the point of which is to ensure that candidates submit two pieces that are genuinely contrasting.

Notation and Presentation

Computer generated scores were in the majority, although there were some handwritten scores. In order to understand how to use a notation program on the computer, candidates do need to know how to write their music down by hand, so there is nothing against submitting handwritten scores. There were, however, very few handwritten scores this year.

Computer generated scores also need to be presented carefully. Several candidates have trouble with rests, especially if they play 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 do not always produce the correct result, and this needs 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 – 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 be corrected if the score was carefully edited. It is disappointing to report that here 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.

The rule that should be followed is 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. That is something that should be taught during the course, because it is an essential life skill for any musician and should never be neglected.

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 (a) they are more instructive to candidates and (b) they convey the spirit of a composition much more effectively than a synthesiser can ever do. It is acknowledged, however, that Covid restrictions will often have made this more difficult than usual this year.

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.

Recordings

As last year, most CDs were formatted so that they played on a standard CD player, as the syllabus requires. There were some, however, that could be accessed only on a computer. Centres are reminded that these are not permitted and that they must check that the CDs will play on the correct equipment before they are submitted. Several centres submitted their recordings on a memory stick rather than on a CD: this is often easier for the moderators to use, provided that any recordings which require particular software for playback are converted (e.g. to MP3) before they are submitted.

All recordings must be checked before submission, to ensure that there are no missing parts and that all the recordings are complete. This was not always the case this year.

In centres where there are several candidates, the recordings must be compiled onto a single CD, if a CD is to be submitted. Separate CDs for each individual candidate should never be submitted. There should be recorded announcements 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. Any other arrangement makes the moderation process more time-consuming and far less efficient. A separate track list, whether the submission is on CD or memory stick, is a great help to the moderators.