

MUSIC

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

Candidates need to be aurally familiar with their set work; factual information about it only accounts for a small number of the marks available.

General comments

Although knowledge of the set world focus was reasonable this year, there was evidence that some specific details which extended the topic beyond the usual Indian music features typically asked about were less well known, particularly with regard to the sarod and the function of the gat section. Many candidates still need to spend more time listening to and learning about their set work, as they gained very low marks in this section compared to the others. Answers to these questions are expected to be more detailed and show evidence of having spent time not only learning factual details about the work but being aurally familiar with it.

Comments on specific questions

Music A1

Question 1

This was well answered. Most candidates correctly identified the voice as soprano; alto was the most common incorrect answer.

Question 2

This was fairly well answered, with adagio and largo being the most common appropriate suggestions.

Question 3

This was very well answered and most candidates gained at least some credit; the most common observations described the ascending chromatic melody, the thickening of the texture due to the introduction of further voices and instruments, and the crescendo.

Question 4

- (a) Identification of the period was less secure, with Baroque and Romantic being suggested as often as Classical.
- (b) Perhaps unsurprisingly, most candidates suggested the composer who matched their answer to 4a; the inclusion of the distractor Chopin did not seem to make those who had suggested Romantic reconsider their answer to the previous question.

Music A2

Question 5

Most candidates were able to describe at least some aspects of the accompaniment, most commonly referring to the syncopated call and response idea with the horn. There was often a lack of precision, however, particularly regarding how often the cymbal played.

Question 6

The most common correct observations here were the change of melody instrument and the staccato string chords.

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the jazz influence.
- (b) Many candidates identified the use of swung quavers and syncopation as typical jazz features. Some candidates described jazz features which were not heard in the extract, however, and did not therefore receive credit for these.

Music B1

Question 8

Some candidates accurately observed that the melody was played heterophonically but fewer commented on the bass line.

Question 9

- (a) Although many candidates did correctly identify the oud, a large number said either guitar or sitar.
- (b) Most candidates gained at least one mark. The most common correct reference was to the ostinato pattern.

Question 10

This was quite well answered, but India and Latin America were frequently suggested.

Music B2

Question 11

This was very well answered, with most candidates correctly choosing glissando.

Question 12

This was much less secure; some candidates correctly identified the shakuhachi, but dizi was a common incorrect answer, and many more candidates did not name a flute-like instrument at all.

Question 13

Answers were generally not very precise, but most candidates were able to gain at least some credit here, usually for describing an aspect of the semiquaver ascending and descending arpeggio in bars 9 to 12.

Question 14

Some candidate correctly identified Japan, but China was a common wrong answer.

Music B3

Question 15

Some candidates correctly identified the sarōd, but sitar was a more frequent wrong answer.

Question 16

- (a) Alap was correctly stated by most candidates.

- (b) The features of this section were clearly well understood, including that the music is slow and freely improvised.

Question 17

- (a) Far fewer candidates identified this section as gat.
- (b) The features were better known, including that the tablā plays the tāla and that the music is more metrical, and therefore credit was given.

Question 18

- (a) Candidates were more secure in identifying the jhāla section.
- (b) They again were able to describe the features reasonably well, including that the soloist speeds up and there is much use of fast repeated notes.

Music C1

Question 19

The key, E flat major, was correctly identified by most candidates.

Question 20

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

Question 21

Answers here were usually rather imprecise, with most implying that the whole two bar pattern was repeated exactly. Where observations were correct, recognition of the different melodic shape in bar 15 was the most common point made.

Question 22

Most candidates correctly named the interval as a perfect fifth.

Question 23

Most candidates gained at least some credit here, usually for recognition that the same melody was played in a minor key.

Question 24

The correct option, march, was usually chosen.

Question 25

- (a) Identification of the Romantic period was fairly good.
- (b) Most candidates noted the very large orchestra; many others commented on the presence of brass instruments but without reference to their role and melodic importance in the orchestra, or the range of brass instruments that were included.

Music D1

Question 26

Only a few responses accurately described how the material was extended.

Question 27

This was much better answered; most candidates could describe the position of the extract within the overall minuet and trio structure.

Question 28

Most answers correctly translated this as sweetly.

Question 29

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

Music D2

Question 30

- (a) Few candidates knew that this was the transition.
- (b) Very few candidates knew that the purpose of the section was to modulate to the dominant.

Question 31

- (a) Very few candidates correctly identified cellos and basses.
- (b) Very few candidates gave precise detail about how the idea was used.

Question 32

Very few candidates were able to explain what happens next in the symphony, suggesting insufficient aural familiarity with the work.

Question 33

Most candidates correctly identified the year as 1794.

Music D3

Question 34

- (a) The correct option, Der Landesvater, was usually chosen as the name of the theme.
- (b) Most candidates correctly identified this as the second subject in E major. There was less understanding demonstrated that the second subject would usually start in the dominant.

Question 35

This was fairly well answered, with candidates identifying sequence as the compositional device.

Question 36

Most candidates chose the correct option of Clarinet, Oboe, Flute.

Question 37

Most candidates correctly identified the Fuchslied as the next part of the music.

Music D4

Question 38

Few candidates were able to give any precise detail about how the music was different. The most common correct point was about the whole orchestra playing.

Question 39

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

Question 40

Very few candidates were able to describe the music with enough precision.

Question 41

Most candidates were able to describe the hand-stopping technique but were less clear about why it was used.

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Paper 0978/02
Performing

Key messages

It is essential to meet the minimum performing time 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.

Candidates should give consideration to the need for appropriate variety in their performance, even if the printed music does not include expression markings.

General comments

The range of achievement was wide; some of the performing was extremely accomplished, but other pieces were somewhat hesitant. There was a notable increase in the use of online sources and arrangements of music, particularly in ensembles, and these were not always of high quality.

Unfortunately, the problem with short performances still persists, as has been stated before in this report. The minimum performing time is four minutes in total, but a number of candidates' performances did not reach 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.

A number of recordings had clearly been edited. Sometimes this involved piecing together different sections of a piece; other examples included creating fake repeats by copying and pasting the first section. This must not happen – candidates may record their pieces as many times as they (or the centre) wish, but the final recording must be a complete take without any editing of the music itself.

Solos

Most solo repertoire was well chosen and appropriate to the candidate. The best performances were outstanding in technique and interpretation, but others were very hesitant and stumbling. Centres are reminded that if a piece is intended to be accompanied, then it should be.

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. This is particularly important for pieces which may not include printed performance directions. This applies not only to repertoire in older (particularly baroque) styles but also to much modern popular music, particularly when it has been taken from online sources. The lack of dynamic markings in a piece does not mean that a candidate should not perform with appropriate dynamic variety. Likewise, candidates should consider if a drum part marked fortissimo throughout is actually effective in a solo performing context, rather than in a stadium gig performed by the original drummer. The onus is on the candidate to demonstrate the skills being assessed – if a piece does not afford the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to perform with phrasing and expression, then other repertoire may be more appropriate.

Ensembles

The majority of candidates submitted appropriate ensemble performances which met the syllabus requirements and demonstrated clear ensemble skills. There were many examples, however, where candidates performed ensemble parts which were significantly less demanding than their solos, limiting the marks they could achieve compared to their ability. Unfortunately, some of the more serious problems which are listed here every year 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, or the candidate playing a melody instrument accompanied by piano. 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 (often from a graded piano syllabus) to which drums and/or bass had been added. 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.

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.

The most common issues with marking are similar to previous sessions and are summarised again 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 still a few 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. 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.

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 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 USB.
- Videoed performances should not be sent.
- CDs should be sent with a separate track listing, which should not be written on the CD itself.
- Tracks on USBs should be accurately labelled.
- 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 message

- Centres must check that all coursework is sent and that all compositions and recordings, including completed paperwork, is included in the submission. Centres are asked to take particular care over this point, in the interests of their candidates.
- Scores must be submitted in hard copy irrespective of the software used to produce them.
- When editing the score, candidates are encouraged to view the task as composing a piece of music rather than just completing a technical exercise. To this end, staves should be clearly labelled with the chosen instrumentation, a tempo marking, some indication of the dynamics and articulation, and (where appropriate) bowing. In many cases, at least one of these aspects is overlooked.
- Care should be taken that the melodic line is appropriate for the instrument chosen. This is not just a matter of not going outside the possible range of the instrument but writing characteristically for that instrument.
- Lyrics with a few chord symbols are not sufficient as notation of a song for the purposes of the examination. Even if the chords are wholly accurate, such scores can only be given a low mark. Some attempt must always be made to notate at least part of the vocal line.
- Work submitted on files must be able to be accessed by the Moderator and not rely on any specialist software programme.

General comments

There was a huge variety of work across the spectrum, ranging from excellent to weak and repetitive; standards range from rudimentary and basic to mature, satisfying and musically imaginative work. Some centres had clearly encouraged candidates to pay attention to the creative treatment of the elements of music and the development of material, which reflected a realistic grasp of the application of the criteria. In other centres, the lack of 'development' of the initial ideas was still an area of some concern; in addition, the correct use of cadences, and a variety of chords (with inversions), including true changes of key, was lacking.

Several candidates achieved full marks and their compositions demonstrated an excellent understanding of an array of musical rudiments, as they were able to develop themes in a very creative and mature manner. These compositions also showed good awareness of a range of musical structures and genres, and ICT had been exploited in imaginative ways.

Compositions achieving lower marks lacked sufficient direction and invention. Many of these lacked sufficient development, and in the use of such structures as Ternary or Rondo, opportunity was not always taken to offer variation or further manipulation of material in the recurring 'A' section.

Further, some pieces at the lower end of the range did not show sufficient reflection as to how the different parts in a composition related to each other. Candidates seemed intent on ensuring bars were based on chords (usually primary triads) and movement outside the recognised triad was often very limited.

It should be noted that candidates who submit minimalist compositions must consider the requirements of the assessment criteria if they wish to secure higher marks. Musical understanding, including that of sufficiently varied melodic, rhythmic and harmonic substance, must be evidenced and utilised within their work, and this genre does not easily offer this opportunity.

Administration by centres was generally well presented and organised. The most common problems were incorrect addition of marks, inaccurate transcription of marks from one form to another or missing documentation.

Assessment

Overall, the marking this year was often realistic and broadly accurate, and though there were many examples of assessment being on the generous side, it was clear that the content of the work had been carefully monitored and controlled, with discerning judgements made when considering the outcome in terms of the assessment criteria.

Acknowledgement of excellent work is straightforward enough. Occasionally, marks for lower range pieces tended to be a little harsh and did not always give credit for the positive musical features seen in a composition (even if the overall stylistic effect was unconvincing or lacking in substance). The difficulty arises when mid- and lower-range pieces have been awarded higher marks than they deserve; in these cases, the outcomes lack the refinement and sophisticated musical understanding commensurate with higher bands of assessment.

Compositions

Top-band compositions fully satisfied all assessment criteria and showed imagination, a clear understanding of structure with an excellent employment of texture, timbre, composition and harmony as appropriate to the style. Weaker submissions lost credit mainly because of inadequate structural control, too much basic repetition of material, a lack of development and insufficient textural variety. Tasks were mostly appropriate and it was really encouraging that many centres supported candidates to follow their musical interests.

However, some centres had chosen to set class tasks that all candidates followed for Composition 1. Whilst this reflected a pleasing understanding of harmonies and textures conventional to a Western tonal style, with idiomatic writing noted throughout candidates' work, they were also formulaic, similar in a number of respects and increasingly predictable. Candidates must be encouraged to produce individual and original responses and develop their compositions for different instrumentations.

Some of the best submissions were from candidates who had clearly spent time researching a particular style, and it was pleasing to see evidence of their efforts imaginatively portrayed in original ideas.

Score Presentation/Notation

Scores were generally well presented and of an excellent standard when exported as a PDF file from Sibelius or similar. This is a commendable practice, reflecting well on the professional approach found in centres. A well-edited score or a clearly set-out and detailed annotation demonstrates that the candidate is in command of the creative processes that led to the composition.

However, candidates who prefer to supply an annotation for Composition 2 should think carefully as to the format and detail that they provide. Remember that it should be a comparable presentation to a full score.

In particular:

- It should be a clear guide to the aural experience of listening to the piece, with a key to the meaning of the symbols used.
- It should indicate timings of when significant structural or musical details occur so the effectiveness of the score can be measured against the recording.
- It should reveal a firm grasp of the musical content of the piece in terms of melodic ideas, rhythmic character, harmonic palette, ways in which texture is explored, and ways in which instruments are used.

Centres are reminded that candidates who compose songs should always notate the voice part, at the very least. If they cannot also notate the accompaniment in full, they could write chord symbols, so that there is at least a guide to the intended nature of the accompaniment. It must be stressed, however, that a song presented with just the words and a few chord symbols does not constitute an adequate form of notation.

Recorded Performance

Most of the recordings submitted were of synthesised performances, often for example, simply the computer playback of the Sibelius or similar score. Recordings extracted from music software were mostly well balanced and of excellent quality. Others were less thoughtfully produced, with little regard for balance between the various parts and in some cases the entire piece was simply far too quiet.

There were some recordings of live performances, which gave a true insight into the composition. 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.

CDs must be capable of playback on a normal, single standard domestic hi-fi CD player. CDs which can only be played through particular computer software must not be submitted. Centres are asked to pay particular attention to this requirement, and to convert the recording format, if necessary, when recordings are assembled on the CD.

Administration

Most of the paperwork was submitted on time, well presented with clear attention to detail, and with all the necessary paperwork and signatures in order. In the main, the collation of recordings was well organised with tracks clearly labelled and submitted with a track list as required. Some centres included track timings, which is of further assistance to the Moderator, and in most cases additional information was included with the coursework to justify the assessment awarded by the centre.

However, there were several instances of the following problems:

- Incorrect track lists or no track lists.
- Inaccurate or missing assessment sheets.
- Missing scores or recordings.
- Compositions being submitted on separate CDs (for each candidate).
- Work in bulky folders, or lots of 'loose' sheets which were unwieldy to navigate.

When such administrative issues arose, for the most part they were dealt with promptly, with centres sending replacement assessment sheets, work, recordings, or providing the information as requested.

Without all the correct forms, correctly and fully completed, the Moderators' task becomes very difficult; therefore please take extra care when submitting all materials relating to the coursework.

Final Comment

Composition submissions can be demanding of teachers as there are several aspects to be incorporated; Moderators are grateful for all the hard work and care taken by teachers in assembling the work.