

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01

Listening

Key messages:

- Read the question carefully and answer relevantly
- Relate the answer to appropriate examples of the music (or relevant contextual details).
- Locate the examples as precisely as possible in relation to the events (or structure) of the music. Do not rely on CD timings as reference points.

General.

On the whole candidates were, in fact, very careful to answer all aspects of each question, only a few having read it too quickly that they answered about the wrong movements (in **Question 2**), or ignored instructions regarding numbers and range of examples.

They were also generally well-practised at keeping relevance in mind but there were several instances of long passages of carefully-memorised information being included that made no contribution to answering the question, e.g. background to the title *Eroica* in **Question 1**.

Section C answers that made clear, identifiable references to examples of music, musicians or groups were nearly always stronger than ones which, although well-argued, remained at a level of generalities.

Overall, candidates had been very well-prepared for the examination. Most candidates showed clear evidence of having listened closely to the Prescribed and Core repertoire for **Sections A** and **B**. They were generally fluent in writing about what they could hear, some only at the level of dynamics and instruments but many with a grasp of a range of appropriate technical vocabulary.

Section A

Question 1

This was most popular question in the Section. Candidates knew the work well and there were a number of very impressive answers. Most chose to deal with every section of the movement in a consecutive commentary, even finding ways to include references to the Introduction and Coda. The best answers carefully avoided describing details of the music simply to show they knew them, but highlighted specific features that illustrated each variation technique. The level of understanding and use of technical terms were often very well-developed, some, indeed, sophisticated. A small number of candidates decided to discuss Beethoven's variation techniques by type, referring appropriately to examples from the music. These were sometimes less successful because they encountered difficulty in describing the precise location of each example. Some answers became very vague because no initial distinction had been made between the bass and *Prometheus* themes.

Question 2

Answers were either very good, some exceptionally so, or weak, with few in the middle range of marks. Confident candidates knew the music really well and were mostly those that kept the issue of the differences in treatment of the Menuet and Trio form in focus, rather than attempting random stylistic comparisons. Candidates who concentrated on describing 'surface' features such as note-values, ornamentation, dynamics or articulation in detail, found it hard to identify any matters of significance but some were well-informed about the origin of the Trio section and were able to relate the three examples to this. A few weak answers revealed fundamental misconceptions about the music, such as that Haydn's movement contained clarinets and that Mozart's ensemble was an orchestra, or even a concerto.

Question 3

Answers reflected a very wide range of achievement both in candidates' understanding of Sonata Form and in their familiarity with relevant music. Most recognised that 'repetition' of earlier material and an approach to an 'ending' were key features. Many were also aware that there were usually two principal themes to be restated, perhaps with some differences, but clear explanations – or examples – of what such changes might be, were only given by the very best-informed candidates. Some knew that there might be a change of key but were vague about where or why it was applied; some suggested that details of the scoring or dynamics might be different but were unable to exemplify this, only a few citing the most obvious example studied among the Prescribed Works, i.e. the first movement of Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*. Several of the strongest answers described very convincingly the more subtle details of the change of roles in the Recapitulation in the first movements of Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet*, and/or Haydn's symphony. Several candidates had misunderstood the nature either of Haydn's second movement or the last movement of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*, citing these as examples of 'recapitulation'.

Section B

There was little evidence of study of repertoire beyond the Core Works. This was particularly evident in **Question 6**. It was clear that the Mussorgsky and Vivaldi pieces, in particular, had been studied very closely, in a similar way to the Prescribed Works. Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed their listening but sometimes the expression of enthusiastic personal responses, while certainly creditable, tended to crowd out more pertinent observations.

Question 4

There were many good answers to this question, some of them very carefully balanced. While most candidates thought that having such a wide palette of instrumental timbres enabled Ravel to suggest the pictures more vividly, some chose examples that illustrated both sides of the argument. Some of the commentaries focused primarily on how the music itself (rather than the orchestration) was suggestive, without showing an adequate recognition of which features of the music were Ravel's and which Mussorgsky's.

Question 5

As with **Question 4**, many candidates tried to approach this question in a similar way, i.e. via detailed narrative commentaries, hoping that these might throw up some relevant points about tempo *en route*. Confusion between tempo and note-values was common – a passage at a slow tempo but in semi-quavers being described as 'quicker' than an earlier one in quavers. Insufficient familiarity with the scenes described in the poems led to vagueness in many answers.

Section A introduces candidates to many listening skills that are equally relevant and valuable in **Section B**, including familiarising themselves with tempo terms and comparing different interpretations. Some candidates who had listened closely to only one recording described features of that interpretation as though they were Vivaldi's explicit instruction, e.g. particular *ritardandos*.

Question 6

A wide range of repertoire was drawn upon in the best answers to this question and a variety of relationships between composing technique and effect was demonstrated. Most candidates chose to discuss one of the Core Works in varying degrees of convincing detail. The weaker answers left it at that. Some of the fullest answers to the question extended its scope by drawing on other genres, such as overtures, symphonies, background music to films, and ballet.

Interpretations were offered freely. While some of these suggested a strong personal response to, and familiarity with, the music, others varied between the speculative and the very-well memorised.

Many candidates seemed to have thought that once they had written a close commentary, explaining what happens, and what was supposedly represented, that they had done enough, but the question said 'show how': effects needed to be explained in relation to the techniques used. Descriptions needed to be followed through.

'A range of examples' should have prompted the thought that different sorts of technique should be discussed and that this demand might not be fully met by concentrating the whole answer on just one (even though the examples were from different movements within the single work). In spite of the admonition not to refer to more than one of the Core Works many did, determined to display all that they knew about the Mussorgsky and Vivaldi pieces, as well as *Mars*.

Question 7

Answers tended to be rather black-and-white, over-generalised. Nearly all candidates showed some knowledge of formal 'patronage', as exemplified by Haydn's life at Esterházy, but many believed that he had to follow 'rules' of composition and express only his master's own feelings. The question's requirement that 'more than one period' be discussed was often met by assigning Beethoven, as a 'freelance' musician, very definitely to the Romantic period. More nuanced answers sometimes expanded to sketch mediaeval and Renaissance practices with regard to church musicians, or showed an awareness of different shades of meaning of the word 'patron' which included the power of audiences via the box office, as well as present-day recording companies. Few actually dealt with the 'commissioning' of music.

Question 8

Most of the answers to this question dealt with it in terms of the Viennese 'Classical' period. The most successful drew knowledgeably on a wide range of repertoires to illustrate how later 'periods' built on, and drew from, the 'Classical' period, but also had defining musical features of their own. Some attempted to distinguish it from the popular use of the term to describe music that is not e.g. from a folk tradition, or 'pop', but very few candidates attempted to apply the term in a wider, global sense.

Question 9

Candidates were very knowledgeable about the electronic technologies of today and clearly relished the opportunity to describe these. Most were careful to organise their answers in a way that addressed each of the three aspects specified – 'composed, performed, heard', but many either ignored entirely the nub of the question 'How...changed', or dealt insufficiently with it. A nostalgic view was expressed by several candidates in their discussion of changes, along the lines of 'the great increase in access to music is to be welcomed' but that a perceived 'lack of discrimination in both what was produced and its reception is to be deplored.' The proliferation of new genres was often listed but specific details of how electronic technology had contributed to them were not always explained.

Question 10

Most candidates who chose this question were able to give knowledgeable, fairly detailed, accounts of the construction of the instrument. Surprisingly, though, some who described the siting and purpose of a chin rest, failed to mention how many strings the instrument has, or how changes in pitch are brought about. Most, also, were clear in their explanations of the terms *arco* and *pizzicato*, and some understood *col legno* and could cite an example of its use, but very few mentioned double-stopping. The best answers were careful to address the 'solo' and 'orchestral' aspects of the question, some showing a good understanding of differences of role and technical demands, citing and explaining e.g. *tremolo*. Discussions of virtuosity, however, were very vague – the use of trills being the most frequently-mentioned device.

MUSIC

Paper 8663/06
Investigation and Report

Key Messages for both Levels:

- Convincing evidence of a range of attentive listening over a sustained period of time must be offered.
- All reading should be thoroughly assimilated, and used to inform understanding throughout the Investigation, not reproduced *verbatim* or paraphrased in the Report.
- Wherever possible the candidate's own judgements about the music heard should be supported by reference to specific examples chosen independently of other commentators.

General Comments (both levels)

Listening: Those candidates who had included either (i) a CD of separate, carefully-chosen extracts, or (ii) a score accompanied by precise references to its bar numbers, or (iii) MS examples which they had selected themselves (i.e. not copied from another's commentary), were fully able to demonstrate their aural perceptiveness, their understanding of compositional processes and their command of appropriate technical language. What some candidates saw as a simple and handy way to demonstrate their familiarity with their chosen music, i.e. enclosing a CD of the complete work(s) with references to CD timings, was not an appropriate way to offer examples; it is also not acceptable to simply direct Examiners to the piece(s) on YouTube. By contrast, some investigations included (i) copies of transcriptions of all the pieces referred to, (ii) a CD of excellent examples that served well to substantiate the points made in the text, and (iii) full recordings. The last were intended explicitly to enable the Examiner to judge whether the examples selected to illustrate candidates' judgments did, in fact, have the significance claimed within their overall musical contexts. Here, therefore, the inclusion of a set of complete recordings – after copious aptly-brief audio examples, with many cross-references to the printed music and the text – was appropriate. They completed the 'evidence'.

Long, narrative commentaries, that described rather than explained pieces of music, without audio examples, usually did offer some evidence that the music had been listened to. Where specific moments selected for particular emphasis were ones of some significance, then some further understanding was suggested only implicitly.

Contextual understanding/reading: most candidates opened their Report with a paragraph or two of 'background', a composer's or performer's biography, the genesis of a musical or an album, the early history of a genre, or a pop group, or definitions of a period or movement, such as Impressionist, along the lines of a conventional essay 'introduction' for a general reader. The Component, however, is a Report (to the Examiners) of what the candidate has learned during the year. It is important that candidates should research relevant background to their topic, but these preambles contributed little to what the Assessment Criteria emphasises as contextual understanding. In the highest bands the descriptors look for how the knowledge acquired has 'informed' the candidate's Investigation. Some candidates simply paraphrased passages that had been read, but not assimilated and needed to make greater attempts to demonstrate their relevance to their study of the music.

The Internet offered a very valuable resource. It gave access to recordings and scores, as well as scholarly articles, and many candidates made very profitable use of these. Encyclopaedias and the sites that offer guides on 'how to listen' to music gave many others useful starting-points for their Investigation. Wikipedia was a legitimate first port of call for many candidates (for some, however, it appeared to be their only resource). This ease of access allowed several candidates to treat the Investigation as a piece of desk-top research, carried out over a very short period of time, in a few cases even in one or two days only. In these cases more evidence that something had actually been 'learned', or that any understanding of a worthwhile body of music had been developed, would have proved useful.

This also led to an increase in the incidence of plagiarism. Candidates were required to sign and certify that the work is entirely their own, and that every source had been acknowledged. Several did not meet this requirement. The accompanying signature of a teacher is assumed to indicate that a named person confirms this to be the case. Candidates require guidance in the proper use of acknowledgement of sources, i.e. how to present bibliographies and when and how to insert footnote citations. Where there had been judicious supervision by the teacher there were far fewer cases of unacceptable paraphrase: this is something that candidates may fall into unwittingly by reproducing too closely notes taken during reading.

The Report is not an 'essay', it is a record of what the candidate has been listening to and reading throughout the year and a statement of what has been learned. Choosing the most suitable format for communicating this is part of the candidate's task - one in which, of course, they need some advice.

In a number of Centres, candidates appear to have been directed rather closely on the overall presentation of their scripts: several began with 'Abstracts'; some, although on very disparate topics, adopted the same sequencing of numbers for sections and sub-sections or paragraphs; a considerable number used identical fonts and layout. While this may prove helpful more generally in other spheres, there was sometimes a danger that it had turned the component into a 'writing about' (almost a word-processing) exercise.

Presentation may take any appropriate form. The candidate should make the decision, in discussion with the Centre, about what will best represent what (s)he has been doing and has learned. (The guidance in the Syllabus regarding an approximate number of words which refers to 'equivalent in length to an essay of 2500/3000 words' should not be read as implying that Reports must be presented as 'essays'.)

Documentation: a handful of very conscientious Centres provided a large amount of material. However, it is not necessary to include printouts of every article read on the Internet - if the bibliography records the sites properly, then they may check for themselves; nor is it necessary to include one or more rough drafts of the Report; the inclusion of notes made while listening on different occasions during the year (sometimes handwritten), however, was helpful.

8663/06

There was a considerable increase in the number of candidates taking this Component, many of whom had clearly enjoyed studying music of their own choice. There were a satisfying number of marks in the top bands. However, some Centres entering candidates for the first time had not taken sufficient notice of some of the requirements laid out in the Syllabus (4.6). Summarised, these are:

- The music for study should be drawn from repertoire other than that laid down for Component 1;
- It should be of not less than 30 minutes duration;
- Audio examples must accompany the Report;
- A full bibliography and discography must be included.

Rough guidance as to length suggests 'approximately 2500 words.'

Some Reports were short, not much more than 1000 words, and had neither bibliography nor discography (though wikipedia was often quickly identified as the principal source of information). To improve, these reports would have benefitted from an actual discussion of a single piece of music, and include audio examples, to indicate that the music discussed had been heard. By contrast, there were outstanding candidates who met all of the above requirements, and who provided considerable evidence, sometimes in the form of 'Listening Notes', compiled over a significant period of time by candidates who had engaged in attentive listening to a substantial body of music, assiduous reading at a sensible level and reflection.

The most able were those who not only demonstrated in commentaries that were judiciously selective (i.e. focusing on significant features, rather than descriptions), that they were listening hard but had also gone on to form some sort of 'overview' of their topic – an appreciation of change over time, or of overall differences of approach to interpretation. These were ones who, at the end of their Investigation, could summarise and illustrate the main features of composer or performer 'style', not simply list what they had done.

Duplication with Paper 1: some Centres, perhaps new to this Component, seemed not to have taken note of the exclusion explicitly stated in the Syllabus concerning topics related too closely to the Prescribed or Core Works studied in preparation for Component 1. A number of candidates had written about Vivaldi's *Seasons*: while some credit could be given for observations about *Spring* and *Autumn*, remarks about the other two

concerti could not. Others had widened their knowledge of repertoire slightly, e.g. by studying one of the Prescribed Work composers such as Beethoven. Credit for a general understanding of the Form also belonged properly to Paper 1. This component requires further work: it should not only widen repertoire encountered, but also extend the listening skills of the candidate.

The best work submitted was that of candidates who had chosen to study in greater depth a composer or performer with whose music they were already closely acquainted. Most had developed considerable familiarity with significant examples of the relevant repertoire before they began their Investigation and therefore got off to a good start, making full use of this opportunity to deepen their understanding of music they rated highly. The best of these were not empty eulogies: they strove to explain influences and intentions, and to demonstrate these in convincing examples.

Other candidates who also focused on their particular enthusiasm, often for a popular genre, were also fairly successful in explaining its development with reference to specific musical features. Some, though, opted for a whistle-stop, socio-cultural history in which the focus of attention was mainly on the lyrics. Topics such as these have their own merits, but a careful scrutiny of the Assessment Criteria will reveal that credit will be limited: some Reports of this type achieved high marks for 'Contextual understanding' but, in the absence of convincing evidence of aural perception, the reward for other Assessment Criteria was lower.