

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/11
Listening, Analysis and Historical
Study Sections A and B

Key messages

- Candidates should consider all of the aural evidence in **Section A**, rather than jumping to conclusions based on one aspect of the performance only
- In **Section B**, candidates should be discouraged from 'pre-planning' one piece for comparison in the contextual awareness question – they should select an appropriate piece for comparison from their knowledge of repertoire once they have considered the extract in detail

General comments

The range of achievement in this paper was wide, but there was clear evidence that all candidates understood the format of the paper and the nature of the question types. There was an improvement this year in the question on contextual awareness for those studying Topic B2 in particular.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

- 1 Candidates were mostly well prepared for this question and there were some very successful answers, although the range of achievement was rather wide this year. Most candidates observed the difference in pitch between the two recordings, and most commented that the second performance was slower (many described the second recording as being substantially slower, but the difference was in fact rather slight). Most candidates commented on the harsh clarinet sound in performance 2, but many then concluded that this meant it was a period instrument and that the second performance was therefore historically informed, even when all of the other evidence in their answers pointed to the opposite conclusion. Most candidates commented on the differences in dynamics between the two performances, and also between the score and the recordings, although it was not uncommon for some of the observations to be incorrect. Many candidates commented on the differences between the two cadenzas, but only a very small number commented on the much larger difference between the recordings in respect of the altered melodic line in performance 1 in bars 45/46 and 49/50. Whilst there was no expectation that candidates should know about the bassett clarinet, the Examiners were surprised that so few candidates observed this difference at all, even if they did not comment on its effect or suggest reasons. The strongest answers covered a wide range of these points and used their knowledge of performance practice to comment in detail about the reasons for the differences and their effect. Some candidates observed some of the differences but did not use a knowledge of performance practice issues to support their answers. Less successful answers contained inaccuracies in the listening, drew some incorrect conclusions about performance practice, or did not cover sufficient aspects of the performance for the higher mark bands.

Section B, Topic B1 Instrumental Music

- 2 Virtually all candidates answered this 'starter' question accurately.
- 3 This was well answered with many candidates gaining both marks, although a lack of precision was a problem for some candidates.
- 4 There were some very strong answers here with many candidates gaining full marks.

- 5 Candidates answered this question fairly well; virtually all commented on the polyphonic texture, and most gained at least one further mark. The question asked for a detailed description and those candidates who were precise in their description, covering a number of the aspects of the texture as the passage progressed, were very successful.
- 6 This question was well answered; there were many points that could be made about the differences, and a number of candidates gained three or more marks.
- 7 Answers here were fairly good; most candidates observed that the music was the same as the passage starting in bar 21 and could then describe the differences.
- 8 A and B were often identified accurately; C usually and D less often.
- 9 Most candidates identified the rhythm error; many identified the pitch error as well. Where the error had been spotted, it was virtually always corrected accurately.
- 10 There was a wide range of answers to this question, which was tackled with varying degrees of success. The best answers were able to compare a number of areas of style with appropriate works. Many candidates focused on the programmatic and nationalist nature of the extract, and carefully chose repertoire which allowed them to make sophisticated comparisons, therefore demonstrating a strong sense of wider contextual awareness. To be successful in this question, candidates need to be encouraged to draw upon their knowledge of repertoire from this topic when choosing suitable works for comparison. Those who appeared to have a pre-planned comparison piece were often clutching at straws to find areas for comparison, making either very vague points, focusing only on differences rather than similarities too, or claiming similarities which were rather tenuous – a frequent example being that the rhythm of this extract was similar to the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony because it contained three short notes followed by one long one.

Section B, Topic B2 Vocal Music

- 11 This question was answered with varying degrees of success. Most candidates observed that Max is a tenor but only a few candidates made three or four valid observations.
- 12 This question was fairly well answered in general, although the F sharp was quite often missing. A few candidates identified the general shape only (for which they received some credit) and a small number of candidates did not complete any or part of the passage.
- 13 Answers to this question were rather better than 11; most candidates made a number of valid observations about Kaspar's part, most commonly focusing on voice type, chromaticism and melodic shape.
- 14 This question was answered very well.
- 15 A and C were often placed incorrectly, but B and D were identified more accurately in general.
- 16 Candidates answered this question well, with many gaining both marks.
- 17 Many candidates identified the rhythm error, although fewer accurately identified the pitch error. Where the error had been spotted, it was usually corrected accurately.
- 18(a) There were only a small number of correct answers here.
- 18(b) Virtually all candidates answered this question correctly, however.
- 18(c) This question was well answered with most candidates gaining at least one mark.
- 19 This question was answered rather better on the whole than the equivalent question last year. Many answers commented on the use of the chorus, role of the orchestra and the extent to which the music was divided into sections, and made purposeful comparisons with other operas, often by Verdi and sometimes by Wagner.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/12

Listening, Analysis and Historical
Study Sections C and D

Key messages

- In **Section C**, the (a) Questions, dealing with the Prescribed Work, demand not only a thorough knowledge of the work but also the ability to address the specific points raised in the Question. Candidates sometimes need to focus on this second aspect a little more carefully.
- In the (b) Questions in **Section C** candidates should demonstrate their understanding of the Topic in a broader sense, illustrating answers with references to a range of relevant repertoire. Some candidates seem able to refer only to a very small number of works.
- In **Section D** candidates are expected to construct clear and cogent arguments and to express them in language of good quality. Some candidates appear to need more practice in these specific skills.

General Comments

Most candidates were well prepared to answer the Questions in this year's Paper. All candidates had studied either Topic C3 *Modernism in France* or Topic C2 *The Origins of Opera*. *Modernism in France* was substantially the more popular option and there were answers to all three Questions. In Topic C2 candidates almost all chose **Question C2(b)(i)**; there were very few answers to **Question C2(b)(ii)**.

In **Section D** there were answers to all five Questions. The majority chose D2 or D3. The best answers were impressive, both in their understanding of the subject and in their command of language to express quite complex ideas.

Section C

Question C3(a)

Candidates were well prepared to answer this Question. Most chose to focus on the flute theme at fig. 1 (described as 'Theme 1' in the Teachers' Guide) or the horn theme three bars before fig. 2 ('Theme 2'); some wrote about the oscillating horn motif at bar 6 ('Motif A'). Several candidates restricted themselves to noting subsequent appearances of these themes, although the best answers showed how relationships between the themes can be observed. Some candidates referred to points in the score later than fig. 17: although this was not required by the Question, it demonstrated a good knowledge of the whole score.

The paucity of scholarly studies of *Daphnis et Chloé*, as compared with *The Rite of Spring*, seemed to have had a very positive effect on the way candidates approached this work. Rather than struggling to understand and reproduce highly complex analytical theories drawn from published literature, they were free to understand *Daphnis* at a level appropriate to this stage in their musical and intellectual development. This was often reflected in the generally high quality of their answers.

Question C3(b)(i)

The candidates who answered this Question had a generally good grasp of the facts surrounding the origins of the *Groupe des six*, although not everyone referred to the first performance of Satie's *Parade* as a significant catalyst. Almost all wrote about Jean Cocteau's pamphlet *Le coq et l'arlequin* and cited him as the self-appointed spokesman of the group. Discussions about the music often singled out Poulenc or Milhaud as the composers who most fully embraced Cocteau's ideals; relatively few wrote about Auric. Less easily defensible was the statement, put forward by some, that Honegger was the most closely identified with the group's supposed aesthetic. Candidates referred to a variety of relevant works, often including *Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel* and the *Album des six*.

Question C3(b)(ii)

This was a popular Question. Almost all candidates were aware that Debussy disliked being described as an Impressionist, but pointed out the undeniable links between his music and paintings by artists such as Monet. There were several references, too, to Symbolist poets such as Verlaine, Mallarmé or Maeterlinck. The works most often referred to were the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *La mer*; some candidates also mentioned *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Question C2(a)

Most candidates understood well the role of the Chorus in *L'Orfeo*, writing about its function in commenting on the drama in the manner of an ancient Greek Chorus as well as its use to represent groups of protagonists such as Nymphs and Shepherds. Most described the madrigalian style of its music, showing how passages of polyphonic and homophonic music often contrast with each other. Relatively few considered the impact of the Chorus on the structure, although some understood that the placing of choruses, especially in Act I, helps to define the symmetrical structure of the Act.

Question C2(b)(i)

Candidates were reassuringly unanimous in the view that word painting was a very significant aspect of Italian madrigals in this period and most could give well-chosen examples from music by such composers as Marenzio, Monteverdi or Gesualdo.

Question C2(b)(ii)

Those few candidates who chose this Question tended to be more concerned to show how Venetian church music differed from the polyphonic style of Palestrina than to discuss the main issue to which the Question referred. They nevertheless had a reasonable knowledge of relevant repertoire.

Section D

Many of the answers in this year's **Section D** avoided the temptation to meander around the subject, even in the last two Questions where they are invited to express their opinion. The clarity of arguments and the quality of language were reasonable, although this requirement of **Section D** seemed not to have been universally understood.

Question D1

This Question was answered by only a small number of candidates. Answers encompassed most of the main points mentioned in the Mark Scheme, although no one gave a fully comprehensive answer.

Question D2

This was a very popular Question. All candidates understood the importance of Programme Music in the nineteenth century and most made a link with Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony. References to composers often focused on Berlioz (especially the *Symphonie fantastique*) and Liszt; some candidates mentioned Mendelssohn or Richard Strauss.

Question D3

This was another frequently answered Question. Most candidates wrote mainly about Verdi or Wagner, with references to quite a wide range of operas (*Rigoletto*, *La Traviata* and *Die Walküre* prominent among them). Several had a good understanding of the ways in which composers tried to make their operas true to life, especially in terms of increased continuity (even within 'number' operas); some made the point that however hard they may have tried, the nature of the genre is by its very nature artificial and therefore can never be entirely true to real life.

Question D4

This Question elicited a wide range of responses even though it was answered by a fairly small number of candidates. Some essays were rather discursive, while others had a good grasp of the main philosophical point (i.e. that sound is random, whereas music is sound that has been organised in some way).

Question D5

Several of the answers to this Question drew on candidates' personal experience, either of concerts or gigs they had attended or of performances they had taken part in. Most agreed with the proposition in the Question and thought that recordings cannot capture the atmosphere of live performances. Among the reasons they put forward were the multiple retakes used to eliminate blemishes from recorded performances, or the possibility in live performances of players taking risks. Some, on the other hand, wrote about music that is conceived in terms of recording and which is not intended for live performance.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/02
Performing

Key messages

- Ensure that candidates' recitals meet the time requirements
- Pieces which are just too technically demanding are likely to be less successful than slightly easier pieces played accurately, confidently and stylishly
- Ensembles need as much preparation as solos

General comments

Once again the Examiners greatly enjoyed visiting Centres for the performing examinations, where they were without exception made to feel welcome. Timetables for the examinations had been organised efficiently by Centres, and copies of the sheet music were readily available in virtually every case.

The standard of performances varied as would be expected, but there were a number of very good and a few outstanding performances. In virtually all cases, the candidates were well prepared for their recitals, with repertoire which was mostly well chosen. A few candidates played or sang pieces which were too demanding for them, and this usually had an impact in more than one assessment area, as there were inevitable problems with accuracy, intonation, phrasing and expression. It is important that Centres check the length of the recitals in advance; those which fall short of the minimum performing time of 15 minutes (Section A) cannot access the very highest marks. Solo performances were usually better prepared than ensembles; although many of the ensembles clearly reflected many hours of rehearsal together, there was a sense that some may have been arranged rather more hastily.

When advising students what they could perform in Components 2 and 42, it is important to note the allowable combinations. The option of 'ensemble / accompanying / duet' counts as one option only, not three different options, and therefore may only be used once per instrument. For example, if a student chooses piano accompanying for Section A, they may not also offer piano duet in Section B. None of the options in Component 2 may be repeated in Component 42; a student who plays only one instrument, therefore, must choose improvisation in Section B of Component 2 if they opt for Component 42.

Improvising

A small number of candidates opted for improvising in **Section B** this year. These improvisations were successful; the candidates were clearly well prepared for the task and made effective use of the stimulus materials in their performance.

Accompanying

The Examiners would like to thank all those teachers who undertook the accompanying themselves, and for arranging accompanists in other cases. A reliable accompanist is an extremely important part of these recitals, and the Examiners do not take this for granted.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/03
Composing

Key Messages

- Coursework exercises must be submitted with the teacher's markings and comments; drafts may also be included: fair copies, especially those produced with a computer notation program, must not be submitted.
- Each Coursework exercise must have an adequate incipit; thereafter no further passages of complete texture should normally be given.
- Compositions must follow carefully the instructions given for each commission.

Section A: Stylistic Exercises (Examination)

Almost all candidates attempted the Chorale harmonisation. There were too few examples of the other questions for general observations to be made.

Most candidates seemed to find this particular Chorale very difficult. Many of the workings were broadly correct in terms of the basic harmony, but lacked sufficient demonstration of stylistic characteristics to gain marks in the upper bands. Surprisingly, even in some otherwise well-handled examples, the cadence patterns typical of the style were often not properly applied. The minims in the melody at the cadences in bars 4 and 10 caused difficulties for most candidates: they typically tried to use a cadential 6/4 progression, but with chords Ic and V below the B minims. Few candidates ventured beyond the essential movement to the dominant; there were few attempts to explore and develop transient modulations within the phrases. There were many examples of carelessness in the use of accidentals in areas which departed from the tonic. The best workings showed competent voice leading, and a few excellent bass lines, which showed aural as well as practical familiarity with the style. Suspensions were quite rare, and not always correctly prepared when present. Given the availability of keyboards for candidates to use during the examination, some of the chord errors were surprising. It was not always clear that they had used the keyboards to check whether what they had written actually sounded as they imagined it would.

Section B: Stylistic Exercises (Coursework)

Presentation was erratic in terms of whether or not the exercises showed the teacher's markings and comments. While it is important that submissions should be clearly legible (which some were not), Centres are reminded that fair copies, especially those produced with a computer notation program, should never be submitted. All exercises must be dated, but they should be chosen primarily to demonstrate the candidate's level of understanding rather than the progress that has been made across the whole of the course.

All exercises, in whichever style, need to have a sufficiently long incipit to provide a model for the completion. In some of the Chorale exercises, only a single chord was given in full texture: this is too little to be helpful to candidates. The whole first phrase, or at least the first complete bar, should always be given in full.

Conversely, there were several exercises, especially (but not exclusively) String Quartets, in which there was too much given material. Candidates need to learn where and when a change of texture or of accompaniment pattern is required. There were many cases in which this important aspect of style was invariably given, which reduced the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the full extent of their stylistic awareness. In the case of Chorales, when there was too much given material, candidates sometimes had little more to do than complete the cadences. In this style, they need to learn how to recognise where the main modulations occur and how to handle harmonic pivots. If too much is given, it again reduces the opportunity for them to demonstrate the full extent of their harmonic and stylistic awareness. In the early stages of the course it may be useful to give candidates this kind of help, but in the five submitted exercises no material in full texture should normally be given after the end of the incipit.

In some exercises the incipits themselves contained mistakes. Sometimes these meant that it was impossible for candidates to avoid errors in their completions. Centres should take care to ensure that all incipits are correctly copied.

The five submitted exercises should cover a range of different keys, tempi or time signatures, according to what is appropriate within the chosen styles. Chorales should not all be in major keys, for example; Quartets should not all be Minuets; Accompaniments should not all be in common time. There were several examples of candidates' achievement being limited by too narrow a choice of examples.

Candidates need to be encouraged to hear their Coursework exercises performed so that they can engage with their completions as real music. The Examiners felt that some of the work would almost certainly have been better finished if candidates had actually listened to the effects of some of the things they had written. At this level, very few of them can be expected to have a fully developed inner ear. There are great opportunities in this part of the course for the purposeful development of aural awareness, but it was not clear that they were always being taken.

(a) Chorale Harmonisations

This was the most common option in Group A. There was some good work: in most cases the Coursework examples were considerably higher in quality than the examination exercise.

Very few candidates showed chord numbers or symbols under their working. It was a pity that such a fundamental aspect of good practice seemed to have been so often neglected.

There was little evidence to show that technical issues such as consecutives had been pointed out to candidates as a matter of routine.

(b) String Quartets

Candidates were generally comfortable with handling diatonic material in the tonic and with modulations to closely related keys. Opportunities for the use of chromatic harmony (e.g. the augmented 6th chord) were often missed.

Some exercises gave candidates little scope to do more than simply continue the given material. The shorter the exercise, the more this applied.

(c) Two-part Baroque Counterpoint

Few candidates chose this option. Exercises based on movements by Bach were often less accomplished than those by other composers which required less contrapuntal ingenuity or complexity.

(d) Early Romantic Keyboard Accompaniments

The range of work presented was often wider in this option than in some of the others. On the other hand, some Centres submitted exercises which demonstrated little more than harmonic continuation of a given figuration, however correct the harmony may have been. Some candidates were able to develop idiomatic accompaniments, imitating or reflecting the vocal line, especially in passages where there were rests in the voice part. Some of the less satisfactory exercises gave candidates little or no scope to demonstrate higher-level skills of this kind.

Centres should follow the example of the song exercises set for the examination, in always providing the words, with a translation. The words provide essential information about mood, phrasing and texture. There were several exercises based on Schubert songs in which the vocal melody was given without any words: a whole dimension of the music was thus ignored.

(e) Music in Jazz, Popular and Show styles

There were too few examples of this option for general comments to be made.

Section C: Commissioned Composition

There was a wide variety of pieces, covering all the options. Commission 1 was by far the most popular choice; the other commissions each attracted similar, though small, numbers of candidates.

It is important for candidates to observe the instructions given in the commissions in the exact terms in which they are stated. Commission 3, for example, required a piece for an instrumental ensemble, but there were instances of candidates writing for solo piano instead. In other cases pieces were only very loosely connected to the commission, as though they were pieces that the candidates themselves had chosen to compose, rather than direct responses to the set tasks. If candidates wish to have a free choice of what to compose, the appropriate place to do this is in Component 43.

Some candidates provided a commentary on their compositions. While this is not a requirement, the Examiners sometimes found the commentaries informative and helpful.

(a) Walter de la Mare: *Winter*

Most candidates wrote for voice and piano, although there were some who used an instrumental ensemble, or a solo instrument in addition to the piano. Much of the instrumental writing was idiomatic and effective, capturing the atmosphere of a wintry scene with expressive music. Many examples were strophic, but there were several through-composed settings as well.

The majority of the songs relied heavily on the accompaniment for structure and cohesion. There were often quite long interludes between the stanzas of the poem, which threatened the balance of a vocal composition. The writing for voice seemed, in general, to have received less attention. There was a surprisingly large number of examples of incorrect accentuation of the words, or of the text being broken by rests at inappropriate places. Several candidates took advantage of the many opportunities for word painting, but sometimes these undermined the continuity and cohesion of the song.

(b) Jason Castro: *If I Were You*

There were relatively few settings of this text. Most used a fairly standard pop-song idiom, in which the conventions of the style were well observed and imaginatively imitated. There were a few pieces in a Latin style, taking the name of Castro as a suggestion that the piece might be set in Cuba.

(c) *Reflections*

Several candidates who chose this option made a precise mid-point, with the second half of the piece an exact retrograde of the first. This was slightly in conflict with the requirement for three main sections; more significantly, the rather mechanical process of reversing the note order in a predominantly tonal style did not always work as satisfactorily as it might have done if a more adventurous language had been employed.

(c) Pitch and/or Rhythm Cells

Pieces using the pitches were often quite successful, although there were several in which the given cell was kept at its original pitch throughout and which did not show very much ingenuity in the use of the basic material. The best pieces were those in which candidates found ways of developing and extending the given cell within a well-planned structure.

The rhythm was usually treated more consistently than the pitches. Some pieces treated the given cell as a kind of Rumba (which it really was not) and attempted to use a Latin style which was sometimes light and witty, if not always entirely convincing.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/41
Dissertation

Key Messages

- Reading needs to be thoroughly assimilated: first-hand experience of the music to which it refers is necessary
- Presentation needs to be designed in such a way that all the evidence needed for a reader to understand any significant musical point in the text is incorporated.

General Comments

The standard of dissertation submitted was wider in range than in previous years, but still mostly high.

Marking was broadly satisfactory, with occasional instances of leniency and severity within the appropriate bands for each criterion. The most helpful submissions explained clearly how and why marks had been awarded; others could have included more detailed comments, not drawn from the band descriptors, to justify the marking. There were some specific issues about the generally lenient application of Criteria 3 and 4. Under Criterion 3 (Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary) centres should consider the accuracy and fullness of analysis; for the top marks under criterion 4, candidates' independent judgements should be substantiated by *musical* examples. Quotation from *written* sources to support arguments can be less effective as, although providing some evidence of scholarly research, it tends not to demonstrate as much musical understanding or independence.

The best dissertations delved quickly and directly into the **music**, whilst others could have dwelt less on historical background; it is more effective to weave this contextual understanding into conclusions based on musical evidence. As explained in last year's report, Contextual Understanding (criterion 2) can include context *within* a larger piece, or between pieces, where appropriate; it is not limited to background information, and so it is not always necessary to spend a number of pages "setting the scene".

Aural perception was most convincingly proved where candidates included a CD of excerpts (not whole tracks), and more importantly, where candidates were able to comment imaginatively and informatively on the effects that particular musical features created; this also demonstrated an ability to focus on *significant* features. It was pleasing that more candidates seemed to be using aural perception to analyse repertoire, clearly having paid attention to last year's report, which encouraged a departure from being overly 'score-bound.'

More CDs were included in this year's submissions compared to last. However, there were some cases where a score, or slightly longer audio examples, would have helped to support arguments more strongly. In-text manuscript examples are always helpful, and particularly so when the features under discussion are highlighted clearly; this assists the Moderator in verifying the claims made by the candidate. A balance between reading, score analysis and listening is essential; none of the three can be neglected entirely. The very best dissertations were informed by wider reading and listening (not necessarily confined to the precise topic chosen by the candidate).

It was clear from this year's dissertations that some topics or titles tended to be more successful than others; this is not to say that such topics could not have been handled successfully. Dissertations that mapped the development of an instrument, or those that focused more on social or historical context missed opportunities to demonstrate aural perception and analytical skills, as well as opportunities to substantiate judgements with *musical* examples; they also tended to be less convincing. In feedback on proposals, a number of candidates had been encouraged to rework their titles into questions, or to focus more on musical analysis, the hope being that they would reach a more satisfying conclusion; unfortunately, this advice was not always followed.

It was pleasing that many candidates adhered to the spirit of the word limit (with some reasonable tolerance allowed above and below 3500 words). This demonstrated candidates' ability to be selective, to focus on significant features, and to show critical thinking. Dissertations that significantly exceeded the word limit could have been improved by being more selective about the examples and context discussed. Shorter dissertations would have benefited from a greater depth of analysis of music to reach the recommended word count and convey a more convincing argument.

Sources were generally well-acknowledged, both in-text and in bibliographies. Footnotes were mostly used correctly, although in some instances they were employed to provide additional commentary, which was not always relevant or appropriate; candidates are encouraged to reserve footnotes for references, which should include the author's name, publication title, year of publication and page number/s. If not using in-text referencing - e.g. (Jones, 1998, 12-13) - then the conventions of Harvard style could be consulted as a guide for footnotes and bibliographies, although it is not expected that candidates will necessarily follow these conventions slavishly.

Most dissertations included a bibliography, but there were some that did not. Centres are reminded to check pp 11-12 of the syllabus, where expectations for submissions are made clear. Form MS1 or a printout of marks submitted to CIE should also be included in all submissions; this was not always done. It was also helpful where Centres included a copy of the original proposal.

It is always worth repeating advice to teachers regarding the monitoring of work. The signed declaration is an important document, which states that the Teacher has verified that the candidate's work is their own. Whilst it is clear that many teachers closely monitor the work of their candidates as a matter of course, it is recommended that teachers hold regular meetings with candidates to ensure that work is the candidate's own, and that the dissertation is on the right track in engaging sufficiently with *music*. The declaration may then be signed with confidence.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

<p>Paper 9800/42 Advanced Recital</p>

Key messages

- The recital should take place in a formal setting with an appropriate size audience for the venue (as far as this is possible to control)
- Candidates should be helped to understand the criteria in the mark scheme for the written project in particular

General comments

The Moderators very much enjoyed seeing and hearing the candidates' advanced recitals. Some of the performances were of an outstanding standard, and it is always good to see well-prepared performances where the repertoire is well suited to the candidates' abilities. Most programmes consisted of a variety of shorter items creating a contrasting programme. It was pleasing to see that the majority of the recitals this year took place as formal concerts (as is the expectation). Centres are reminded that an audience must be present at the recital; in some cases it seemed that only one or two people were in the room. There is, of course, no minimum audience size stated in the syllabus, but it should be noted that performances which have a sense of occasion about them are often the most successful.

Written project

The written projects were generally successful, although with a few weaknesses in places. It is essential that the project directly links the listening to the candidates' own performing intentions; most projects now do this, but there are still some which do not, and one third of the marks are for the relationship between the judgements about the recordings and the candidates' own intentions. If this link is not present throughout the project, the marks in this category are severely compromised. A small number of candidates took the decision to base their project on recordings by one professional and one amateur performer (in the form of a 'vanity' recording); whilst this is allowable, it is the intention of this project that it should form a genuine support for the candidates' own performances, and two higher quality recordings should result in a better outcome (both for the written project and the performance) than choosing one 'good' and one 'bad' recording simply because there are many – but often simplistic – differences.

The projects must be supported by a CD of short extracts to support the candidates' judgements. Candidates should understand that this CD is the only evidence to support these judgements and is a crucial part of the project. In some less successful projects, the examples were not always well chosen in this regard.

Marking

It is difficult to generalise here; where adjustments were made it was in the light of seeing the work from all Centres together to ensure parity across the entry, and feedback on the individual marking has been sent to Centres.

DVDs

There were few problems with DVDs, but the audio CD, recorded on separate equipment, remains a vital back-up and is referred to by the Moderators when necessary, often to clarify issues over tone quality. A camera angle which shows the recital as a whole is preferable to one zoomed in too closely on the candidate.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/43
Free Composition

General comments

There were too few submissions for this component to write a meaningful report, but feedback has been sent to individual Centres where appropriate.

PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/44
Music Technology

There were too few submissions for this component to write a meaningful report, but feedback has been sent to individual Centres where appropriate.