

MUSIC

Paper 0978/12
Listening

Key messages

More detail is often needed when answering questions which carry more than one mark.

General comments

As in previous years, questions about the set work were answered poorly in general, with many candidates gaining very low marks in this section. This is the final June session in which candidates study a set work; the new syllabus has a number of focus works instead, but candidates should still study these in sufficient detail to apply their knowledge of structure, tonality, instrumentation (including transposition) and musical devices (for example) to similar repertoire.

Comments on specific questions

Music A1

Question 1

There were many ways that candidates could gain credit; the most commonly identified features were the diminuendo and the repeated melody. Comments on the left hand walking bass line were relatively infrequent. Overall, this question was answered quite well.

Question 2

Many candidates chose the correct option for the melodic shape.

Question 3

Again, there was much that candidates could comment on, and most gained at least one mark. The higher melodic range, syncopation, piano doubling the voices and line 10 being unaccompanied were the most frequently identified features.

Question 4

Answers here were less precise; there was often some recognition that the tenors and basses did something different but a description of exactly what they sang was relatively uncommon. Some candidates did use the term melisma correctly.

Question 5

Most candidates identified that the extract was influenced by jazz.

Music A2

Question 6

C minor was quite well identified.

Question 7

Answers here were often very vague; a simple statement that there were short chords played on the beat was sufficient to gain full marks, but many candidates named accompanying instruments, usually incorrectly, without attempting to describe what they actually played.

Question 8

This question was answered much better. The most commonly identified features were the change of melody instrument to the violins, the louder dynamic, legato articulation and modulation to a major key. Most candidates gained at least some credit.

Question 9

Most candidates identified that this extract was from the Romantic period, and that it was composed by Tchaikovsky.

Music B1

Question 10

Balafon, xylophone or marimba were all accepted here, and most candidates identified the instrument.

Question 11

- (a) The majority of candidates correctly observed that the music came from Africa.
- (b) Answers here were less precise; many candidates appeared to assume that because the music was African then the texture must be call and response, but this was not the case. Those candidates who gained credit usually recognised the contrast between a solo singer and group of singers, the repeated phrases and/or the use of parallel harmony.
- (c) Answers to this question were more secure; many candidates commented on the use of drums playing ostinato patterns and creating polyrhythm. The term polyphonic was often used incorrectly, however.

Music B2

Question 12

- (a) Some candidates identified the pan-pipes, but many thought that the instrument was a shakuhachi.
- (b) This question was not well answered in general; descriptions of either the charango or the drum part were not usually precise enough to gain credit.

Question 13

This was answered much better; most candidates who gained credit commented on the change of melody instrument, the higher pitch and/or the legato articulation.

Question 14

Many candidates correctly identified the origin of the music as Latin America, but a large number suggested Japan.

Music B3

Question 15

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the dizi.
- (b) Many candidates observed that the scale was primarily pentatonic, but fewer gained a second mark by commenting on the use of extra passing notes.

(c) This was fairly well answered; many candidates gained some credit for identifying that the texture was heterophonic, but fewer provided further detail for a second mark.

Question 16

Most candidates gained some credit, most commonly for observing that the tempo increased with each section, for commenting on the quadruple metre, and/or for describing the use of the ban to keep the beat. Some candidates named instruments but did not demonstrate understanding that it was the combination of string and wind instruments that is typical of silk and bamboo ensembles.

Question 17

Some candidates understood that this music was played by amateur musicians in tea-houses. Many answers incorrectly suggested that the music was played for religious ceremonies or in imperial courts.

Music C1

Question 18

This was very well answered; most candidates suggested allegro.

Question 19

This was quite well answered, although sequence was also commonly suggested.

Question 20

A wide range of keys and key relationships were suggested here, some minor but others major. Some correctly identified the tonic minor, D minor, but most answers were incorrect.

Question 21

Only a small proportion of candidates correctly identified the oboe; piccolo, flute and clarinet were common wrong answers.

Question 22

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

Question 23

Most candidates correctly identified the interval as a major third.

Question 24

The overall structure was usually well identified as ternary, but the bar numbers for the ABA sections were often incorrect.

Question 25

Most candidates correctly identified the period as classical and the composer as Mozart. The most common correct reasons included the small orchestra and the regular phrases.

Music D1

Question 26

(a) This was answered very poorly; only a few candidates were able to give any detail of the differences at all, usually observing that it was more detached.

(b) This was also answered poorly, with references to pizzicato the most common observation.

Question 27

Most candidates correctly described the structure, usually either as ternary form or scherzo and trio, but fewer correctly located the extract as being the second scherzo section.

Question 28

This was answered very poorly; hardly any candidates correctly identified the key as F minor, with C minor being the most common incorrect answer.

Question 29

Most candidates chose the correct option, 1808.

Music D2

Question 30

- (a) Some candidates correctly identified the development section, but most answers were incorrect.
- (b) Answers here were very poor; there were occasional references to the dominant, but very few candidates gained more than one mark.

Question 31

The transposition was generally quite accurate, although occasionally an octave too high.

Question 32

Some candidates knew that this thematic material was from the scherzo and played in C minor. Most answers were incorrect, however.

Music D3

Question 33

Most candidates recognised that the wind section repeated the music from the previous bar and gained some credit, but fewer gained a second mark by adding that the repeat was an octave higher.

Question 34

Some candidates correctly located the section as the second subject; far more accurately the key as B flat major, noting that this was the dominant.

Question 35

- (a) Many candidates correctly stated that the trumpet had keys, but a number suggested that it was a valved trumpet.
- (b) Many candidates gained at least some credit, usually by referring to chromatic notes; fewer made a second point, for example commenting on the stepwise motion or explaining why this would not have been possible on a natural trumpet.

Music D4

Question 36

Some candidates chose the correct option, tonic pedal, but many opted for the main melody.

Question 37

Some candidates identified the section as the second subject. Descriptions of how the motif was then used were usually vague, referring to repetition in general without usually adding much further detail. Hardly any commented on the use of diminution.

Question 38

The transposition was generally quite accurate, although occasionally an octave too high.

Question 39

Many candidates correctly identified the transition, although development and recapitulation were suggested just as often.

MUSIC

Paper 0978/02
Performing

Key messages

Candidates must meet the required minimum performance time to fully demonstrate the assessed skills. There were many performances which fell short of the minimum duration, sometimes by a significant margin; these were not always able to receive the mark they might otherwise have achieved.

Note that the syllabus changes next year, and the new requirement will be a minimum performance time of two minutes per section, which can be achieved by playing two shorter pieces in one or both categories.

Candidates should also be mindful of including expressive variety in their performances, even when the music does not indicate dynamics or expression markings explicitly.

The performing and composing coursework components are entirely separate, and moderated by different teams. The work must be sent separately; it causes significant delays to the process (sometimes enough to delay the release of results) when centres send combined work.

General comments

The moderators listened to a broad and diverse selection of performances again this session. Much of the advice given in previous reports continues to be relevant and applies equally this year.

In particular, performances that are too short continue to be submitted with no account taken of this in the assessment. The minimum total duration required is four minutes (NB: from next year this is at least two minutes per section), and a number of submissions still fell below this threshold. Centres should advise candidates to add a second piece – either another solo or an ensemble item – as needed, ensuring both are performed on the same instrument or voice within each category. Repertoire should be timed early in the preparation process, leaving enough time to learn additional material if necessary. Performances which fall short of the minimum time requirement cannot qualify for the mark they might otherwise have received, and centres should take this into account when awarding marks, noting the decisions made in the comments box.

While candidates are permitted to record their performance multiple times, the final submission must be a single, unedited take. Making a recording of a single piece by editing together sections from different takes is viewed as malpractice. For vocal performances, amplification is acceptable if stylistically appropriate (for example when singing to a backing track or with a band), but further enhancement (for example adding reverb) is not permitted.

Solos

Solo performances were, in most cases, well matched to the candidates' abilities. The top-level performances were technically and musically impressive, while others showed less confidence and fluency. Centres are reminded that if a piece is intended to be accompanied, this accompaniment should be included.

The area needing most improvement was expressive detail and musical phrasing. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on delivering a musical performance that has a genuine sense of character. This is especially relevant when playing from music that does not include expressive markings – common in baroque compositions and in much contemporary popular repertoire, especially that sourced online. The absence of notated dynamics does not mean dynamics should be ignored. For example, drummers should consider whether playing fortissimo throughout is musically effective. Candidates are expected to demonstrate expressive capabilities to achieve a high mark in this category, and if a piece does not allow for this, alternative repertoire should be chosen.

Ensembles

Most ensemble submissions met the syllabus expectations and clearly showed ensemble interaction. However, in several cases, the ensemble pieces were significantly easier than the solo pieces, which limited the candidates' ability to show their full potential. Centres (particularly those with 3–5 candidates where this issue is commonly found) are reminded that the candidates do not all have to play in the same ensemble as each other, and that the part they perform should be of an appropriate level of musical demand for their ability.

Unfortunately, certain types of invalid performances continue to be submitted despite repeated warnings. Below is a summary of the most common examples of non-compliant ensemble submissions:

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 are not allowed in ensemble performances for the current syllabus. However, from next year, they will be permitted provided there are at least two live performers.

Assessment

Individualised feedback has been provided to centres via their reports. The Coursework Handbook available on the School Support Hub includes marked examples, which help to illustrate performance standards. Recurring marking issues seen in past sessions remain a concern and are reiterated below:

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.

The moderators encountered a number of cases of inappropriate internal moderation; to clarify, internal moderation must only be applied 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. Internal moderation should not be used by a second person to change some or all of the marks of a teacher who has already marked the work of all of the candidates themselves.

Presentation of coursework

Coursework was generally well organised and clearly labelled. However, centres are reminded of a few practical considerations that assist with moderation:

- Avoid sending individual USBs or CDs for each candidate.
- Refrain from excessive use of plastic wallets – paperclips are usually sufficient.
- Do not staple working mark sheets to the music.

Further key reminders:

- 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.
- If USBs are divided into folders, a folder per candidate is more helpful than a 'solo' folder and an 'ensemble' folder.
- Copies of the sheet music must 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.
- Send the performing coursework separately from the composing.

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Paper 0978/03
Composing

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.
- All material for Composing (mark sheets, scores and recordings) must be submitted separately from material for Performing.
- 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 a centre 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 only be carried out when more than one teacher is involved in the internal assessment. In cases where internal moderation is required, the Working Mark Sheets must show exactly which marks have needed to be adjusted.

General comments

The usual wide range of ability was demonstrated in the compositions submitted this year, with a few 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 satisfactory. 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. Some centres submitted material for Composing and Performing on the same memory stick or CD.

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 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 CIE 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.

Unfortunately there are still centres where internal moderation is carried out when it should not be, or where marks are changed for no clear reason.

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 very 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.

It is important that candidates try to ensure that contrasting material (e.g., the middle section of a Ternary Form piece) is not so contrasting that it sounds like an entirely different piece. The most successful compositions were those in which there was some relationship between the main thematic material and the contrasting section(s).

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.

Even if the recording is going to use synthesised sounds, care must be taken to ensure that instrumental parts are within the range of acoustic instruments, and that they are playable on the instruments chosen. Parts which go beyond the range of an instrument (e.g. flute parts going lower than Middle C), or which are impossibly fast and complex for a human player (several piano parts fell into this category) should not be given high marks under Use of Medium.

Notation and Presentation

Computer generated scores were in the majority; there were very few 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, but most candidates submitted computer-generated scores.

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 small minority of cases.

Computer generated scores were often accurate in terms of pitch, but several lacked the full range of phrasing, expression marks, articulation or dynamics that the music required. To gain a mark in the highest bands, scores should not lack such important markings.

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. Commentaries were more usually descriptions of the intended emotional content of the piece, which is not what the moderators require.

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 score (or whatever notation program had been used). The best recordings were almost always of live performances. Centres are encouraged to submit live recordings whenever possible, since even with wrong notes or other shortcomings, they are more instructive to candidates and they convey the spirit of a composition much more effectively than a synthesiser can ever do.

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

Most centres submitted recordings on memory sticks this year. As with CDs, however, centres must ensure that the recordings do not require specific software for playback. Recordings submitted on a memory stick must be playable through a standard media player accessible from either Windows or Apple Mac computers. If necessary, any recordings which require particular software for playback must be 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 or memory stick. Separate CDs or memory sticks 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 unduly time-consuming and far less efficient than it should be. A separate track list, whether the submission is on CD or memory stick, is a great help to the moderators.

Teacher Comments on the Working Mark Sheets

The space on the WMS for comments in support of the marks awarded can be very helpful in giving an indication of the thought processes used when marking compositions within the centre. In some centres, however, the comments were either very bland and generalised, or entirely missing. In some cases, the comments were simply copied and pasted from the Assessment Criteria; this is not at all helpful and should not be done.