MUSIC

| Paper 0978/12 |
| Listening |

Key messages

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

Knowledge of the set works was not extensive; few candidates appeared to have engaged fully with their chosen set work.

General comments

Far fewer candidates took the examination than usual, and these comments therefore reflect the performance of a smaller cohort compared with the last examination of this paper in 2019. Answers to the set work questions were not strong this year, with large numbers of candidates demonstrating little knowledge of any features of the pieces beyond those that could be ascertained by listening to the recording in the examination. Knowledge of structure, keys and context was largely absent in the set work questions. It was noted that the term Call and Response was used frequently to describe any sort of repetition; aside from the fact that the term was usually used incorrectly, it was also rarely appropriate to the style of the music being described. A number of candidates provided answers to both set works: invigilators should be made aware (as per the track listings on the Confidential Instructions sheet) that the candidates only need to hear the recordings for the one set work they have studied.

Comments on specific questions

Music A1

Question 1

Most candidates failed to identify the correct melodic shape.

Question 2

Many candidates chose the correct option; aria was the most common wrong answer.

Question 3

This question was fairly well answered, with many candidates recognising that the melody was repeated by a lower voice. A number of candidates commented that the lyrics were the same, but did not mention the melody – answers to questions like this must focus on the music. It was also common for candidates to comment that the rhythm was the same without mentioning the melodic shape.

Question 4

Most candidates failed to identify this as an example of a melisma. Trill and vibrato were common incorrect answers.

Question 5

(a)   This was answered much better, with most candidates correctly identifying the baroque period.

(b)   The most common correct answers included the use of harpsichord, ornamentation, and the small/string orchestra. A number of candidates wrote about baroque features which were not heard in this piece, in particular terraced dynamics.

Music A2

Question 6

Most candidates correctly identified the violin; piano was a common incorrect answer.

Question 7

This was not well answered, with the most common incorrect answer being B flat major, suggesting that candidates had learned their key signatures but were not listening carefully enough to the tonality.

Question 8

Many candidates gave an appropriate answer, usually allegro, but many suggested markings which were too slow.

Question 9

(a)   This was well answered, with the majority of candidates correctly observing that the piano took over the melodic role,

(b)   Very few candidates were able to describe with any accuracy the ways in which the melody changed.

Question 10

Most candidates identified the romantic period, although classical was a common incorrect answer.

Music B1

Question 11

Some candidates were able to give the correct name, bansuri, but dizi and nay were common wrong answers.

Question 12

(a)   This question was well answered; the most commonly made points were the use of drone and the slow tempo.

(b)   Candidates generally identified the addition of the tabla and the faster tempo.

Question 13

Most candidates correctly identified India as the origin of this extract.

Music B2

Question 14

Most descriptions of the introduction were very vague and lacked sufficient musical detail to gain any credit.

Question 15

Only a few candidates correctly identified Bandoneon. Violin, piano and harmonica were common wrong answers.

Question 16

The lack of precise musical detail limited most candidates from gaining more than one mark.

Question 17

Most candidates identified Latin America, but a large number stated Europe or named European countries; they should be reminded that no European music is used in *Section B* of the examination.

Music B3

Question 18

Most candidates were aware of the reference to God.

Question 19

The most common correct observations were references to the backing singers singing in harmony, and most candidates gained at least some credit.

Question 20

Most candidates had some understanding of typical reggae features and were able to gain credit here, usually through reference to specific instruments, 4 beats in a bar, and the rhythmic emphasis on beats 2 and 4 (which was described and accepted in various ways, including 'one drop'.)

Question 21

(a)   This was well answered.

(b)   Answers here were generally weak, and mostly discussed the early history of Caribbean music in general, rather than addressing the specific question.

Music C1

Question 22

The key was identified fairly well.

Question 23

(a)   Only a few candidates identified the clarinet; common incorrect suggestions included flute, piccolo, oboe and trumpet.

(b)   Many candidates identified that the second instrument repeated the melody, but only a few provided further precise detail about the pitch or rhythmic relationship between the two parts.

Question 24

The interval was named entirely accurately by many candidates; some others identified 'fourth' correctly but not 'perfect' and gained partial credit.

Question 25

There was a wide variety of responses from no answer to completely correct; many candidates gained at least some credit. Candidates should be reminded that the rhythm is given to help them – if they write more or fewer notes, by definition their answer will be incorrect.

Question 26

The most common correct observation was that the melody was played by the strings. Some candidates further identified that there was no longer a canon (which was expressed in various different ways, but credited if the meaning was clear).

Question 27

(a)   Many candidates identified the period correctly; classical was a common wrong answer.

(b)   This question was not well answered. Most candidates who had identified the period correctly proceeded to list a number of general twentieth century features which were not heard in the extract. It is important that answers to this type of question are focused on the extract itself.

(c)   Many candidates identified Shostakovich correctly, but Tchaikovsky was also commonly suggested.

Music D1

Question 28

Many candidates identified that the piano now plays the melody, but only a small number of candidates made further accurate points.

Question 29

This was not well answered.

Question 30

(a) and (b) Answers were slightly better here with some correct recognition of the key and its relationship.

Question 31

Some candidates chose the correct option, but most answers were incorrect.

Music D2

Question 32

Many candidates gained some credit here, mostly for identifying the violins playing the melody.

Question 33

This was fairly well answered.

Question 34

(a)   Some candidates chose the correct option, but most answers were incorrect, with perfect cadence stated at least as often as the correct answer, imperfect.

(b)   Only a few candidates used the term *eingang*, but many could describe at least some of the music that was played, most commonly the trill, and therefore gained some credit.

Question 35

Some candidates were able to transpose the pitches correctly, but a large number of answers were entirely inaccurate.

Music D3

Question 36

(a)   Some candidates chose the correct option, but most answers were incorrect.

(b)   Very few candidates knew the meaning of this term. The notes for guidance are quite clear that candidates might be tested on markings in the score.

Question 37

Hardly any candidates gave a correct answer here.

Question 38

Only a small proportion of candidates were able to transpose the pitches correctly

Question 39

Some candidates were able to state where the extract was taken from within the structure and gained at least some credit, although the level of precision was generally too vague to gain both marks.

Question 40

The correct year was chosen by most candidates.

Music D4

Question 41

(a) and (b) Hardly any candidates gave any correct answers to these questions, despite the large number of acceptable points for **part b**.

Question 42

Some candidates identified the fanfare.

Question 43

(a) and (b) Hardly any candidates identified the key or the key relationship correctly. A major was answered far more often than the correct answer, A minor.

Question 44

Only a small proportion of candidates were able to identify the theme that was played.

Question 45

Some candidates knew that this extract was taken from the development section.

MUSIC

| Paper 0978/02 |
| Performing |

Key messages

The minimum performing times are essential in order for candidates to fully demonstrate the skills in which they are being assessed. Many performances were too short, some significantly so, and as a result did not provide sufficient evidence for the high marks which were often awarded to them.

A number of ensemble performances did not meet the syllabus requirements, which are very clear and have also been explained in detail in previous Examiner reports.

Recordings must be complete takes and not edited afterwards. A number of tracks had very clearly been edited; candidates must be able to demonstrate that they can perform their piece from beginning to end in one go.

General comments

Most candidates submitted both solo and ensemble performances; a few centres had requested exemption from ensemble performing due to the pandemic.

There remains a concern about the length of performances. There is a minimum performing time of four minutes (two minutes this year for candidates submitting solo performances only); if a candidate's performance is shorter than this, they must add a second solo and/or ensemble piece to ensure they meet the syllabus requirements. It is important, therefore, to time 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. Conversely, some candidates submitted two long solos even when this took them beyond the maximum time of ten minutes; this is not necessary and may not be in the best interests of the candidate if one of the pieces is less good than the other.

Solos

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

Ensembles

The majority of candidates submitted appropriate ensemble performances which met the syllabus requirements and demonstrated clear ensemble skills. However, problems still persist; here is a reminder of the types of performance which are regularly submitted but are not acceptable as ensembles:

Solos: pieces described as ensembles but which consist of only one performer. The syllabus does not allow a second solo performance (whether or not on a second instrument) instead of an ensemble.

Accompanied solos: pieces in which there are more than two performers, but the candidate's part is still clearly a solo. Examples often include solo songs in which drums and/or bass have been added in addition to the piano accompaniment; this is still a solo song for the singer. Examples also include candidates playing

a piano solo to which a bass instrument had been added, for example, perhaps simply doubling the left hand. This does not change the fact that the candidate is still clearly playing solo repertoire.

Vocal 'duets' (usually from musical theatre repertoire): pieces where the vocal parts consist of solo passages alternating between two solo singers – if the candidate hardly ever sings at the same time as the other singer, they cannot be demonstrating ensemble skills. An appropriate vocal duet should allow the candidate to demonstrate the ability to maintain an independent part singing in harmony with one or more other singers.

Pieces with backing track: these must not be included in an ensemble performance – ensembles must only include live performers.

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

Assessment

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

The marks for the range of technical and musical skills demonstrated were usually accurate, but 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, they will not have demonstrated the same range of skills as a different candidate who performs the same piece with style and confidence.

The marks for choice and control of tempo were also fairly accurate, although some of the tempi chosen by candidates were on the slow side compared with the composers' intentions. Marking for ensemble co-ordination was often very lenient. Centres should consider not only rhythmic co-ordination, 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 the most leniently assessed. 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: this is sometimes difficult for rock or pop styles, but it is possible, with thought. Marks for technical control were generally accurate, although problems with intonation, tone quality and breath control were often overlooked for singers.

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

Presentation of coursework

Most coursework was carefully presented with well labelled materials; however, please do not send an individual CD per candidate – it is much more helpful for the Moderators, as well as the environment, when the recordings are sent on as few CDs as possible (with an accurate track listing). Please note the following advice:

- The work must be submitted as an audio recording on CD or memory stick.
- Videoed performances on DVD should not be sent.
- CDs should be sent with a separate track listing, which should not be written on the CD itself.
- Copies of the sheet music should be sent, with the sole exception of music which has been improvised. 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 mark sheets to the sheet music.
- Send the performing coursework separately from the composing.

MUSIC

| Paper 0978/03 |
| Composing |

Key messages

- Any composition that is capable of being notated using Staff Notation should be notated in this way.
- The two compositions submitted must be written for different instruments/voices, or for different ensembles. Substituting Piano in one piece for Electric Piano in the other (or similar minimal changes) is not sufficient.
- In centres with several candidates, individual CDs for each candidate should not be submitted. Recordings should 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 should be spoken announcements to identify each piece and a track list on a sheet of paper separate from the CD itself.
- Internal moderation should not be carried out unless there is more than one teacher involved in the internal assessment.

General comments

Given the unusual difficulties under which schools had been working this year, candidates did well to complete the requirements of this component, often with considerable success. There were a few centres in which candidates had not completed two compositions each, but these were only a small minority.

The usual wide range of ability was demonstrated in the compositions submitted this year. Where achievement was in the lower mark bands, 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 awarded high marks to work of very modest attainment.

The standard of administration by centres was mainly quite good. There were, however, several instances of incorrect addition of marks and inaccurate transcription of marks from one form to another. Missing documentation and assessment materials, including Working Mark Sheets, Computer Mark Sheets, recordings and even scores, made the moderation of some centres' submissions very difficult indeed. Several centres submitted memory sticks in place of CDs, which is an acceptable alternative. When CDs are submitted, they must comply with the requirement that they must be playable on a standard domestic CD player: formats that need to be played using specific computer software are not permitted.

Assessment

The internal assessment of candidates' work was often realistic, although accurate and consistent marking, fully in accordance with the published criteria, is relatively uncommon. There were many cases in which all the candidates in a centre were assessed too leniently, or where the marking bore little relation to the descriptors. There were very few instances where the internal marks were too low.

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 the internal moderation 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.), and why.

Compositions

As usual, there was a very wide range of styles in the submitted compositions. A large number of candidates used quite simple structures, with a tendency to use the 'copy-and-paste' facility on the computer rather too readily. This year there were several pieces in which candidates had tried to use minimalist techniques. These were only rarely successful. More often the technique was applied too mechanically, often producing a formulaic result that was not very musical.

A simple structure such as Ternary Form can sometimes be very effective, especially if the sections link together smoothly with some kind of relationship between the A and B sections, and if the return of the A section is varied appropriately, rather than being indicated simply with a DC marking. Even the simplest of ternary forms, however, ought to be given more marks than a very short piece in a single section. There were several of these, some as short as 16 bars or even fewer, 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.

There was a noticeable increase in the number of very long compositions this year, many of which (if not quite all) would have benefited from severe pruning. Most of these pieces relied too heavily on repetition, or an the addition of too many new sections, to the point of weakening what might have been quite successful pieces.

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, including modulation and chromatic chords, 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.

Some candidates persist in submitting pieces based on pre-recorded loops (from applications such as Garage Band), despite previous reports making it clear that such loops should not be used. Candidates must acknowledge the source of any materials in their compositions that they did not compose themselves. This includes any borrowed themes used for sets of variations. Centres are reminded that it is only the candidate's compositional input into such pieces that can be rewarded.

A candidate's two compositions must use different instrumental or vocal forces. If they do not, the mark for Use of Medium in Piece 2 must be 0. This requirement was not always observed. In some cases, candidates had written one piece for flute and piano (for example), with the second piece for oboe and piano – but with very generic parts for the flute and oboe, which made them indistinguishable from each other. Another example concerns a Piece 1 for solo piano and a Piece 2 also for piano, but with the bass notes doubled by a cello. These combinations do not satisfy the spirit of the syllabus, the point of which is to ensure that candidates submit two pieces that are genuinely contrasting.

Notation and Presentation

Computer generated scores were in the majority, although there were some handwritten scores. In order to understand how to use a notation program on the computer, candidates do need to know how to write their music down by hand, so there is nothing against submitting handwritten scores. It would be good, however, if candidates could be encouraged to take care over the presentation of such scores, because several this year were very untidy.

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. There was little evidence to suggest that this editing had been done, except in a minority of cases.

Whenever possible, even if they find it hard, candidates must try to notate their music. If they are writing a song, they should notate at least the voice part. The lyrics alone, with a few chord symbols, are not sufficient.

Some candidates submitted screen shots of the computer program they had used to create their pieces. In the very rare circumstances where this may be appropriate, such screen shots must always be accompanied by a detailed explanation of what it represents, how it should be read and how it relates to the submitted recording. Several of the commentaries submitted this year did not explain the screen shots in sufficient detail, if at all.

The rule that should be followed is that if a piece is capable of being notated conventionally, using staff notation, that is how it should be presented. The syllabus makes provision for other forms of notation to be used, but only in cases where it would not be possible to use staff notation (some forms of electro-acoustic music, for example). It does not mean that an alternative notation can be used if a candidate has not acquired the skills of using staff notation. That is something that should be taught during the course, because it is an essential life skill for any musician and should never be neglected.

Recorded Performances

Most of the recordings submitted were of synthesised performances, often simply the computer playback of the Sibelius or Finale score. The best recordings were almost always of live performances. Centres are encouraged to submit live recordings whenever possible, since **(a)** they are more instructive to candidates and **(b)** they convey the spirit of a composition much more effectively than a synthesiser can ever do.

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.

CDs

As last year, most CDs were formatted so that they played on a standard CD player, as the syllabus requires. There were some, however, that could be accessed only on a computer: centres are reminded that these are not permitted and that they must check that the CDs will play on the correct equipment before they are submitted.

Some centres submitted memory sticks instead of CDs. This is an acceptable alternative, even though it is not mentioned in the syllabus, but centres should check carefully that the files are complete and that they play satisfactorily.

Some recordings were submitted with significant instrumental parts entirely missing. Examples include a recording of an orchestral piece where the string parts were entirely omitted, or a piece for flute and piano in which the whole flute part was absent. Such instances demonstrate that the CDs were not checked before being submitted, even though the box on the WMS was ticked to say that they had been.

In centres where there are several candidates, the recordings must be compiled onto a single CD. Separate CDs for each individual candidate should be avoided. There should be recorded announcements on the CD 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. A separate track list, not written on the CD itself, is a great help to the Moderators and should also be provided.