

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/11 Listening</p>
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Key messages

In **Section A** candidates should always take care to read questions carefully. There were instances this year where skilled candidates answered with the name of a particular compositional feature they correctly observed in the music, but which was other than the one required by the question.

Candidates should always consider the space provided and marks available for more extended answers. Answers can become unnecessarily lengthy, taking up valuable time.

In the **Section B** care should be taken when communicating the location of references in the scores. Rehearsal numbers and bar references should be used rather than track timings which differ between performances. Better still, a full description of a musical idea or feature, its instrumentation, dynamics and so on, will tell the examiner what is being referenced and will show a real familiarity with the score. Essays which are structured to describe a work chronologically can also help candidates to establish where in the music they are describing.

General comment

Candidates' work this session showed a wide range of knowledge, understanding and listening skills. As usual, candidates' preparation for **Section A** depended on their detailed knowledge of the Set Works, and on the range of performance practice to be found in performances of Baroque instrumental repertoire. Generally, candidates gained most or all of the marks in **Question 1**. Elsewhere in **Section A**, there was evidence of the need sometimes for more care when reading the specific requirement of some questions. The lengthier paragraph answers were generally well done, with candidates able to describe textural interactions well, and to make detailed comparisons of the two performances.

In **Section B** essays often showed secure and detailed knowledge and the ability to use this to make convincing arguments in answer to the specific aspect of the question. Less successful answers showed less familiarity with the music. In a few weak essays candidates attempted to describe what the music was describing, based on what they could hear on their recordings rather than drawing on prepared learning.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most answers correctly identified this as a gavotte. Some named other movements from the Bach Suite instead, and a few answers gave names of dances which were inappropriate for this work or period.
- (b) Many gained both marks here, with 2 – 2 or cut common time and moderate or fast tempo being the most common answers.
- (c) A pleasing number of candidates correctly observed the two textures in this passage. The opening bars were described variously as monophonic, unison/octaves or heterophonic, with the alternating texture being identified as polyphonic.

Question 2

- (a) Nearly all candidates gained both marks here. Although the question asked for the name of the melodic device, some credit was also given for correct wordy descriptions of what was happening in the music.
- (b) Some candidates correctly observed the syncopation here. Credit was also given for hemiola, even though this was not the conventional use of this effect in a cadential context. Many candidates incorrectly interpreted the tied notes as suspensions.
- (c) The key and cadence were correctly identified by a large number of candidates. However, not all had identified the tonic as G minor and an incorrect relationship was given by some.
- (d) Nearly all answers correctly gave suspension.
- (e) Circle of Fifths was correctly given by many candidates.
- (f) A really pleasing number of candidates gained full marks here, showing a secure understanding of the features of interaction in the extract. Other answers tended to be non-specific descriptions, lacking correct terminology and/or bar number locations.

Question 3

- (a) A small number of responses described features other than ornamentation. Otherwise, this was well answered by most. Instances of the similar use of trills were cited, as well as locations where the two performances differed. Performance B's oboe decoration in bar 47 was observed by many candidates.
- (b) Nearly all candidates correctly observed the difference in tempo, with a good number going on to comment on which performance had the more appropriate interpretation of *allegro*. Opinion was divided on which performance was at a lower Baroque pitch. Most answers observed that both performances used a harpsichord, though only a small number had heard a lute-like instrument as well in Performance A. Few answers gave details of differences in the dynamic interest of the two performances. The overall, more energetic feel of Performance A was noted by many, as well as its more prominent harpsichord in the overall balance. Most candidates were able to summarise their comments and suggest that Performance A was closer to the expectations of an historically informed performance.

Section B

Question 4

This was by far the more popular choice of essay in this section.

Many answers were able to describe the use of melody equally well in both works, with the best being able to describe the musical features of the melodic material as well as its descriptive use. For the Tchaikovsky, the opening hymn, folk melodies and two 'national' anthems, as well as original themes were comprehensively mentioned by many candidates. For the Sculthorpe, most candidates were able to mention the Baudin theme and Kepler motif, as well as the original thematic material.

Better answers were able to explain how instrumentation and timbre were used by Tchaikovsky in shaping his melodies in response to the narrative of the Overture. For the Sculthorpe, the best responses were able to refer to the melodic tessitura and performance techniques, as well as compositional features such as aleatoric writing and melodic layering.

Question 5

Answers here tended to concentrate on the Sculthorpe work. Thematic material, performance techniques such as *col legno* and *glissandi*, and compositional techniques such as aleatoric writing and gamelan influences were all well covered by most candidates. Better answers went on to relate these musical features to aspects of the natural world in Australia and to its wider regional influences.

For the Barber work, candidates were able to make references to the thematic material of the opening section, and to the instrumentation, texture and timbre employed to create a mood of nostalgia. Answers explained how this music evoked a childhood world of trees, birds and horses and simple innocence. The contrasts of urban life were referred to, before answers commented on the return of the opening material for the description of nighttime.

Section C

Question 6

This was the most popular choice in this section. It was generally well answered, with most essays explaining the importance of music in societies, communities and families. The contribution of music in religion and ritual, its importance in establishing and maintaining a sense of community and national identity, and its place in the observance and celebration of calendrical events were all mentioned by many candidates. Not all answers though were sufficiently well supported by references to specific music or performers.

Question 7

There were widely differing interpretations of 'recent times', and all were accepted. A few answers chose to describe the evolution of Western classical tradition in recent centuries. Many traced the development of African-American music from its roots as an expression of hardship in slavery to the many sub-genres of jazz, blues and rock. Nearly all answers explained the impact of music technology on composing, performing and dissemination. The fusion of styles, particularly in folk music was also described in many answers. Answers were generally well supported by references to specific music and artists.

Question 8

Relatively few candidates chose this essay. Most responses made reference to Western classical music, with Baroque ornamentation usually being cited. Decoration in music in the Classical Period was mentioned as well as in one or two cases the florid decoration in Romantic piano music. The decoration, both instrumental and vocal, in jazz improvisation was mentioned, usually with specific artists being cited. Relatively few answers included examples from world music.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/12 Listening</p>
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Section B

Question 4

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Question 7

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MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/13 Listening</p>
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<p>Paper 9483/02 Practical Music</p>
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Key messages

- When assessing, centres are advised to ensure that the rank order of marks is appropriate for the group of candidates to support the moderation process.
- In Element 1, it is helpful to do a sound check before recording. Some candidates were hard to hear because the accompaniment was far too loud.
- In Element 2, it is essential that candidates cite their listening influences in the written statement. The comments made inform the mark awarded in Assessment Criterion A (Preparation: shaping of ideas and structure).

General comments

Most performances this year took place in a school environment, and there was lots of evidence of musical interaction with ensembles and some live performances of compositions. Most performers seemed to be well prepared for Element 1, and there were some very skilled performances of a huge variety of repertoire – everything from heavy metal to world music. The range of composition styles in Element 2 was similarly varied and programme music was popular, but also fugues, serialism and gaming music. Many teacher assessors now use the comment boxes on the Working Mark Sheets to inform their marking. The insight this provides into the school assessment process is valuable. Marking was mostly reliable, but a couple of centres would have benefited from more consideration of the rank order of their candidates before committing marks to the MS1.

In general, candidates were relaxed in front of the camera in Element 1. There were some strong performances in a wide range of styles. Centres are reminded that a lengthy performance (well over 10 minutes, in some cases) may not benefit the candidate. There were numerous instances where the final piece could have been omitted without affecting the marks, especially where the performer was tiring. Several centres included an ensemble performance in the submission for all candidates. Whilst this worked well for the majority, there were one or two performers (mainly pianists) who were clearly inexperienced in accompanying or ensemble playing. Their marks may have been higher had they stuck to solo performance, and teachers are advised to consider the skills and strengths of individual candidates when deciding repertoire and performances to submit. Centres are reminded that the pieces in Element 1 can be recorded at any time, and rerecorded if necessary.

It is essential that candidates understand the assessment criteria when choosing repertoire and recording their performances. Several candidates were fluent and technically accurate, but the approach to dynamics and interpretation was sometimes careless, which inevitably had a detrimental effect on marks. If circumstances allow, it is a good idea to record a mock or practice performance and then go through this with candidates in some detail, pointing out where (for example) a crescendo could be louder, a breath could be taken, a LH chord could be quieter, different beaters might be deployed etc. Linked with this is the need to rehearse properly with the accompanist or backing CD, preferably in the designated performance space. This should include a test recording to ensure that the candidate is not drowned out by an overloud accompaniment.

The syllabus (page 25) states that for Element 2, candidates' written statements should 'outline briefly the creative and musical decisions made, giving relevant listening influences'. The final point is the most significant here and is referenced in the first bullet point of Assessment Criterion A: 'evidence and outcomes of initial research including the music of other composers'. Candidates who simply provide a bar-by-bar analysis of their piece or discuss the content of the lyrics are not able to access the full mark range. The Scheme of Work provided on the Cambridge International School Support Hub provides more guidance and ideas on how to incorporate listening activities into Element 2 work.

However, there were many examples of excellent compositions, with a strong sense of engagement and creativity, and a clear relationship to preparatory listening. The two pieces should be contrasting in some way (either by style, resources or intended audience). There were several live, or partially live, performances, often featuring the composer. If candidates produce a recording via music technology, they should be encouraged to do some basic editing or mixing before submission. Some candidates were disadvantaged by poor attention to detail in the recording. The recording and score are of equal weighting in Assessment Criterion D (Communication). A conversation along the lines of 'What instrument do you want to bring out here?' at key points in the piece can offer valuable feedback to candidates and encourages them to think objectively about what they are trying to communicate in their work. Centres are reminded that if a live recording includes any improvisation, the written statement and/or the score should offer as much detail as possible about guidance given to the performers by the composer, otherwise that part of the work cannot be credited.

Whilst candidates are strongly encouraged to participate in recordings of their own pieces if possible, it is not appropriate for them to perform their own compositions in Element 1. There is an implicit understanding in Assessment Criterion C (Realisation of performance markings and/or performance conventions) that the music performed should be that of an established composer, and there is a strong possibility that any inadequacies in the piece might impact on the marks in both Elements.

Administrative Points

- Please do not send work for other components in the same envelope or on the same USB as the submission for this component.
- Please package DVDs carefully – breakages are quite common.
- Please write the centre number and candidate numbers on the actual DVD or CD, not just the packaging.
- Each candidate should sign a cover sheet which must be submitted with the work.
- Please retain copies of all work until results are published.
- There is a helpful checklist of the items which must be sent for each Element on page 24 of the current syllabus.
- Please send Working Mark Sheets for all candidates, even if the cohort is large enough for sampling to occur.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/03 Extended Performance</p>

Key messages

- Performance repertoire should reflect a well-defined stylistic focus.
- The research report must contain a comparison of one piece in the performance, accompanied by relevant audio extracts.
- A signed cover sheet must accompany each submission, giving an outline of the work undertaken for 9483/04 or 9483/05. Centres are reminded that there should not be any duplication of work across components.

General comments

This year most performances took place in a school environment. Almost all candidates were well prepared for this aspect of the syllabus and there was some excellent accompanying and technical support. There were some outstanding performances in a wide range of musical genres, often with an appreciative audience. Standards of recording were usually very high, but centres are encouraged to undertake a thorough sound check, particularly if there is a live piano accompaniment.

It is a syllabus requirement that candidates perform music that reflects a single focus, from any tradition. Most candidates made suitable repertoire choices. Well-chosen themes included complete classical sonatas. However, some performance themes were vague or extra-musical or in the case of singers, were often driven by lyrical content rather than a musical connection in the repertoire. The best themes enabled candidates to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific style. A popular theme was love and the most appropriate examples of this contained repertoire that showed some stylistic coherence, rather than a collection of diverse songs that just happened to be about love. In Assessment Criteria D (page 43 of the syllabus), candidates are credited for 'performing with contextual understanding of conventions within the chosen performing focus'. If the performance focus is wide, or unclear, then this will be reflected in the marks awarded. Similarly, in Assessment Criteria E candidates are credited for 'making interpretative connections between research elements and performing outcomes' in relation to the whole performance, not just the piece compared in the research report. Candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria for this component and to choose themes and repertoire that enable the full range of marks to be accessed.

The research report can be approached in a variety of ways, but the central core of the submission should be a comparison of two performances of one piece that they have performed supported by carefully selected, relevant audio extracts. The purpose of this exercise is to learn about differing interpretations in order to frame an appropriate context for the candidate's own performance. Many candidates this year did not include any audio extracts or limited them to website links to complete performances. Submission of audio tracks is a syllabus requirement and is marked in Assessment Criteria A. These should be recorded as separate tracks and carefully cross-referenced in the text where appropriate. Some candidates pasted score extracts into their text too. Candidates are required to provide this information. However, many candidates approached this part of the examination with great enthusiasm and produced scholarly, well-evidenced work, based on good quality professional-standard recordings that clearly informed their own performances. They inevitably did well in Assessment Criteria A, but their focused approach to the task also helped them to achieve good marks in criteria D and E as well. Nearly all candidates produced a bibliography, but this was sometimes just a list of YouTube performances. Most music genres attract a wealth of information available online, including interviews, programme notes, sleeve liners and newspaper articles and candidates should be encouraged to imaginatively explore beyond the first page of a search engine and document their findings in their preparatory journal as they go along. The text of the research report should be entirely original and candidates are expected to use conventional referencing, especially when quoting the words of others.

Overall, there was a consistent approach to the actual extended performance. Most candidates were well prepared, performed at a level appropriate to their technical ability and played or sang with a sense of engagement with the music. Some candidates needed to take careful note of performance markings as ignoring these (or substituting what is written with something stylistically inappropriate) can adversely affect the marks awarded in Assessment Criteria D, and perhaps even in Assessment Criteria E too. Centres are advised to ensure that when filming, the placement of the music stand does not impede a full view of the candidate. Singers using scores should practise looking up as staring fixedly at the copy and never making (virtual) eye contact with the audience can impede 'performing with understanding' in Assessment Criteria E. Some centres included an ensemble performance as a matter of course for each candidate. Whilst this can extend the range of skills demonstrated, it should not detract from a consistent focus for the performance. Some performance themes might have been better served by another solo item.

Administrative Points

- Please use the checklist on page 36 of the syllabus when preparing submissions for despatch. Centres are contacted if essential items, including copies of the music performed, are omitted. Please include a signed cover sheet for each candidate and include details of the work submitted for 9483/04 or 9483/05 as appropriate. Centres are reminded that there should not be any duplication of work across components.
- Although not in the checklist, a copy of the Attendance Register is very useful too.
- Please check that all files will open, play and are relevant to the examination.
- Please check that the music copies are in the same order as the actual performance.
- Please send all components separately and not on the same USB or DVD.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/04 Extended Composition</p>

Key messages

- Meticulous attention to detail is essential in the compiling of folios for despatch.
- A current version of the cover sheet must be completed in every category where information is asked for and the authentication must be signed by both candidate and teacher.

General comments

Candidates who showed evidence of being musically curious and passionate about developing their composing skills appeared to find this a rewarding component. At this level, candidates who choose this extended option often feel that creating music is a strength to build on and they have an intense curiosity to learn more about composers and their craft. In this way, candidates can learn about composing techniques, varied musical languages and good practice from the role models they decide to research and investigate.

Administrative issues

The cover sheet

It is important that all sections of the current cover sheet are completed for each candidate. Candidates are required to give a summary outline of the work submitted for the composing component but also provide an informative outline for the additional option they have decided to work on. This detail must not be omitted by leaving the box blank.

This requirement makes it clear to centres and candidates that the content of each component should be discreet and independent. Analysis and performance comparisons of songs sung in 03 Extended Performing, for example, must not be offered as research evidence in this component. Credit cannot be gained for the same material across two components. Centres should encourage candidates to understand the significant benefits of breadth of investigation and learning in their options in the second year of study.

Inclusion of audio materials

When candidates' audio recording tracks in support of the research report were referenced in their writing but not evidenced in the package contents, this generated significant difficulties in providing a fair assessment of the work.

Materials must not be mixed with other components such as Extended Performing (03) or Investigation (05).

Some centres chose to present the audio materials of all candidates on a single CD/USB. Whilst there are clear advantages to this approach in terms of conserving resources and reducing waste, it nevertheless takes responsibility for the submission of complete folios away from the candidate and errors may be made as a result. Given the variety of means of submitting work in extended composing, candidates must always have the final responsibility in checking that all parts of their submission are included.

The syllabus

The syllabus outlines the parameters for work in this component. It should be studied closely across all its requirements including the information given in the assessment criteria.

A Research report

Research work in support of the composing takes place across a second year of study and allows for up to 20 per cent of the total marks available for the component to be scored. Candidates should be encouraged to approach the research element with an appropriate level of diligence. This is how candidates will become more competent composers with a growing range tools at their disposal.

Successful candidates provided evidence across the assessment considerations.

- They gave a clear and coherent account of their work with evidence of critical thinking and reflective practice and were able to honestly articulate the difficulties and successes of the year's work.
- They referenced important influences and were able to evaluate and analyse the music they had investigated and logged in their journals.
- They were able to describe the process of their compositional work across the course.
- They referenced their sources in a scholarly way and included a fully detailed track list of supporting audio tracks in addition the recording of their final composition.

Weaker candidates often seemed not to have a body of analytical information from which to compile their report, as outlined in the journal approach in the syllabus. They described their own composition rather than their composing process and provided little or no evidence of listening and analysis of the work of other relevant composers. They were not able to coherently evidence reflective thinking in their writing.

B Shaping of Ideas; structure

A great advantage of this syllabus is that it provides freedom of choice in terms of compositional style, traditions and use of resources. It recognises that candidates may be drawn to electro-acoustic composing, for instance, or the creating of a pastiche baroque toccata and fugue. These two examples are at different places on the spectrum of possibilities and there are innumerable options in between.

Some formal structures might be ready made categories within which to present and work on ideas – theme and variation, song format, music structured by a programmatic narrative – or the structure may be a creative construct evolving alongside the exploration of ideas.

Teachers can use their knowledge and experience to make listening suggestions as candidates progress in their work. If a tonal work is contemplated, for example, it may be appropriate for a candidate to include some formal harmony study as part of the research to support this.

Candidates seeking to improve their melody writing, for example, may study the ballet scores of Tchaikovsky, or the film scores of Ennio Morricone. They should always use primary sources in their research, that is the music of other named composers, rather than secondary research sources such as internet 'how to...' websites that may appear to be a potential short-cut.

C Working with ideas; the use of compositional techniques

Candidates will have already learned some useful analytical techniques in their study of set works in the Listening Paper. It is vital that candidates should have a growing understanding of how composers develop musical ideas and construct extended passages of music from a relatively simple starting idea. Stronger candidates used a range of techniques while less successful candidates overused repetition with a rather simple change of colour in the instrumentation to provide some variety.

D Use of medium and texture

Some candidates showed great enthusiasm and knowledge of their chosen medium whether traditional resources or technology was used. Candidates working with extended techniques understood the need to present their work in live realisations.

E Communication

Compositions using voice almost always contained a live vocal element even if other parts of the recording were sequenced. This allowed a more authentic portrayal of composing intentions.

Some commentaries in place of a score did not give sufficient detail of software or technology devices and processes used. Successful statements gave concise and informative descriptions of how the recording was mastered including ways in which ideas were communicated to others when several performers were involved. Other candidates showed mastery of their chosen software in laying down each of the tracks and detailing the way in which techniques were used to produce the final mix.

Concluding remarks

Evidence in successful candidates' work indicated that thorough preparation and an on-going willingness to refine and improve their work is crucial. Some teachers helpfully commented on the way candidates worked diligently through several drafts of their work and observed candidates working steadily over time rather than rushing at the last minute to order their thoughts and their work.

There is no requirement for candidates to include earlier drafts of their work but if annotated brief score sections (listening or composing work) facilitate clarity then these can be included as appendix material and are not part of the word count.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9483/05 Investigating Music</p>
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Key messages

- Music must be the focus of the investigation.
- Edited audio extracts on CD or USB are required to guide the reader through the research journey.
- A word count must be given for each of the essay and the reflective statement. It is important to ensure the topic is manageable in scope in order to adhere to the set word counts.
- Candidates should ensure that nothing is missed out in error when compiling the folios.
- A fully completed cover sheet in its latest version is required to authenticate the work and to demonstrate breadth across the chosen options and avoidance of overlap.

General comments

Most of the submissions reached a satisfactory level of achievement.

It is extremely important that teachers know they have a vital role to play in terms of encouraging and supporting candidates at every stage of the research, from initial explorations right through to the final presentation. Teachers should be ready to make suggestions about routes of exploration, give help with locating information, advising how to assess the quality of sources, making suggestions about recordings or analysis techniques, promoting breadth of approach using books, scores, recordings, interviews, internet resources and journal resources to name just a few sources of information. Teacher experience of sifting information and organising material should be readily available to candidates who may not have embarked on such a significant piece of music research before.

Candidates should be willing to revise their titles in the light of final outcomes. Titles should be fully informative of the contents of the report.

Some candidates showed great interest in music topics including gender issues, feminism studies, the poor status of women composers historically, for example, or the therapeutic role of music in mental health and well-being. Candidates should ensure that such investigations keep a clear focus on music and contain the in-depth analysis of music expected in this component.

Many folios referred to items including audio extracts, photographs, song lyrics or other appendix material, that was not actually to be found in the work presented. Candidates should check all enclosures. Audio tracks must be accurately compiled with a comprehensive track list giving full details as expected in scholarly research.

Comments on specific tasks

A Reflective statement

Whilst only 500 words in length, this document should be based on the research journal. It must be a concise, personal reflection on the research undertaken. Candidates should use the syllabus instructions and assessment criteria to guide them in their construction of the statement.

Stronger essays were not just a collection of facts and second-hand ideas but well-documented explorations which evidenced learning. Sometimes candidates were brave enough to articulate that their initial ideas or opinions had been challenged and they found that the research had taken them on a different route.

B Listening

Candidates must realise that if they do not submit supporting recorded extracts, they will not be able to access a substantial proportion of the possible marks available. Many investigations will simply not make sense to a reader without audio tracks to illustrate and provide direct evidence of listening.

C Contextual Understanding

Some topics require a substantial amount of contextual investigation, but this should not be to the exclusion of time spent investigating chosen music. Sometimes candidates took a large proportion of the essay writing to discuss the story telling in songs or instrumental programmes. This contextual understanding carries just 20% of the marks and must be balanced with sufficient exploration of music.

D Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary

Candidates often need guidance in their selection of research sources. They may not understand that fan websites or a Master's thesis posted on-line do not necessarily provide appropriate material, for example. Candidates should understand the difference between popular websites, secondary or tertiary source material. They can be supported to evaluate and make judgements for themselves about music they study. They should also know how to access the views of acknowledged experts in the field where appropriate.

E Communication and substantiation of judgements

Some essays were compiled to resemble a combination of the quotations of others. Candidates should learn to absorb information and to write in their own words whilst acknowledging the major influences and reading in a carefully compiled bibliography. Quotation (correctly presented and referenced) has a valid part to play but candidates should also aim to formulate their own judgements and opinions, demonstrating critical thinking and sensitive response to texts and music studied.