

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01
Listening

Key messages

- Write clearly, both in terms of English and handwriting.
- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable.
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant.
- Follow the rubric of the paper.

General comments

The general standard has shown a continued improvement, especially amongst candidates taking the paper for the 8663 syllabus. The best responses were certainly of a very high standard, and there was some very mature thinking and extensive musical experience in evidence in the best work. Many candidates had clearly diligently and keenly studied the Prescribed and Core works, knew them in fine detail, and were able to construct intelligent and focused responses. Some candidates could have provided greater detail in the discussion questions in particular. These candidates' musical experience also required expanding to inform their responses better.

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response, and sometimes directly repeated information already stated. It is also unnecessary to write the question out at the beginning of the response, and any planning should be crossed out, else it will be marked.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good, which greatly aids Examiners' understanding. In rare cases where meaning was unclear, either due to expression or illegibility, it was not possible for Examiners to award full credit; this highlights the importance of clarity.

The tendency for unasked-for 'blow-by-blow' commentaries was further reduced this session, with candidates managing to highlight significant features instead. **Section A**, with its requirement for a more detailed familiarity with the set works, was sometimes less well-answered than **Section B** and **C** questions. In some cases, the brevity of responses (e.g. fewer than three sentences) prevented candidates from being able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity; there were also some longer responses which avoided relevant points.

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Candidates should be reminded that referring to timings on recordings is not helpful, as the Examiner will not necessarily have access to the same recording; relating examples to where they sit in the overall structure or sequence of events, as well as in relation to each other, will make references perfectly clear. The use of bar numbers is also not required, and these should only be used if memorised, as scores are not allowed in the examination.

1. This was a very popular choice for candidates, many of whom were obviously more comfortable with writing a commentary than picking out significant features from a longer movement or piece. There was generally a good level of familiarity demonstrated with the variations, with a few candidates becoming confused over the numbering of variations (e.g. treating Variation I as if it were II, and therefore not commenting on IV as required). Very few candidates were able to make the connection between the harmonic outline of the variations and the theme. The best responses were able to articulate clearly the role and music of each instrument in the variations.

2. This was almost equal in popularity with **Question 3**. Many candidates gave an uneven account, focusing more on either the Haydn or the Mozart, with stronger responses offering a clear overview of the characteristics of both (with specific musical examples) and a straightforward comparison. Overall, the Mozart seemed less secure, with some candidates struggling to explain the form. More practice comparing music is recommended for future candidates preparing for this examination.
3. Few candidates were able to enumerate the instruments of each orchestra, and some floundered in descriptions of the first movements without providing important examples of the *use* of instruments in different ways (the third movements were richer in relevant examples). A small number of candidates were able to write knowledgeably about the expansion of the orchestra under Beethoven and offer pertinent examples from his fourth movement.

Section B

Although close familiarity with Core Works is to be commended, the strongest candidates showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question. In order to show a well-developed understanding, candidates need to relate musical features and techniques to their effects consistently and convincingly.

4. This question was not attempted by the majority of candidates, and those that attempted it often offered an uneven explanation, focusing more on the Smetana. A good number of candidates interpreted 'countryside' erroneously as referring to the river itself; such comments were disregarded. Similarly, commentary on the weather in the Berlioz was irrelevant (e.g. thunder). A focus on the hunting scene, the wedding, and St John's Rapids in *Vltava*, and the pastoral aspects of *Scène aux champs* were characteristics of stronger responses.
5. Comparatively few candidates answered this question, and it was generally not well-answered. Some had difficulty selecting an appropriate piece for comparison, and a very small number tried to compare both the Debussy and the Smetana, thereby answering only half the question. There was also some confusion over what constitutes '20th-century', with some earlier, inappropriate choices offered, more so in style than any strict historical interpretation. Especially problematic was a tendency to write about popular songs, as candidates focused on lyrics rather than musical features, which were often unrelated to 'night' or the lyrics in any meaningful way.
6. This was the most popular question in **Section B** and generally well-answered. Candidates showed strong familiarity with *Un bal* and the appearances of the *idée fixe*, with discrimination shown through the detail of descriptions and the link to effect. There was much peripheral information provided, but so long as these examples were related to the artist's obsession, they were counted as evidence of understanding. There were some particularly vivid descriptions of the ending of *Marche au supplice*, which candidates obviously enjoyed.

Section C

The best candidates organised their thoughts logically and presented them in an orderly essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters, drawn from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience.

7. This question was moderately popular, although few managed to cover the full scope of it. The most common observation was about Weidinger's trumpet and the clarinet, with some examples related to the repertoire. Very few candidates wrote thoroughly about how music was *heard* or about developments in communication technology, and most responses skimmed over a variety of considerations unconvincingly.
8. This was a popular question, and was often well-answered. Occasionally, candidates were very confused about the basic definition of 'texture', writing instead about articulation, for example. The very best responses, of which there were several, gave clear and straightforward definitions of a variety of common textures and exemplified these with reference to specific musical examples, some more apt than others and drawn from an impressive range of periods, traditions and styles.
9. This question was also fairly popular, with candidates drawing heavily on their own experience and listening, which is to be commended. The best responses considered a wide range of examples of what

can, should or should not be changed, with some nuanced opinions. Some struggled to go beyond very basic, one-sided examples and express a firm opinion.

10. Candidates answering this question generally had a good knowledge of the construction of the piano. Most were able to identify some different roles for the piano, and the best responses additionally provided some very pertinent examples of these roles, drawing on Western classical and modern, popular styles.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 8663/06 Investigation and report</p>

Key Messages

- The focus of the investigation, and therefore the report, should be the study of a body of music.
- The report should be accompanied by a CD of recordings, which have been investigated.
- Each report should be accompanied by an Investigation and Report cover sheet, which may be found on the samples database. Both the teacher and the candidate sign the declaration, certifying that the work is entirely the work of the candidate.

General Comments

As always, candidates submitted reports on a wide range of topics, some of which were more successful than others. Examiners look for evidence of engagement with music and that the candidate has chosen their music wisely and listened to it attentively.

The most successful investigations looked at a small, carefully chosen range of repertoire, placing it in context, with some background information.

Weaker investigations often made very little reference to any musical repertoire, other than in passing. Whilst the development of a musical instrument can result in a successful investigation and report, this is only the case if a study of the repertoire of the instrument is the main focus, not solely how the instrument is constructed and has changed over time.

A small number of reports had very little to do with music at all, taking as their starting point or title a scientific, historical or social topic. Areas such as music therapy do not lead to discussion of musical repertoire and candidates therefore do not gain high marks in many of the categories in the assessment criteria.

Whilst there are obvious reasons for a candidate choosing to investigate the music on a favourite album, reports of this nature were often lacking in contextual information, with only a superficial look at the tracks on the album.

The weakest reports were often very short, only about 1000 words, rather than the required approximately 2500 words and were usually not accompanied by a CD. Youtube or other internet links listed in a bibliography are not a substitute for a CD. It is also imperative that some identification of the tracks on the CD is given in the report. Whilst 30 minutes of music should be studied, inevitably not all 30 minutes will be discussed in detail in the report; the strongest candidates select the material to discuss in detail, with the remainder serving to place it in context and for comparison.

Centres are reminded that an investigation should not be into an area covered in Paper 1.

Candidates who discussed a number of pieces of music in detail often used wide-ranging technical terms confidently and accurately and it was easy to hear what they were referring to in the music on the accompanying CD. Candidates should be encouraged to give CD timings of key features they want to draw attention to, in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Technical terms relating to texture were most often incorrectly used, with some candidates confusing homophonic and polyphonic. Candidates who did not discuss repertoire very much (or at all) in their reports, or who enclosed a CD, but did not refer to it, obviously did not have the opportunity to display their knowledge of technical vocabulary.