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| <p>Paper 9703/01 Listening</p> |
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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 instructions on the paper

General comments

The general standard has shown a continued improvement. Some impressive papers stood out at the top end of the mark range but most candidates knew the music, understood significant points about it, and were able to describe, in their own words, what they were hearing. A good number of papers delved straight into answering the question, where others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response. It is also unnecessary to write the question out at the beginning of the response, and any planning should be crossed out.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good. A small number of candidates answered more than one question from each section, ignoring the rubric of the paper. An equally small number did not indicate the question number addressed, or wrote what was clearly the wrong question number, causing Examiners to make a best guess.

The tendency for unasked-for 'blow-by-blow' commentaries was 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) prevents some candidates from being able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity; there were also some longer responses which avoided relevant points, or discussed completely unrelated (non-musical) matters.

Comments on specific questions

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 to be avoided, as the Examiner will not necessarily have access to the same recording; relating examples to where they sit in the overall structure, as well as in relation to each other, will make references perfectly clear.

Question 1

This question was the most popular in Section A. The variations were mostly well-known, with a few candidates providing very detailed and technically correct commentaries. A small number of responses became very confused over the numbering of the variations, clearly referring to the wrong music. There was a lack of clarity in some responses, which could have been improved by using musical terminology clearly and accurately. For example, some candidates could have been clearer when referring to the melody (sometimes, this obviously did not refer to the principal theme), or conveying the difference between 'staccato' and 'pizzicato', or 'dotted' and 'staccato', which were also sometimes confused.

Question 2

A relatively small number of candidates chose question 2. Of those who did respond, the best answers clearly described the structure, and focussed on ways in which the principal theme has been used. Other strong responses described all the sections, including instrumentation and differences, giving a clear commentary. Weaker responses could have been improved by being clearer about the structure (it is primarily a Rondo, with some variation of the A section, not a Theme and Variations movement).

Question 3

This question was not generally answered well. Many candidates were unable to enumerate the composition of each orchestra convincingly. Some were able to paint the broad differences, perhaps referring to specific instrumentation. Very few managed to illustrate their account of the orchestras with specific examples drawn from various movements of the two pieces. Others gave a commentary of the two pieces, often referring to irrelevant features. This highlights the importance of reading the question.

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.

Question 4

This was the most popular question chosen for Section B, with the two most popular movements chosen for description being II and IV. Candidates clearly responded well to the programme, although some only had a general understanding. The very best answers had a very clear understanding of the programme and how it was reflected in detailed musical examples. Often, the detail of the programme was known better than the actual music. Of particular relevance was the use of the *idée fixe*, which many mentioned without explanation or exemplification; equally, identification of the instrumentation in each iteration was elusive for some.

Question 5

The best responses showed a clear understanding of different types of recitative, illustrated with reference to specific musical examples from core and non-core works, and contrasted this with arias, again with clear examples. Weaker answers became confused between 'aria' and 'recitative', often referring to inappropriate examples. Although many mentioned word-painting, very few candidates exemplified this, instead offering vague descriptions of what word-painting *might* look like: specific examples from repertoire and an explanation of their effect should be given.

Question 6

Although there were some strong responses to this question, which addressed all elements convincingly, a good number described both death scenes from the core works, where the question asked candidates to choose one scene and compare it with another similar scene from another opera or musical. The description of the death scene was, for most candidates, clear, with musical features related to the tragic mood. However, very few candidates offered a suitable scene for brief comparison, with some choosing the other core work, some choosing film music (especially when this was instrumental), and a few others offering Pop examples.

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.

Question 7

This question was very popular, although not often done very well. A small number of candidates showed very good contextual knowledge of 18th/19th-century Viennese concert life, but needed to give more detailed comparisons with the modern day. Others still had little knowledge of Viennese concert life, but gave many convincing examples of modern concert life. In particular, details of public/private concerts were somewhat lacking. A narrow view of modern concert life restricted the achievement of some candidates. In general,

the weakest responses ignored the prompts in the question, or focused on patronage and composers without relating these to concert life. This indicates that some candidates did not read the question carefully.

Question 8

It was evident that most candidates choosing to answer this question were a little confused about the two terms. Nonetheless, some still managed to provide articulate responses with reference to a number of well-chosen examples. Weaker responses needed to go beyond definitions and lists of genres.

Question 9

Along with question 7, this was a very popular choice for candidates, some of whom were able to draw on significant personal experience to illustrate their answers. A small number referred to a wide range of examples, but many did not consider a wide enough range of issues. The best answers considered the question from a variety of perspectives, from conductors' or performers' choices, to cover songs or technical ability. Weaker responses needed to refer to more specific examples and focus on how performances of the *same* piece might sound different.

Question 10

A small number of candidates chose to answer this question, with a good number doing very well. The very best answers gave detailed information about the construction of the double bass, as well as a variety of techniques (beyond the obvious 'pizzicato' and 'arco'), and specific examples illustrating a range of performing roles. Weaker responses gave very brief details of the parts of a double bass and limited discussion of performing roles to a vague description of 'supporting', with no detailed examples; these could have been improved by referring to the numerous examples in the set and core works.

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| <p>Paper 9703/02 Practical Musicianship</p> |
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Key messages

- The two disciplines chosen for Element 2 should be clearly different from the performance presented in Element 1.
- For Element 3, exercises should be of sufficient length to enable candidates to demonstrate a full range of skills.
- Each composition for Element 4 should be composed for two or more instruments/voices.
- Centre assessors should provide comments in support of the mark awarded on all working marksheets. This is of particular importance for Element 2.

General comments

The overall standard achieved by candidates in this component was good. There were some outstanding submissions, both in the various aspects of performing and in composing. Many Centres presented varied combinations of Elements, allowing individual candidates to work to their strengths and to demonstrate the highest possible level of skills. All possible combinations of Elements were offered, with 1 & 2 and 1 & 4 being the most popular.

Element 1 was presented by almost all candidates. A large number of candidates performed on piano or voice, but a wide variety of instruments was heard this session. This included a number of instruments from the Chinese tradition as well as orchestral and popular/jazz/rock band instruments. Most candidates chose a range of repertoire suited to their capabilities and performed with a sense of purpose, often to an audience. Some chose to perform just one piece, or two very similar pieces. Demonstration of a range of techniques and understanding of a range of styles are among the aspects considered in the assessment criteria, and, if the selection of repertoire is too narrow, it may not be possible for candidates to access the full range of mark. Most candidates gave a spoken introduction as is required, though some were rather brief. In their introduction, candidates should include something about the background, musical content and technical aspects of the pieces they have chosen to perform. Centres are reminded that each candidate's submission for Element 1 should be recorded as one continuous performance presented on a single occasion and that copies of the music performed should be included with the submission.

Most DVD recordings were of good quality, with the camera/microphone suitably placed, but there were some instances where poor audio balance was detrimental to the overall performance. The recorded balance between the candidate and the accompaniment or backing track should be checked, and corrected if necessary, prior to the performance.

In **Element 2**, candidates presented two disciplines as required and many achieved a high standard. This Element gives candidates an opportunity to develop and extend their skills and Centres should ensure that the tasks undertaken for the two disciplines are truly different from each other. Particular care should be taken when selecting repertoire for "Ensemble" and "Accompanying" where some candidates prepared very similar tasks for both disciplines. Where candidates have also offered Element 1, the two disciplines chosen for Element 2 should be clearly different from the performance presented in Element 1.

A number of candidates offered "Conducting and Rehearsing", with a range of ensemble types and genres of music being chosen. Candidates should be given the opportunity to build up good working relationships with their ensemble through regular rehearsal. Therefore small ensembles may be more appropriate than working with large pre-existing groups such as the school orchestra or choir. Some assessment recordings showed only final performances rather than the rehearsal process and Centres should ensure that submissions demonstrate the full range of criteria for this discipline as given in the Syllabus. It is appropriate for each of the three assessment recordings to include a section of rehearsal, showing the candidate engaging with the

ensemble to communicate interpretative intentions, together with a short performance or run through of the piece studied.

Most Centres included recordings of all three assessments of each discipline as required. Progress is an integral part of the assessment process in this Element and the recordings, together with detailed assessor comments on the working marksheets, are essential in order for moderators to make valid judgments. Recordings were generally of good quality and some Centres took great care to ensure that individual candidates could be identified in large ensemble performances – again, moderators cannot make valid judgments if they are not able to identify the candidate. Centres are reminded that copies of the music performed for the final assessment of each discipline should be included with the submission.

Most candidates who submitted work for **Element 3** had followed suitable courses covering a range of appropriate knowledge and techniques in one established tradition. Candidates are not expected to present full texture without any given material and at least one part (usually the top or bottom) should be given throughout each exercise. Candidates may undertake some preliminary work in preparation for more specific exercises, but the final exercises selected for assessment should contain evidence of the range of language and techniques acquired within the selected tradition. The material chosen for submission should be based on actual (identified) repertoire, with the given material clearly distinguishable from the candidate's work. Centres should ensure that exercises submitted are of sufficient length to enable candidates to demonstrate use of the techniques they have learnt during their course. Centres are reminded that it is a requirement that a clear outline of the course undertaken for Element 3 should be submitted with the folios.

A good overall standard was achieved in submissions for **Element 4**, with compositions written in a variety of styles and genres. There were some very imaginative and exciting submissions with live or detailed sequenced recordings. Less successful candidates omitted to identify the intended instrumentation or to include performance indications in their scores. This often led to rather bland and poorly balanced audio realisations. While most candidates demonstrated an ability to develop their ideas and had clearly considered the importance of refining their compositions, others needed to pay greater attention to these aspects of their submission. The majority of candidates included a short written commentary explaining the origins of the compositional thinking, listening influences, and the on-going compositional decisions, as required. Centres are reminded that each composition should be for two or more instruments/voices. Several compositions were submitted for a single instrument, thus not fulfilling this requirement. Most Centre assessors applied the assessment criteria accurately, although some were rather generous in their marking of candidates whose work fell into the lower middle mark bands.

For the component as a whole, most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork and provided DVD recordings that were compiled so that the individual items for assessment for each candidate could be easily located and accessed.

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| <p>Paper 9703/03 Performing</p> |
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Key messages

- Candidates should select focused repertoire that is within their current technical capability.
- Copies of the music performed should be enclosed with the submission.

General comments

There was a good level of work submitted for this component with all candidates performing to at least a satisfactory standard. Some recitals – on drums, oboe, piano, saxophone, violin and voice – were outstanding. A wide range of focused repertoire was chosen including Baroque keyboard sonatas, 19th century Italian operatic arias, Chopin waltzes and 1970s rock. Most candidates had prepared well and many were able to give a convincing performance. Performing to an audience often added further to the sense of occasion.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate their technical ability to good advantage by performing a programme of music which was within their capabilities. Some chose a repertoire which was too challenging and were therefore not able to show full aural awareness, stylistic understanding or a real sense of performance. A few recitals were very short, giving candidates limited opportunity to demonstrate a range of technical skill and understanding.

Almost all candidates chose an appropriate focus for their performance and the majority gave a spoken introduction outlining features of the focus and how these were reflected in each item to be performed. While many introductions were of a high standard, some candidates merely listed the titles of the pieces they were performing and a few candidates provided no introduction at all. The content of the spoken introduction is assessed in Section E of the assessment criteria – Stylistic Understanding – and the full range of marks cannot be accessed if no detail about the music is given. Candidates may read their introduction if they prefer, rather than speaking from memory.

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performance. Backing tracks were used to good effect where appropriate live musicians were not available.

Most DVD recordings were of good quality, with the camera/microphone suitably placed. Centres are reminded that copies of the music to be performed should be included in the submission.

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| <p>Paper 9703/04 Composing</p> |
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Key messages

- The relationship between thoughtful, explorative listening and composing is a key to success
- Any performer of non-notated music – a singer, drummer, improvised solos, solo electric guitar, for example, must be identified. If the performer is not the composer, a full explanation of how the composing intention was explained to the performer must be given
- Label everything, including CDs, accurately and fully.

General comments

Composing submissions continue to show an increased understanding of the importance of drawing on all aspects of musical experience and knowledge from and beyond the course of study. A fine range of achievement was evidenced in the submissions this session.

Centres should be alert to the way in which improvisation within a group performance might create difficulties in assessment. The specific contribution of the composer must be explained in the commentary when there is no notation. Candidates frequently use software to overdub many of the parts themselves. When a candidate sings and plays guitars this is a popular choice. If a chord sequence is provided for a pianist, for example, the candidate should explain in the commentary how the left and right hand textures, figuration and style, for example, were negotiated.

Scores were often meticulously presented, using notation software in many instances but there were also some skilful, handwritten scores and this is equally acceptable.

Specific Comments relating to Compositions

Commentaries

Commentaries need not be too long and should include helpful information about compositional decisions and listening. A lengthy section-by-section description of what is in the composed music is not necessary.

The scope of submissions

Many candidates favoured a Programmatic approach to their work, perhaps influenced positively by the compositions studied in the topic *Love and Loss*. Candidates linking their compositional ideas with non-western instrumental groupings with which they were familiar or musical ideas from different traditions were often successful in their creative work.

The scope of submissions also included:

- Use of a specific ensemble such as saxophone quartet, brass group, extended rock or jazz ensemble, small orchestral group
- Music inspired by a favourite film or narrative, producing cinematic outcomes; not all compositions, however, were able to successfully 'stand alone' as a piece of music
- Theme and Variation continues to be a popular structural framework – candidates need, however, to construct a secure theme with sufficient potential to be fruitfully varied
- Several mentioned Shakespeare's texts such as *The Tempest* as inspirational but the literature/theatre of candidates' own traditions may also be musically motivating.

The range of listening mentioned in commentaries included:

- Copland, Ravel, Tchaikovsky (ballets), Mendelssohn (Midsummer Night's Dream)
- Albeniz, Granados, Falla (particularly Spanish, Latin American influences)
- the film scores of Danny Elfman, John Williams, Hans Zimmer

Materials, Use of Materials

Through the study of prescribed and core works in addition to candidates' own interests, candidates know that even the smallest ideas have the potential to grow into something much more substantial. Short motifs can be a good starting point but candidates need to 'grow' their materials in a way that demonstrates the extent of their technical skills.

Candidates should reflect on an appropriate balance of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic materials. Changes of key or tonal centre are often an important way of moving the music on; those candidates composing in a single key across a 6–8 minute piece are neglecting the use of modulation as an essential tool.

Some materials displayed weak harmonic understanding; candidates should aim for consistency and coherence whatever harmonic language they adopt for their compositions.

Structure

Most compositions submitted took the form of a single structure rather than shorter pieces conceived as a whole. The syllabus directive of a composition lasting not more than 8 minutes takes into account that the content of a composition can vary significantly depending on the speed and pacing of the materials. Some compositions at more than 10 minutes in length were overlong for the materials. Others, at under 4 minutes were rather too short.

Submission of a single song, whether an art song or one in popular song style, should be approached with care. The inclusion of significant amounts of instrumental material may be an important way of ensuring sufficient variety and range of skills. Alternatively, two contrasting yet related songs may be considered.

In instrumental compositions, candidates can improve assessment outcomes by paying particular attention to the links between sections and the balance of repetition and contrast within the structure.

Use of Medium and Texture

If candidates are able to look at scores (orchestral, chamber music, vocal, jazz band, rock etc.) this may aid an understanding of the principles of orchestration, for example, how instruments can be used in combination within families of instruments and across orchestral sections, as well as the way in which countermelodies and solo instruments can be used within the larger group.

Listening closely to orchestral works will demonstrate to candidates that percussion devices are often used sparingly to ensure maximum effectiveness. Piano textures and figurations in candidates' own performing repertoire can also be a useful learning opportunity, where appropriate.

Candidates should aim not to overuse unison across all instruments, which can be a striking texture if used frugally.

Some compositions employed extremely large forces, which were not always used efficiently. There may be wisdom in working with smaller ensembles.

The benefit of researching specific instrumental skills was clearly demonstrated. An example of this might be the use of electric lead guitar in cantabile style clearly influenced by the playing of Satriani or the finger-style of guitar accompaniment such as those used by Andy McKee or John Butler.

Notation and Presentation

Scores should be appropriately sized with bar numbers at the start of each line of the score only. Performance details on the score should include an opening tempo or mood direction with consistent detail in dynamic markings throughout.

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Whilst there is no assessment advantage in submitting a live recording if a well edited sequenced recording is offered, many Centres went to considerable lengths to ensure a live performance was possible. The benefit for enabling last minute adjustments and refinement is considerable when time is allowed for rehearsal and reflection. For the emerging composer, the thrill of hearing a composition performed live cannot be overestimated.

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| <p>Paper 9703/05 Investigation and Report</p> |
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Key messages

The Investigation should be designed to extend and/or deepen the focus of Component 3 or 4 and the nature of the link must be clearly explained at the beginning of the Report.

General comments

The overall standard was high. Several candidates who had investigated an aspect of the link with component 3 (Performing) submitted outstanding Reports. The best of these both deepened and extended the programme offered in their Recital. Appropriately brief audio examples on well-referenced CDs supported their text and a good level of reading had been thoroughly assimilated. In the very best works, a wide appreciation of characteristic techniques of one or more styles allowed mature independent judgments to be expressed and demonstrated.

Centres are reminded that, if candidates choose to compare two or more recorded interpretations of the same piece, carefully chosen short extracts (not whole pieces) that demonstrate specific points in their comparison should be included, together with copies of the relevant scores. It should not be assumed that scores enclosed with the candidate's Component 03 Performance will be available to the Examiner of Component 05.

Contextual facts and judgments acquired through reading must be thoroughly assimilated and cues offered by commentators to other relevant music should be followed up. Detailed acknowledgement of sources on its own is not necessarily an indicator of reflection and learning. Extending background understanding should, in nearly every case, embrace a wider range of listening than only that relevant to Component 03. In discussion of the history of a genre, for instance, a detailed chronology and list of significant composers has no value in itself without evidence that the candidate has explored the repertoire and has learned something from doing so.

Investigations linked to component 4 (Composing) were, on the whole, not as satisfactory. Too often the Reports were over-lengthy, self-indulgent accounts of 'how I wrote my composition' and 'what I was trying to express' rather than a record of what had been learned, and then applied, about composing techniques from a wide range of listening.

Most Reports met the formal requirements for the component – CD, bibliography and discography – and most candidates had learned how to acknowledge their sources fully in a scholarly manner. Regrettably, however, in a very few cases systematic plagiarism was evident.