

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01

Listening

A generally high standard of expression in essays reflected a serious, thoughtful approach with occasional flashes of passionate engagement with the music. Answers were nearly all well-structured and usually to the point. All candidates attempted three Questions, though some may not have left sufficient time to do themselves justice in **Section C**. It is not clear whether candidates were being over-cautious in their reluctance to refer to music other than the Prescribed and Core Works (in **Sections B** and **C**) or whether they had very little other experience of wider repertoire(s) to draw on in their answers.

Section A

Candidates had prepared well for this Section and most showed themselves to best advantage in this part of the paper. Some very high-scoring answers demonstrated close knowledge of the Prescribed Works, particularly the Schubert, an understanding of the relationships between techniques and effects, careful attention to relevance and the ability to cite details in a convincing way. **Questions 1** and **3** attracted almost equal numbers of candidates: few chose **Question 2**.

- 1 Most candidates were aware of differences in style, tone and texture between the two movements but many were hazy about the basic defining features of a Minuet and Trio, particularly the form – it was often referred to as being in Sonata Form. The best answers were those that could distinguish clearly between 'Minuet', 'Trio' and 'Scherzo' (however spelt) and also drew attention to Beethoven's passage linking the movement to the Finale.
- 2 Three principal features of a concerto were usually listed: double exposition, cadenza and the virtuosic nature of the solo part. Some candidates were also able to distinguish between the orchestra's *tutti* moments and its accompanimental role, and to make valid comparisons between concerto and symphony both in this respect and in terms of number and type of movements. But answers generally suffered from a lack of specific detail relating points made about concerto in general to the Haydn concerto in particular.
- 3 There were many comprehensive commentaries on individual variations but candidates were not always able to sustain this level of detail over three variations. Some accounts were surprisingly eloquent, the choice of vivid adjectives to describe rhythms, figures and textures testifying to close appreciation of the music. Not all, however, attended to the requirement to choose 'contrasting' variations and others strayed into irrelevance with introductory discussion about the form and harmonisation of the initial statement of the theme or even biographical matter.

Section B

The majority of candidates chose **Question 5**. Only **Question 4** was explicitly tied to any of the Core Works: **Question 5** was designed to be accessible to candidates who had only studied the Core Works, but it also gave full freedom to range outside these. The scope of **Question 6** lay entirely outside the Core Works.

- 4 The difficulties experienced with this Question were often of a candidate's own making: a straightforward answer listing the roles of the soprano soloist, the SATB and boys' choirs would have formed the backbone of a satisfactory answer. Brief descriptions of examples of chordal, imitative and unison/octave singing would have completed it. Discussion of the Owen poems was irrelevant but several candidates were determined to work this into their answers.

- 5 The standard of answers was high: candidates chose the work (or works) about which they were most confident and enthusiastic and showed keen aural awareness in their enumerations, as well as considerable involvement in their chosen work's 'message'. Some very poor answers showed a good understanding of the need to relate personal response to a detailed identification of techniques used to create the effects being so vividly described. Many compared the Britten with the Vaughan Williams but many others wrote equally confidently about the Penderecki only. A few candidates were able to refer to other movements in the choral works but there was otherwise virtually no evidence that music by any other composers had been studied.
- 6 'Popular song' was unexpectedly often misunderstood: more than one candidate read it as an invitation to talk about the Britten and Vaughan Williams, giving virtually a looser answer to what had been posed as **Question 5**.

Section C

Fewer answers in this section achieved high marks. While candidates had clearly been well prepared in terms of knowing the music of the Prescribed and Core Works less attention had been paid to fleshing out the contextual background to the inception and performance of these works. All except **Question 10** could be answered well by thoughtful candidates who relied only on the Prescribed and Core Works for their references. But the Questions were also amenable to illustration by examples drawn from a much wider range of repertoires. It was disappointing that so few candidates felt sufficiently confident of their own judgement to refer to any music that they perform themselves or listen to outside the classroom. **Question 8** attracted the greatest number of candidates: a substantial number chose **Question 9** but relatively few **Questions 7** or **10**.

- 7 Although most candidates were able to relate tempo to speed, only a few were precise enough to tie its definition to the beat. But they nearly all realised that they had a great deal of illustrative material at their fingertips, particularly from the Prescribed Works, and discussed the different movements of symphony and concerto, and contrasted this with examples of unmetred music in the Britten and Penderecki pieces. One enterprising candidate also discussed a range of piano music in a relevant way.
- 8 Again, there was a wealth of material available to candidates simply by comparing the Prescribed with the Core Works. Most made some attempt at this and were able to convey the ideas of orchestras enlarging and composers becoming more innovative (a disconcertingly large number saw the eighteenth-century as very rule-bound and painted a gloomy picture of composers suffering from oppressive conventions which stifled their powers of expression). The best answers were those which not only described technological advances in terms of new instruments, new ways of playing them and improvements in tuning, but were also aware of the differences in sound and texture (beyond simply 'louder') which became possible. One candidate widened his discussion to consider the issue of 'authenticity'.
- 9 Answers were generally framed in terms of reception, i.e. whether the music feels personal to the listener, rather than the composer's intention. The basic evidence available to all candidates was, of course, the contrast between chamber music and small-scale orchestral music for private performance, and larger works for public concert halls or cathedrals. Misconceptions abounded about the nature of the audiences for whom eighteenth-century composers wrote. The most thoughtful candidates widened the scope of their answers to include examples from popular music genres (there were many references to Bob Dylan and Woodstock), and also considered the issue of recorded music. Although many candidates argued their point of view solidly, and some attempted the difficult task of distinguishing between 'music as entertainment' and 'music as expression', too many lacked sufficient references to examples to support their case convincingly. One or two widened the scope of their answers to discuss music which they had performed themselves.
- 10 There were disappointingly few satisfactory answers to this Question. Although most candidates were able to identify the types of feature that would need discussion (rhythm, scale, harmony, melody, instruments etc), the level of their answers remained too general, never succeeding in making sufficiently explicit references to examples from a single identified tradition to communicate what distinguishes 'their' tradition from any other.

MUSIC

Paper 8663/06
Investigation and Report

There was a high standard of presentation in Reports: great care had been taken with word-processing, structure, footnoting, bibliographies and discographies. Audio examples, whether on CD or tape, were mostly representative, giving adequate selections of material for discussion, and were carefully cross-referenced in the text. The Report, therefore, was able to fulfil its function well as a vehicle to reflect the nature of the Investigation.

It was clear, though, that resourcing the Investigation is often a problem: candidates need to ensure that they will be able to lay their hands on a sufficient range of appropriate repertoire before they become too deeply committed to a particular topic. Internet sites were not, on their own, able to supply the extended examples that candidates needed to be able to access. The Internet is, however, a very valuable tool to help in tracking down where and how the necessary material can be obtained. This may take time and needs to be set in motion as early as possible.

Although candidates had been judiciously instructed regarding matters of presentation, the extent of support and guidance in the earlier stages of the Investigation was less clear. Teachers were rightly wary of giving improper help, and had obviously confined their advice to general principles, but there was also a need to ensure that each candidate's aural skills and technical vocabulary were sufficiently developed to carry off the projected task successfully. However diligently a candidate listens and reflects, if the relevant analytic skills are not developing simultaneously there is a danger that observations will not progress beyond rather vague appreciative statements. Candidates certainly need to respond to the music – their enthusiasm is important in sustaining their interest through the task – but they need also to learn to be able to describe fairly precisely what the effect of the music is and then to explain what techniques are used to achieve each effect. The Investigation should be a learning process in itself.

Candidates also needed supervision to ensure that what they say is generally the case in their text is supported by the specific examples that accompany it. There was sometimes a gap between information taken from a published commentator about the nature of the repertoire in general and what could be demonstrated from the candidate's examples. Assertions in the text of the Report that 'x and y are typical features of this music' would often have benefited from challenge by a Supervisor along the lines of 'which of your examples shows this particular feature?' (or 'how many...?').

Such insecurity regarding aural perception and analytical/technical vocabulary was often matched by a lack of confidence at the level of outlining the background to the repertoire and explaining concepts central to discussion of it. Although a good range of sensible reading had usually been carried out, this was rarely sufficiently assimilated for candidates to be able to lay the books on one side and explain the matter in their own words. While careful to avoid plagiarism - references were duly acknowledged in footnotes and bibliographies - by picking out a sentence from one text and a sentence from another, candidates sometimes produced an unconvincing, jumbled mosaic, which betrayed the shallowness of their understanding.

Nonetheless, the topics chosen were worthwhile in themselves and much had always been learned *en route*.