

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01

Listening

Key messages:

- Candidates should extend the repertoire studied in **Section B** beyond the Core Works
- Candidates need to develop their understanding of the context of all music studied
- Candidates should ensure all answers are relevant to the question
- Under no circumstances may scores may be used in the examination room

General

Overall, candidates were very well-prepared. It was evident that the Prescribed and Core repertoire had been studied closely. Whilst answers were structured well, candidates should aim to ensure that they are answering the question asked rather than pouring out all they know. Care must be taken to be selective and address the question in a more precisely-focused way.

Many candidates approached the Core Works from **Section B** as though they were Prescribed Works, which limited their ability to demonstrate wider knowledge of other repertoire. In **Section C**, candidates need to demonstrate a full understanding of the context of the music they had studied. This did not seem to be fully understood.

The aim of the Syllabus is to develop a keen aural perception and appreciation of music. The ability to read a score and memorise bar numbers is not a requirement. However, Centres may add score-reading as an additional skill to their course, if they wish. **Scores are not allowed in the examination room.**

Where making a reference to the music, recognisable descriptions of musical passages almost always provided a more worthwhile demonstration of familiarity and understanding than bar numbers, e.g. 'in the slow section of the movement where the oboe has the melody', or 'the crescendo that accompanies the dominant pedal build-up to the recapitulation'. Bar numbers were often misquoted resulting in a confused answer.

Section A

- 1 Several answers were more loosely about 'variety' than 'variation techniques'. Many others gave close commentaries on appropriate movements but without singling out specific, relevant features for discussion. The best answers summarised what the candidate considered to be the principal techniques that they had met, illustrating these selectively and carefully with clear references to the music.
- 2 Most candidates mentioned that greater skill was needed on the soloist's part, and almost all were able to cite the frequent use of higher registers than those required in the orchestral part. The accompanimental role of the orchestral violins was usually mentioned. Although memorable moments such as the *pizzicato* playing of the timpani motif were described, candidates found this difficult to discuss. Few could get further than contrasts of dynamics. Excellent responses mentioned the structural roles of both violin parts. Other responses needed to develop more detailed answers with specific references to the music to gain higher marks.
- 3 Candidates were secure and clear in their explanations of Sonata Form. More work was required to offer similarly convincing explanations of Rondo.

Section B

It was in this section particularly that the tendency to come armed with prepared answers was evident.

- 4 This question was about the 'music' (not only the accompaniment) and 'moods' (rather than scene painting). Most candidates showed a satisfactory level of familiarity with, and appreciation of, the songs. Excellent answers demonstrated more subtle awareness of the relationships between text and music. They also displayed an ability to pinpoint and describe vividly, the specific techniques used. Other responses concentrated too much on the pictorial aspects of the accompaniment without addressing the nature of the vocal line.
- 5 Candidates found it difficult to define the term 'word-painting'. Whilst many recognised Purcell's treatment of words like 'shake', 'languish', 'storm', and some could point to Verdi's orchestral illustration of '*tuoni*', answers drifted to discuss 'mood' and 'character' rather than word painting itself. Some candidates explained in detail how the piano accompaniment in the Schubert songs 'paints the scene' rather than analysing word-painting.
- 6 Most candidates were able to make relevant points about the role of the orchestra in Verdi's *Otello*. However, care needs to be taken to ensure candidates are directly referring to the question. Too often candidates wrote all they knew about the piece of music rather than accurately referring to 'supporting action on stage'. Candidates need to improve upon supporting their arguments with a musical passage and precisely identifying musical examples. Candidates can also improve by referring to other works studied rather than just the Core Works.

Section C

- 7 The more confident candidates showed good contextual understanding in their answers. Others approached it in a deductive way, following a logic determined by the resources required for different works: broadly, the more performers, the bigger the venue. Little was said about audiences other than that they were 'rich'.
- 8 Some thoughtful answers showed understanding of the changing nature of the term 'classical', as well as detailed knowledge of current sub-genres of popular music. More care needed to be taken to discuss the term 'folk' sensibly.
- 9 Candidates seized with enthusiasm the opportunity to talk about the application of a range of twentieth-century technologies to their favourite music. Only a few, however, were able to illustrate their answers convincingly by describing how these are used in specific examples. References to 'at least one acoustic instrument' sometimes felt forced and hurried, although a handful of candidates went in the opposite direction by devoting almost their entire answer to a detailed account of the evolution of playing techniques on their own instrument. A balance needed to be struck.
- 10 Answers to this question were generally very vague in their understanding and explanations. Again, care should be taken to support answers with well referenced musical examples.

MUSIC

Paper 8663/06
Investigation and Report

Key Messages

- Candidates need to be more careful with footnoting and fully referencing quotes. Precise references to examples are essential.

General Comments

There was both a wide variety of topics and a similarly wide range of achievement. It was very pleasing to see that there were some outstanding Investigations which considerably extended each candidates' understanding of a significant body of repertoire. They had read sensibly (including scholarly books), listened widely and reached their own personal conclusions which were expressed coherently.

Presentation and Researching

Skilful use of word-processing techniques and other software makes it possible for Reports to be presented in very attractive formats. While these made for ease of reading, the time given to producing something that looks polished and scholarly should not have been allowed to occupy the lion's share of the candidate's attention. In several cases it was clear that much less effort had been put into research than into the appearance of the Report, with consequent loss of genuine learning. There were no marks for sophisticated presentation techniques.

In a very few cases, comments and marks had been written on the Report by the teacher. As this is not a teacher-assessed component the candidate's script should be submitted free of annotation by any other person.

Candidates should aim to spend an appropriate amount of time researching various types of sources. Candidates also need to allow time for the information to be digested, assimilated and applied to musical examples that the candidate has chosen for themselves. It is in this way that the report needs to demonstrate that the first three Assessment Criteria have been met: aural perception, contextual understanding, and use of appropriate analytic/investigative techniques.

Referencing

Nearly all the Reports contained a bibliography and a list of CD tracks. Only a few candidates offered a proper discography.

Careful discographies identified exactly where (e.g. on youtube) their many audio extracts came from. However candidates should also remember to acknowledge who the performers were. Several candidates had transferred such extracts straight onto their CD of audio examples. The ability to listen critically, to select and explain examples chosen independently of other commentators is a key feature of the process of learning which should take place during these Investigations. A small number of Reports contained no audio examples at all. It is a requirement of the Syllabus that they should.

While Centres are rightly on their guard against outright plagiarism, the Examiners would suggest that more explicit warnings to candidates – and subsequent supervision – needs to be given regarding paraphrase, intentional or not. It has been pointed out many times that changing a word here and there does not absolve the copier from acknowledging that they are, in fact, quoting. Footnotes at the bottom of the page referring the reader to a specific title in the bibliography frequently failed to indicate precisely enough the extent to which the candidate was actually quoting. Exact quotations of another's words must be signalled by the use of quotation marks. Close paraphrase should be introduced explicitly by a phrase such as '*Tovey suggests...*' and might continue '*...that the use of a 'y' chord here is typical of...*' The exact extent of dependence on the observations of others must be made clear, not left to Examiners to consult the sources for themselves.