

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/11**  
**Listening Analysis and Historical**  
**Study Sections A and B**

## Key messages

- Candidates should not jump to conclusions about which performance is more historically aware in Section A when the aural evidence shows that both performances demonstrate good awareness in this regard
- Candidates should focus on overall style, not just small details, in the final question in Section B

## General comments

Section A was answered by all candidates, although the level of achievement was wider this year than in some previous years. Section B questions were attempted by most candidates, although a small number did not answer Questions 11 or 22 – these carry the most marks in Section B, so candidates should be encouraged to manage their time effectively and at least attempt this part of the paper.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

- 1 There was a wide variety of achievement in this section. Most candidates observed the clear differences in tempo and pitch, but the fact that Performance 1 was faster and Performance 2 was lower seemed to cause confusion for some candidates who appeared to expect that ‘authentic’ performances must be faster **and** lower. In some essays this led to completely incorrect assertions that Performance 1 was on authentic instruments and Performance 2 was on modern instruments, whether or not they had correctly observed the difference in pitch. There was some good discussion of dynamic variety and the differences in the trills, but not much mention of the very different approaches to flute articulation. Only a few candidates commented at all about the use of the harpsichord in the two performances.

The knowledge of performance practice demonstrated in the essays varied considerably. In the best answers, the differences in interpretation were fully supported with an appropriate discussion of performance practice. However, there were also essays which included lots of information about performance practice that was not relevant to this particular extract, or was actually incorrect. For example, a number of candidates described the construction of instruments without linking this in any way to a valid point about the performances.

There were also some erroneous observations that authentic instruments cannot play fast, hence the difference in tempo. Others described the lack of sustaining power of authentic instruments, failing to appreciate that this was irrelevant in such a fast movement. As has been pointed out in this report before, it is perfectly normal for both recordings to display an awareness of good historical performance practice, and candidates should be advised not to jump to conclusions which are not borne out by the aural evidence.

**Section B, Topic B1 Instrumental Music**

- 2 Most candidates described the gradual increase in tempo, and some also observed the uneven nature of the *accelerando*. A few commented on the *rit.* in bar 14, but not many observed that the music was moving from 4 in a bar to 2 in a bar. Overall, most candidates gained at least some credit.
- 3 This question was well answered, and again, most candidates gained at least some credit with many getting higher marks. The clarinet melody, oboe and flute answering phrase and harp arpeggios were the most frequently mentioned examples. Some answers were too vague, mentioning the name of the instruments heard, but not giving the 'specific examples' required by the question.
- 4 This was also fairly well answered, although the chromaticism was not always accurately notated in the second and third bars in particular. Some candidates failed to write any notes in bar 15.
- 5 Some candidates spotted that this was an imitation of the melodic part from earlier in the bar; others described the melodic shape. A few answers were too inaccurate or imprecise to gain credit.
- 6 Many candidates correctly identified the term *ostinato*.
- 7 Again, this question was answered well (diminished 7ths).
- 8 This question was well answered. The most commonly described features were the rising pitch, crescendo, tremolando strings and increasing orchestration. Many candidates gained full or close to full marks here.
- 9 A few candidates did not attempt this question, but those who did generally identified and corrected both errors appropriately.
- 10 Many candidates gained at least some credit in this question.
- 11 Many candidates knew at least something of Liszt's musical style and could put this work in some appropriate historical context, although the quality of the answers varied. The best answers focused on the chromatic style of the melody and the harmony, and most frequently compared this with other works by Liszt or with Berlioz. Other relevant points included the large orchestra, and again, some candidates made appropriate comparisons. It was also appropriate for candidates to make contrasts with more traditional composers from the period. Some candidates focused on very small details rather than the overall style of the extract, and a few made little or no attempt to answer the question.

**Section B, Topic B2 Vocal Music**

- 12 (a) Most candidates observed that the chord lasts for 4 bars.  
(b) Again, most candidates correctly identified the chord changes to A minor, or the subdominant.
- 13 The most common relevant points here referred to the *bel canto* style of singing, the use of vibrato, portamento and the dynamics. A few answers did not focus on the **performance** of the passage, and instead described features of the melodic shape.
- 14 There were a variety of responses here, but most candidates gained at least some credit.
- 15 Many candidates identified the perfect cadence, but fewer correctly identified A minor as the key.
- 16 Most candidates identified the use of pedal and accurately observed that it was used for 7 bars, although a variety of answers were given to the second part of the question.
- 17 The most frequently described features here were the crescendo and rising pitch, although there was little mention of the chromatic chords. Most candidates gained some credit, although only a few made three valid observations.

- 18** Again, most candidates gained some credit, usually by describing the tremolando and the dotted rhythms.
- 19** Many candidates identified and corrected both errors accurately, but some did not attempt this question.
- 20** The descending intervals and the violin figuration were the most commonly described feature here.
- 21** Most candidates gained some credit here, but the level of detail was often insufficient for gaining both marks.
- 22** Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge. Many were able to write about Verdi's style and common comparisons were made with Weber and Wagner. There was a tendency to dismiss the use of the orchestra in this extract as merely providing supporting harmonies, which was not entirely the case; the orchestra plays a large role in reflecting the changing moods of the scene. However, there was some good discussion of the bel canto style. A few candidates did not attempt the question.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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Paper 9800/12

Listening, Analysis and Historical  
Study Sections C and D

## Key messages

- In the **(b)** questions in **Section C**, candidates need to draw on a range of relevant repertoire to support the points they make. This range is sometimes too narrow to permit them to write a full enough answer to score high marks.
- Candidates need to be sure they have read and fully understood the question before starting to write their answer.
- Questions in **Section D** often require candidates to bring together information that draws on different aspects of the course. They often find this difficult and may need additional guidance in developing the skills involved.

## General comments

Most candidates answered on either Topic C2: *The Baroque Concerto* or Topic C3: *Innovation and Exploration in Twentieth-Century Music*. A small number chose Topic C1: *Latin Church Music in Continental Europe during the Late Renaissance* and Topic C4: *Jazz*.

In **Section C**, although there were several excellent essays, the general standard was rather less good than in previous years.

In all the topics chosen, in addition to **Question (a)**, there was a similar number of answers to **Questions (b)(i)** and **(b)(ii)**.

In **Section D**, there were answers to all five questions, although **Questions D4** and **D5** were the most popular choices. Answers tended to be rather discursive. Relatively few candidates presented clear and coherent arguments, while those who chose the historical questions were able to cite only a rather narrow range of music. The quality of written English was very variable.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section C**

#### **Question C1**

- (a)** Candidates were able to show in detail how parts of the Kyrie are derived from the motet. They were generally less confident in describing the polyphonic structure of the music in terms of, for example, the order and placing of entries in points of imitation. Despite this, answers were generally very thorough.
- (b)(i)** Candidates wrote about Flemish composers such as Josquin, Lassus and Willaert. In most cases, they could demonstrate some knowledge of the influence of Flemish composers on members of the Roman and Venetian schools. Answers, though not particularly detailed, were generally secure.
- (ii)** Candidates who answered this question could describe what is meant by the term *Parody Mass* and they knew that this approach to Mass composition declined during the period covered by the topic. They were much less confident in explaining the reasons behind this decline, although they knew that it had something to do with the Council of Trent. They were not fully aware of the fact that many of the models used for Parody Masses were secular, so they tended to miss the

important point that secular sources came to be frowned on under the influence of the Council, which in turn led to a reduction in the number of Parody Masses that were written. Similarly, they often overlooked the fact that the trend towards audibility of the text mitigated against the use of complex parody techniques.

### Question C2

- (a) Candidates who answered this question could mainly give a clear account of the greater complexity of structure and technique in the Bach as compared with the Handel. Some, however, made the mistake of assuming that, because Handel's themes are sometimes longer than Bach's, they must therefore be more complex. Both first movements were usually explained in terms of Ritornello Form, even though in Bach's case this is not a completely adequate description. The use of fugal techniques in both third movements was noted and there were some good efforts to summarise the differences between the slow movements.
- (b) (i) It was good to note that a few candidates knew that the common factor in the concertos of all three composers mentioned in the question was the church of San Petronio, Bologna (even though they worked there at different times). In most cases, however, the development of the concerto before Corelli was not as thoroughly understood as the quality and interest of the music might merit.
- (ii) Almost everyone who answered this question wrote about Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. This was clearly a good starting point, but sadly it was often the only reference to repertoire that the candidates could make. Although they knew that the concertos in the *Four Seasons* demand virtuosity, they found it much more difficult to describe the virtuoso effects that are used. Very few candidates could demonstrate a wider understanding of Vivaldi by citing other works, such as the Flute Concertos, Op. 10, or other composers.

### Question C3

- (a) There was a wide variation in the standard of answers to this question. Some candidates appeared to be unaware that the movement in question is an example of Bartók's *Night Music*, so they found it difficult to decide what the expressive intention of the music might be. The best answers gave a fairly comprehensive account of the wide range of special effects found in this movement (and in other *Night Music* pieces). Several candidates, however, did not really read the question and provided a straightforward description of the form of the movement.
- (b) (i) Candidates knew a lot about Stravinsky's Russian ballets and quite a lot about *Pulcinella*. They were altogether less confident about the works that came in between. Most answers therefore consisted of a direct comparison, usually between the *Rite of Spring* and *Pulcinella*, rather than an account of the ways in which Stravinsky's style changed in the intervening years. Even as well-known and crucial a work as *The Soldier's Tale* was widely ignored. Nevertheless, most candidates could point to ways in which the style of *Pulcinella* differs from that of the *Rite of Spring*, so the issue of changes in Stravinsky's style was covered, at least by implication.
- (ii) This question resulted in a wide variety of answers, dependent largely on the choice of additional subjects that had been made in different Centres. There were several accounts of Shostakovich's difficulties with the Soviet authorities and several descriptions of Satie's *Parade* (often going on to trace the origins of *Les Six* with varying degrees of accuracy). A few candidates wrote about developments in Britain. There were very few attempts to trace more recent examples of innovation and exploration, for example, in the music of composers such as Messiaen, Cage or Lutosławski.

### Question C4

- (a) Several of the candidates who attempted this question appeared to misunderstand the term 'texture'. There were many comments on rhythm, harmony and form which could not be credited. The best answers demonstrated an understanding of the use of smaller groupings within the main ensemble and the build-up of texture through the staggered introduction of instruments. Some candidates recognised the polyphony in pieces like *Three to get ready*. A substantial amount of detail was missed, however, even in the better answers, including the variety of piano textures, the use of saxophone to double the top line of the piano and the use of the whole kit versus only partial use of the kit. Candidates often did not notice the use of *ostinati* and features which emerge over pedals. The examiners felt that candidates needed to use their ears much more here, and to be clearer about standard terminology.

- (b)(i) Too few candidates answered this question for general points to be made.
- (ii) Those who answered this question did not always understand what a rhythm section actually is. Several of them spent time discussing the role of soloists or issues of harmony and form. There was relatively little understanding of the development of the drum kit from its New Orleans marching-band origins in the 1920s and no reference at all to the role of the different instruments in the kit (e.g. cymbals or wire brushes). In general, there was too little reference to actual music or understanding of historical development. It seemed to the examiners that candidates had listened to only a narrow range of music.

### **Section D**

Answers in Section D were generally rather less good than in previous years, with many essays which did little more than restate the question, meandering around the subject with hardly any references to music.

The quality of argument and of written English was a common weakness, especially (but not exclusively) in answers to the questions which invited candidates to express an opinion.

#### **Question D1**

The description of Haydn as 'The Father of the Symphony' was less familiar to several of the candidates than might have been expected. While there were some quite good answers to this question, few candidates knew enough about early symphonists to be able to make a full enough judgement.

#### **Question D2**

Most candidates knew enough about the importance of the orchestra in nineteenth-century opera to be able to give a reasonable answer to this question. Most referred to Wagner and Verdi, though it was relatively rare to find a candidate who could give precise examples of passages where the orchestra dominates for a specific reason (e.g. to tell the audience something that the characters on stage do not know or do not admit to knowing – a common technique in Wagner). References to other nineteenth-century opera composers were also scarce.

#### **Question D3**

Most candidates knew a reasonable range of Romantic music, including works by composers such as Berlioz, Liszt, Mahler or Strauss. They were altogether less well informed about the preoccupations of the Romantic Movement (nature, the supernatural, idealised history, literature) or about the relationship between these preoccupations and the music they cited. Some candidates wrote about the contrast between the 'conservative' and 'progressive' trends in nineteenth-century music, which was not the real point of the question.

#### **Question D4**

This question was chosen by a relatively large number of candidates. Almost everyone believed that live concerts still have an important place, and most drew on personal experience in support of this view. It was good to observe that several candidates could describe both popular and classical concerts that had made a significant impression on them.

#### **Question D5**

There were several different interpretations of the meaning of this question, with a variety of views about the words 'serious' and 'popular' in the question. Rather surprisingly, only a few candidates saw this as a contrast between 'high art' and 'popular culture'. Instead, they tended to think about the purpose behind the music, irrespective of any classification. Some good ideas were presented, but few candidates seemed able to put two sides of an argument before coming down in favour of one or the other.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/02</b> <b>Performing</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

- Set up and test backing tracks and amplification equipment well in advance of the examination
- Think carefully about which instrument or skill will be the strongest to present in Section A

## **General comments**

The Examiners heard a very wide range of performances on different instruments and in different musical styles. A warm welcome was provided by all Centres, and the Examiners enjoyed the opportunity to meet teachers and candidates. Arrangements were usually very efficient, and copies of the music were provided at the start of the session in almost all cases.

On some occasions, candidates who were performing with backing tracks and/or amplification equipment had not set up, tested the equipment or checked the amplification levels in advance. This led to delays – some of which were significant – in the running of the examination, which is not fair on candidates who have to perform later in the session. It also did not provide the ideal setting for the candidates themselves to perform to the best of their ability.

The range of achievement was fairly wide, but in most cases solo performances were well matched to candidates' abilities. The range of repertoire that was performed was really quite remarkable, and it was very pleasing to see these young people so committed to whichever musical style – or variety of styles – they had chosen. As always, candidates should be encouraged to avoid music which is too difficult for them, as this often impacts on more than one category in the assessment criteria. Nonetheless, some performances of extremely challenging repertoire were at an astounding level of achievement and this is very much welcomed.

There were some very fine ensemble performances. Usually these were presented in Section B, but Centres are reminded that they can also be presented as Section A performances – for nervous candidates, performing in a group with other people may be preferable. Some candidates performed on a second instrument for Section B; in a small number of cases, this instrument was very much less strong than their main instrument, and these candidates could have considered improvising in Section B.

## **Improvising**

A number of candidates offered improvising in Section B, most often using the chord sequence or melodic opening. The improvisations were usually very successful, demonstrating a confident approach in a variety of musical styles. On occasion there was a sense that some improvisations were 'pre-planned', as they bore only passing resemblance to the stimulus material. While it is essential that candidates are well prepared for this task in advance, they must nevertheless be aware that the mark scheme focuses on use made of the original material – contrasting elements are, of course, important, but the right balance must be struck.

This option should certainly be considered by those candidates who wish to perform an advanced recital but whose second instrument is very much less strong than their first.

## **Accompanying**

The vast majority of the accompanying was carried out efficiently and musically, and was a great support to the candidates. The examiners would like to thank the accompanists; it is recognised that for some teachers there are a lot of accompaniments to learn and this is much appreciated. On a very small number of occasions, some external accompanists actually hindered the candidates from performing to the best of their ability. It is understandable that some candidates may wish to provide their own accompanists, but Centres should be alert to the possibility that this may not always be in their best interests.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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Paper 9800/03  
Composing

## Key messages

- All stylistic imitation exercises should begin with an *incipit* in which the complete texture is given. In the case of Chorales, the complete first phrase should normally be given.
- Coursework exercises should normally involve the completion of approximately 24 bars. In the case of Chorales, exercises should normally involve the completion of at least 12 – 16 bars.
- All coursework exercises (both the final version and any preparatory drafts) should be handwritten, not produced with a computer notation program.
- Candidates must be sure to read and understand the full requirements of the Commissioned Composition.

## **Section A: Stylistic Exercises (Examination)**

The majority of candidates chose the Chorale. As in previous years, too few attempted the other Questions for general comments to be made. There were very few examples of the string quartet, two-part counterpoint or song accompaniment. No one chose the show song.

As noted in last year's report, some candidates' harmonisations were rather better than their Coursework exercises. In other cases the opposite was true. There was quite a lot of rather plain, hymn-like harmony with few passing notes. Most candidates identified the main modulations correctly, though some treated bar 14 as an imperfect cadence in G and missed the opportunity for a perfect cadence in A minor at this point. In many cases, carelessness in the use of necessary accidentals marred the modulations. While cadences were often well formed, suggesting that most candidates had learned them thoroughly, the intervening harmony was generally less satisfactory. There were several instances of wrong inversions, including some at cadence points. Most candidates attempted to harmonise the last two phrases differently, but with varying degrees of success.

While the majority seemed to have at least a developing understanding of this style, there were only a few really outstanding harmonisations. This may have something to do with the fact that in the Coursework exercises there were hardly any examples of chorales in triple time; this aspect of the examination exercise clearly caused difficulties for some candidates that might well have been avoided if they had had some experience of chorales in 3/4 during the course.

## **Section B: Stylistic Exercises (Coursework)**

Most of the Coursework exercises were presented in handwritten MS copies, with several drafts that showed the teacher's annotations and comments. In some Centres, however, the Coursework exercises took the form of computer-generated scores, with only a single draft for each exercise. It would be very helpful if Centres could ensure that all Coursework exercises are handwritten. In most cases, no more than two or three drafts should be included.

### **(a) Chorale Harmonisations**

This was again the most common option in Group A. In some Centres the exercises did not appear to have been chosen with a view to increasing their difficulty or complexity as the candidates grew in confidence; the early exercises were just as difficult as later ones. In other Centres this issue had clearly been thought through, usually with much better results.

All exercises should begin with an *incipit* consisting of a complete phrase in which the full texture is given. This requirement is observed in every other option, but in the case of chorales is often

ignored. In some cases only the first chord was given. Candidates are expected to follow the precedent set by the *incipit*, but they cannot do this if they have no model to follow.

The inclusion of preliminary drafts of the submitted exercises is often very instructive. There were cases, for example, where the teacher's annotations (including MS examples of how to cope with tricky corners) were completely ignored and the original, incorrect, solutions were carried forward from one draft to the next. Sometimes there were too many drafts.

**(b) String Quartets**

This option was chosen by a substantial number of candidates, but in general the standard was much less good than in the chorales. Even when the basic harmony was broadly correct, the effectiveness of the working was often let down by the texture. The alto clef proved very challenging to several candidates, resulting in the viola part frequently going below the cello, with incorrect inversions of the chords as a consequence.

Some exercises were far too short. The Syllabus requires candidates to complete approximately 24 bars after the *incipit* in each exercise. Some exercises fell substantially short of this – in some cases demanding the completion of only eight bars. Exercises as short as that do not give enough scope for candidates to demonstrate the extent of their understanding.

Most candidates were happy enough dealing with diatonic harmony in the tonic and with simple modulations (e.g. to the dominant). Opportunities for chromatic harmony were often missed and several candidates did not recognise melodic patterns that clearly suggested that an augmented 6th chord was needed. Modulations to keys more distant than the dominant and the correct identification of accented passing notes were recurrent problems. There was little firm evidence that candidates had experienced the quartet genre as living music, rather than as dry, academic exercises.

**(c) Two-part Baroque Counterpoint**

A very small number of candidates chose this option – even fewer than last year – and as a result it is not possible to make general comments about this option.

**(d) Early Romantic Keyboard Accompaniments**

This option was again taken in only a few Centres, with mixed results. Sometimes the harmony was accurate enough, but quite basic, depending heavily on the given figuration with little or no addition or invention. Several candidates showed insufficient awareness of nineteenth-century harmony and characteristic chromaticisms were not generally very well understood.

The choice of exercises is crucial to success in this option. Pieces which demand only the continuation of the given figuration do not provide candidates with enough scope to demonstrate a full range of skills. By the end of a two-year course, they are expected to recognise when a change of figuration is needed; if the exercise shows every such change, the candidates are being unnecessarily restricted.

**(e) Music in Jazz, Popular and Show styles**

There were too few examples of this option for general comments to be made.

**Section C: Commissioned Composition**

As last year, Commissions 1 and 3 were the most popular, accounting for the majority of candidates. Of the other options Commissions 4(a) and 4(b) were each chosen by a relatively small number of candidates, while Commission 2 was the least popular.

Some candidates included commentaries. While short commentaries can sometimes be helpful, they should be kept in proportion.

A significant number of otherwise strong compositions were weakened by a lack of variety in terms of tonality. Contrast of key is an important aspect of musical structure, but one to which few candidates had paid sufficient attention.

**(a) Hal Summers: *My Old Cat***

There were some effective efforts to capture the mood of particular words in the poem (sleekest – blackest – gentle – rage – defiance – hate), but overall musical structure was sometimes sacrificed to the setting of individual phrases in the text, in a kind of stream-of-consciousness approach. Where there were motivic references to articulate the structure, they were almost always in the accompaniment rather than in the voice part. Sometimes there were long sections where the voice was not involved at all, so that the phrases of the text appeared only intermittently, which detracted from the coherence of the song.

Word setting in some songs was less careful than it might have been. There were several instances of incorrect emphasis, some of which were carefully smoothed out in the recorded performances. From this point of view, it was good that so many of the recordings were of live performances, and that the performers were so audibly committed to getting the most out of the music. In cases where the performance was synthesised (including the voice part), it was noticeable that the vocal writing was generally weaker.

Some songs were very brief indeed.

**(b) Clare Maguire: *Sweet Lie***

There were too few settings of these lyrics to allow general points to be made.

**(c) In Memoriam: *The Battle of the Somme, 1916***

The parameters for this commission were clearly stated: the piece was required to encapsulate two contrasting emotions, which needed to be identified in a subtitle. A significant number of the candidates who chose this option missed these requirements. There were several pieces of programmatic music in several named sections (Off to War! – The Battle – Victory! – Home Again), suggesting that the candidates concerned had not read the question carefully or were not informed about the Battle of the Somme. This was intended as an opportunity for candidates to reflect on an important anniversary and express their reflection through music. Teachers supervising this part of the Syllabus are asked to ensure that candidates really do understand what is required of them in a commission of this kind.

The candidates who did follow the instructions correctly tried very hard to make coherent sense out of music that often embodied very stark contrasts. Most of them found it much harder to compose music in a violent mood than in a peaceful or thoughtful atmosphere. There were some effective passages that might well have been marked *nobilmente* in tribute to Elgar.

Candidates chose to compose for a variety of ensembles, from modest chamber groups to full orchestra. In several cases candidates who wrote for orchestra lacked the skills or experience to do so effectively. A little more guidance from teachers might have been beneficial in such cases. Pieces for solo piano (of which there were a few) did not fulfil the requirements.

**(d) Pitch and/or Rhythm Cells**

There were some very good responses to this commission, with several candidates demonstrating very secure technique in developing the given material. Candidates should be warned not to change the given materials: the E flat in this year's pitch group was an essential ingredient, but altered to an E natural it inevitably produced a rather bland result.

In some cases, especially where the piece began with added material, it was initially rather difficult to tell which stimulus had been chosen. It would be helpful, if there is any such ambiguity (legitimate though this may be), to mark the score to show which stimulus has been chosen.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/41</b> <b>Dissertation</b></p>
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## Key messages

- The inclusion of a CD with short audio excerpts is very beneficial to candidates
- Dissertations should not be submitted without an approved proposal
- Candidates should follow the advice contained in proposal feedback

## General comments

The standard of dissertation submitted this year was generally high. Marking by Centres was usually slightly lenient, as has been the case in previous years, with occasional instances of very slight severity, mostly within the appropriate bands for each criterion and only sometimes slightly outside the appropriate band. The most helpful submissions explained clearly how and why marks had been awarded; in some cases, perceptive comments were made, but these observations were not reflected in the marks awarded.

More specifically, there could be an improvement in the application of some criteria, as was the case in previous years. Criterion 3 (Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary) was often marked generously; Centres should consider the accuracy and breadth of analysis in reaching a mark for this criterion. Similarly, criterion 4 tended to be marked leniently, although this was more consistent than in previous years; *musical* examples should substantiate the candidates' independent judgments.

The best dissertations delved quickly and directly into the music, more so than in previous years; it is most effective to weave contextual understanding into conclusions based on musical evidence. It should be noted that Contextual Understanding (criterion 2) can include context *within* a larger piece, or between pieces, where appropriate, for example in dissertations that are primarily analytical.

Aural perception was most convincingly proven where candidates included a CD of excerpts (not whole tracks), and more importantly, where candidates were able to comment imaginatively, informatively and specifically on the effects that particular musical features created; this also demonstrated an ability to focus on *significant* features. In some cases, the lack of a CD was defended, but it remains the case that a CD of excerpts tends to strengthen candidates' dissertations, rather than being unnecessary. Some dissertations needed to explain more thoroughly how musical effects were achieved. There was a good balance between score and aural analysis, the latter of which is particularly to be encouraged. The use of manuscript examples is worthwhile, but there should also be evidence that this music has been *heard*. In some cases, candidates would have made more convincing arguments by highlighting the relevant features of score extracts more clearly.

On the whole, candidates were receptive to suggestions to rephrase dissertation titles as questions, so as to make them more evaluative. Where candidates formulated a sensible question, a more convincing conclusion was reached. Centres are reminded that the Assessment Objective of this component is primarily Critical Thinking, and this should be kept in mind when drafting proposals and providing feedback on drafts. Some candidates did not pay due attention to advice given in proposal feedback, which sometimes meant that dissertations were unable to meet the criteria for the highest bands. Centres are also reminded of the need to submit proposals; it is not acceptable to submit a dissertation without first having sought approval for the topic.

It was pleasing that many candidates adhered to the spirit of the word limit (with some reasonable tolerance allowed above and below 3500 words), although a greater number of candidates submitted short dissertations this year. This demonstrated candidates' ability to be selective, to focus on significant features, and to evidence critical thinking. No dissertations exceeded the reasonable bounds of the word limit. Shorter

dissertations could have delved more deeply into careful analysis of music to reach the recommended word count and convey a more convincing argument.

Sources were generally well-acknowledged, both in-text and in bibliographies, thereby avoiding questions of plagiarism, although in many cases this needed to be done more thoroughly throughout the text. Footnotes were mostly used correctly; they should include the author's name, publication title, year of publication and page number/s. If not using in-text referencing – e.g. (Jones, 1998, 12–13) – then the conventions of Harvard style could be consulted as a guide for footnotes and bibliographies, although it is not expected that candidates will necessarily follow these conventions faithfully.

All dissertations included a bibliography, although some were too short to constitute a wide range of sources. It was helpful where Centres included a copy of the original proposal, although this is not strictly necessary.

It is always worth repeating the advice to teachers regarding the monitoring of work. The signed declaration is an important document, which states that the Teacher has verified that the candidate's work is their own. Whilst it is clear that many teachers closely monitor the work of their candidates as a matter of course, it is recommended that teachers hold regular meetings with candidates to ensure that work is the candidate's own, and that the dissertation is on the right track in engaging sufficiently with *music*. The declaration may then be signed with confidence.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/42</b> <b>Advanced Recital</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Vocal repertoire should be chosen carefully to fit the range of the candidate
- The audio extracts for the written project were not always comparative

## General comments

The Moderators enjoyed seeing and hearing the advanced recitals. There was a range of achievement, but the majority of the repertoire was well suited to the candidates' abilities. Some vocal repertoire, however, did not always fit comfortably within the candidate's range, leading to issues with tone quality in particular and intonation. The quality of diction and pronunciation (particularly in French and German songs) was also variable in vocal recitals. At the top end, there were some very fine recitals indeed, representing performing at the highest level that might be expected by candidates at this stage. In some recitals, a lack of variety in the performance detracted over the course of a 30 minute programme, and candidates should be encouraged to really work at the details of style, including tone quality, dynamic contrast and articulation, in order to express the musical intentions of the different composers.

It is again necessary to remind some Centres that performing in front of the teacher alone does not constitute an audience within the spirit of the syllabus; it changes the nature of the task for the candidate and we must insist that this issue is addressed for the next session, please. It is also a shame when some of these recitals are at such a high standard – they deserve to be heard by more people.

## **Written project**

The written projects were usually successful, with most recordings of the repertoire being well chosen examples which benefited the candidates' own performances. As always, the best projects focused on features of stylistic significance in the performances, rather than small and usually unimportant details. In the best projects, the candidates' own performing intentions were made clear in the text and were also heard in the recital itself.

As highlighted in last year's report, not all projects were completely successful in linking the audio extracts with the written text. It is important to note that the project should be comparing the performances, and the CD of extracts should also demonstrate a clear comparison of the same or similar passages performed by the two chosen performers. Some CDs only provided the performance of one performer and did not therefore provide aural evidence to support the comparison made in the text. Sometimes the order of the extracts was not consistent or logical on the CD and/or the written text did not reference the CD accurately, making it unclear which performance was being played. A few projects focused rather too much on comparing the recordings with the score, rather than with each other.

In the most successful projects, the CD contained a range of focused extracts which directly contrasted the two performances, one after the other, with the performers also appearing in the same order. The tracks were clearly referenced in the written text, and fully supported the arguments.

## Marking

Any adjustments which were made were to ensure a common standard across all Centres, and feedback on the individual marking has been sent to Centres as appropriate. As was highlighted in last year's report, some of the marking was rather generous again this year; the mark schemes and grade boundaries are designed to allow for differentiation at the top end, and recitals which are good, but not consistently strong in all areas, should not be given the very highest marks available. Centres are reminded that any marks above 70 will still represent achievement at distinction level. Centres are asked to check the addition of marks carefully as there were some significant errors; on more than one occasion the total mark written on the mark sheet was different from the correct total by 10 marks.

## DVDs

Centres are reminded of the importance of making an audio recording on separate equipment from the video camera, so that there is a back-up in case of equipment failure. The audio CD can also be used to clarify issues of tone quality which occasionally arise from the DVDs. The ideal camera angle is one which shows the recital as a whole, rather than being zoomed in too closely on the candidate – but please ensure that the instrument (particularly the keyboard for piano recitals) is fully visible. For organ recitals, it may be beneficial to experiment with different camera and microphone placements to get the best possible effect.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/43**  
**Free Composition**

## **General comments**

There was a small entry for this component, but a wide range of interesting work was submitted. All candidates fully met the syllabus requirements for two contrasting compositions, a recording and a supporting written commentary. Some of the pieces were extremely ambitious, and often very successful. Other work was more modest and occasionally did not really extend the compositional skills beyond those demonstrated in Component 3. Candidates should be reminded that this component carries one quarter of the marks of the whole syllabus and the scope of the work submitted should be commensurate with this.

It was pleasing that the advice given in last year's report to avoid extensive sections of improvisation was heeded; the majority of the compositions were fully notated, and the detail of the notation and overall presentation was often very professional. Some of the assessment was rather generous; there was extensive use of the top band box when marks in the second band would have been more appropriate. Centres are reminded that any marks above 70 will still represent achievement at distinction level, so marks in the high 90s should only be given if realistic in this context. Further feedback on assessment has been sent to individual Centres.

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

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**Paper 9800/44**  
**Music Technology**

## **General comments**

There were a very small number of submissions for this component, so only limited general feedback can be offered. All candidates fulfilled the syllabus requirements to submit an arrangement and a composition, using sequencing and recording technologies, accompanied by a written commentary. The very best work was outstanding in all categories, displaying both musical imagination and technical competence. Other work was more modest in its achievement; some arrangements in particular suffered by being no more than re-orchestrations – it is essential that the arrangement demonstrates clear new compositional input if the higher mark bands are to be accessed. The commentaries generally addressed all of the required points, although pages of screen shots which are not directly related to valid points in the commentary do not serve any purpose. Feedback on assessment has been sent directly to Centres.