

MUSIC

Paper 8663/01

Listening

General comments

While the general standard of answers was satisfactory, showing a good measure of familiarity with the music discussed, a growing tendency to rely overmuch on memorised facts was noticeable. This caused many otherwise promising candidates to miss the real point of the question e.g. in answers to **Question 6**, many of which included detailed explanations of Penderecki's notation for specific string techniques without further comment about the effect of the sounds produced by them or any other indication of relevance. Candidates should also be warned that the ability to quote bar or section numbers from memory in itself does not show evidence of an understanding of musical processes.

Section A

Question 1 was very popular indeed. Perhaps candidates found describing the variation processes in the Haydn work rather more straightforward than dealing with the musical techniques in the concertos and symphony. All the questions, including **Question 1**, however, required more than just straight commentary on the musical events. Whilst a good deal of enthusiasm for the Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven works was discernible, there was less evidence of reflection on the four Prescribed Works as representatives of their genres and the style as a whole. Few candidates chose **Question 3**.

Question 1

There were some very thoughtful answers which showed clear understanding of the distinction between 'development' and 'variation' of a theme and exemplified it well. However, in general, the response to this question was rather disappointing as many candidates treated it as an exercise in showing a detailed account of the music of each variation. Although reference was made to the 'varying' aspect, it was often not really explained. Some answers gave an indication that 'developing' was a different kind of process, but it was frequently not referred to. A few candidates treated the terms as interchangeable. Among those who understood the distinction, there were difficulties in exemplifying it by referring to convincing examples from any of the other Prescribed Works.

Question 2

The question was generally answered with a clear and enthusiastic sense of purpose. Most candidates had a lively appreciation of the different sound worlds of the two concertos. Many were able to explain this knowledgeably, in varying degrees of detail, often making telling points of contrast (as well as, in some cases, useful ones about similarities). Some demonstrated understanding, but left the comparison part of the question implied rather than more explicitly teased out.

Question 3

Of the few candidates who chose this question, most broadened the discussion into one about the 'classical style' in general, with too much focus on the elements of Sonata Form and little reference to the nature, make-up and use of the orchestra in this particular symphony. Most were aware of its 'Mozartean' scale. A handful of answers placed it in its performance context, showing a good understanding of its domestic nature (in contrast to the more public occasions of the two concertos), and explaining the different environment and purpose for which it was composed. There were some telling comparisons with the 'grander' sound of Beethoven's music.



Section B

There was a great deal of reliance on the Core Works, a clear preference being shown for questions in which detailed commentary on one or more of them was thought to suffice. For this reason, **Question 5** attracted very few answers. Although answers to **Question 6** depended heavily on commentaries on the Penderecki piece, slightly more readiness was shown than in some previous sessions to engage in discussion of wider repertoire.

Question 4

There was widespread appreciation of the movement, many candidates combining a thoughtful reading of the text with a keen ear for the effects of its musical setting in purposeful attempts to explain Vaughan Williams's compositional techniques. The most obvious techniques of word-painting were generally understood and adequately exemplified. Many candidates went on to discuss, in this case very convincingly, the role of dynamics in the expression of the text. Others gave relevant examples of the use of pitch, intervals, chromaticism/dissonance, antiphony, other choral textures, onomatopoeia and verbal rhythms. Most mentioned the military significance of brass fanfares and the drums at the beginning of the movement, but only a few were able to examine the contribution of the orchestral accompaniment beyond this.

Many answers were of a high standard, most were more than satisfactory, with the least successful being from candidates whose explorations did not extend beyond the first three lines of the text.

Question 5

'*Beat, beat, drums*' was also the most obvious example from the Core Works for the few candidates who answered this question to refer to, and most did. The first part of the question – explaining 'the general characteristics of a march' – was generally poorly done, with very few candidates able either to define or account for even the most obvious typical features.

Question 6

Inevitably, prompted by the word 'threnody', most candidates chose the Penderecki as one of their pieces. Many of them, however, took the question as an invitation to describe the composition in considerable detail, often relating its effects to their own vivid interpretations of events, and lost sight of the aspect that asked about 'grief for those lost'. The Britten movement '*Libera me*' was most often the companion piece: again, there was much listing of techniques, such as the tritone and 'free time'. While some candidates recognised a mourning flavour in the recitative settings and many cited Owen's poem '*I am the enemy you killed, my friend*', few related these directly to any mention of 'lament for the dead'. One or two candidates bravely tried to show how Vaughan Williams's '*Beat, beat, drums*' was also a 'threnody'. There was a widespread desire to present all these composers as 'getting their message across'. While this was true, it tended to lead to overlong diversions on the horrors of war. There was a welcome widening of repertoire discussed, including many anti-war songs and pieces. One candidate made a convincing case for Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* as 'a lament for the dead'. There were very few references to any music from other traditions.

Section C

There was a noticeable improvement in the performance of candidates in this section of the paper.

Question 7

The best answers were usually those that explicitly pointed out features of 'repetition' and 'contrast' in the music they discussed. Most cited one or more of the classical structures they had learned in their study of the Prescribed Works, quite a few making useful comparisons between Rondo form and the verse-chorus structure of today's popular music. Many contrasted this with the Penderecki piece from the Core Works, considering it wholly 'unstructured', although a few more reflective answers considered it in terms of 'sections' and a 'forward momentum' leading to a climax. A number of candidates discussed improvisation, some showing that cadenzas, for instance, are unstructured, while jazz improvisation occurs within a structured framework.



Question 8

Few candidates chose this question. Nearly all of those who did were able to discuss patronage in respect of Haydn's working life, some in impressive detail with a clear eye on how this affected the sort of music that he composed, but most were far less clear about the nature of patronage in Beethoven's life. About half the answers mentioned publishing as a source of income.

Question 9

This was the most popular question in this section. It provoked many thoughtful answers across all levels of ability and knowledge, as well as of musical interests. A wide range of positions was taken, and a similarly wide range of examples was offered, not only from the Prescribed and Core Works, but from candidates' own performing repertoire. Popular, folk and various traditions were also referred to.

Question 10

Most candidates were able to explain the roles of keeping time and cueing instruments, and many also discussed control over interpretation of dynamics and articulation. Few, however, were able to tease out more complex aspects of interpretation. Hardly any referred to having heard different performances of a work.



MUSIC

Paper 8663/06

Investigation and Report

There was a pleasing number of Investigations that fully met the spirit of the Syllabus. Some had chosen to explore the development of a genre, or the music of a composer, usually in the form of a chronological history. This had led the keener candidates to seek out and listen to music hitherto unfamiliar to them. Others confined themselves to a journalistic collage of information derived mainly from websites, with no convincing evidence that they had heard any of the music mentioned. The Report was, at best, no more than a précis of the work of others – no real, active 'Investigation' had taken place – at worst, a second-hand account coupled with judgements that verged on plagiarism. The deliberate cutting-and-pasting of paragraphs downloaded from websites is obviously dishonest but so, too, is the careful transcribing of phrases and sentences, often with an element of paraphrase or substitution of synonyms to disguise the dependency on a source. Almost all the work submitted was accompanied by the appropriate 'Authentication' Form, signed by the candidate and their teacher: both, therefore, could be presumed to have read the very clear definitions of 'plagiarism' given in it. Several candidates, though they had signed, had not heeded the warning implied i.e. that dishonest work risks complete rejection. In cases where the 'borrowing' was only partial, the Examiners were unable to credit the identified passage(s) as the work of the candidate, with a consequent impact on the overall mark. The most 'convincing' presentations (see the Assessment Criteria 'E Communication of findings and acknowledgements', page 35 in the Syllabus) were all 'carefully documented': their Bibliographies gave full details of all sources consulted, including websites and, where applicable, CD liner notes, concert programmes or personal communications and, whenever information or a judgement from any of these was quoted or paraphrased in the candidate's text the source was identified in a footnote.

The best evidence of independent learning was found among candidates who had assimilated what they had read and then gone on to show, through their discussion of relevant musical examples, that they could apply their knowledge and understanding. This was usually done by a mixture of MSS examples embedded in the text and short audio extracts on an accompanying CD. The significance of the examples needs to be teased out in the text (something which the best candidates did well): a few zealous ones had not understood the purpose of an 'example' and had painstakingly compiled CDs with multiple tracks that amounted to little more than *incipits* – no musical points were made about them; a handful of others used MSS examples almost as a way of decorating their pages, breaking up the text. In some cases, these were recognisably copies of other commentators' examples. Frustratingly, some CDs failed to play, reproducing their extracts neither on a stereo player nor on a PC - candidates must check before submission that they will play on standard equipment. Several candidates included no aural extracts but directed Examiners to youtube for examples: this is not acceptable.

Centres are advised to draw candidates' attention to the marks awarded in the Assessment Criteria (p. 34 in the Syllabus) for **(A)** Aural Perception and **(C)** Analytic/Investigative Techniques. Careful reading will show that the higher mark bands for the former require at least a 'wide range' of listening. The appropriate 'Analytic/investigative techniques' applied to the exploration of the music in their listening varied from candidate to candidate according to their focus. For a very few it took the form of a full-blown formal 'analysis' of a substantial piece, the most successful of whom were those who demonstrated by their approach and comments that this was not the only piece of its type with which they were thoroughly familiar. For most, though, a thread was traced – the development of specific performance techniques, the characteristics of widely differing examples of a particular genre or a composer's style, or a comparison of interpretations: these were all legitimate ways of 'investigating' the music.

There were widely differing ways of tackling the task of setting the investigation of the music in its context. The Assessment Criterion ('B' on page 34) is entitled 'Contextual understanding' and it was the distinction between 'chunks' of context (e.g. lengthy biographies which were not thereafter shown to have any bearing on the music, or detailed lists of scale systems to which no reference was later made in commentaries on the aural extracts) and very knowledgeable, 'joined-up' discussions of the music that made timely references to significant contextual matters, which differentiated between candidates. The best 'informed' were those who had read and assimilated, whose 'understanding' permeated and was reflected in the analysis. Many had

been assiduous in the pursuit of 'information' but left it as a self-contained body of knowledge – 'background'. The weakest paid lip-service to the requirement by offering a series of notes downloaded from easily accessible (and immediately recognisable) sources.