

# PRINCIPAL COURSE MUSIC

Paper 9800/11

Listening, Analysis and Historical Study Sections A and B

## General comments

As would be expected from a listening paper of this type, there was a wide range of achievement; some candidates demonstrated excellent aural skills in all areas and gained very high marks, whereas others showed a weakness in one or more areas of the paper. In general, however, most candidates clearly knew how to approach the different parts of the paper and performed creditably. Individual candidates had their own strengths and weaknesses in the different types of aural skills tested in **Section B**, but as a generalisation, there is room for improvement in questions which explore wider contextual awareness of the topic; in this year's examination this was tested in **Questions 9 and 17** (see below).

## Comments on individual questions

### **Section A**

- 1 Virtually all candidates made a very good attempt at this question. Candidates took different approaches to structuring their answers: some wrote a description of the first performance followed by the second, but the majority of candidates compared different features of the performances together (e.g. tempo or instrumentation). This approach was very successful, but there is no expectation that all candidates should follow the same model.

Most candidates wrote detailed comparisons which looked at a number of the important features present in the performances. The strongest answers, of which there were many, demonstrated acute aural skills in accurately identifying important differences, the effect of which was then described, and a solid knowledge of performing practice was used to explain the approaches.

Some answers which gained fewer marks wrote about a range of features in much the same way that the best answers did, but with less accurate aural observations. In other cases, some features were discussed in great detail, but other important areas were omitted. Some candidates made accurate aural observations of features in the performances, but did not demonstrate a knowledge of performance practice to explain these.

There was a tendency for some candidates to "judge" the level of "authenticity" as if this were the primary aim of the question, with every paragraph concluding with a statement to this effect. Candidates are not expected to do this, and should not assume that there will always be one "authentic" and one "non authentic" recording.

The Examiners felt that there was a tendency for some candidates to confuse knowledge with listening – the most obvious example of this was connected with pitch, where a number of candidates made some very clear assertions about the specific frequency that A had been tuned to in the different recordings. Whilst it is expected that knowledge about performing practice will support the answers, candidates must be sure that they are making aural observations and not assumptions.

### **Section B, Topic B1 Instrumental Music**

- 2 This passage of melodic dictation was tackled extremely well by virtually all of the candidates, with many gaining full or close to full marks.
- 3 Again, answers to this question were most impressive.
- 4 This question was well answered.



- 5 This question was fairly well answered, although more candidates spotted the rhythmic error than the melodic one. Where the error had been identified in the right place it had usually been corrected accurately.
- 6 Answers to this question varied somewhat in their precision, but most candidates gained at least some credit.
- 7 (a) Most candidates identified the place correctly.
- 7 (b) This question was fairly well answered.
- 8 Most candidates gained some credit here, but many answers were not detailed or precise enough to gain a higher number of marks.
- 9 Answers to this question were, on the whole, disappointing. The pieces that candidates chose to compare the work to often only gave them limited scope to make worthwhile observations. The relevance of many of the comparisons was often very limited and in a small number of answers the comparisons were somewhat tenuous. Very few candidates observed that this was the slow movement of a symphony and therefore missed the opportunity to make any comparisons with similar movements. Some stronger answers did notice the modulations to keys a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart and made some good comparisons with other works which use similar key relationships. In order to have gained higher marks for this question, most candidates needed to think much more critically about the repertoire they have listened to during the course in order to make more relevant comparisons and to demonstrate a wider contextual awareness.

**Section B, Topic B2 Vocal Music**

- 10 Answers to this question varied in accuracy; some candidates gained full marks, but many others did not complete the whole passage, or were not entirely accurate.
- 11 The first two chords were usually identified quite well, but more candidates struggled with the placement of the augmented triad.
- 12 There were many different ways in which candidates could gain credit and this question was answered well by most candidates.
- 13 Many candidates answered this question well with some detailed and accurate observations about the harmony and tonality. Other candidates clearly knew how to approach the question but were less accurate in their observations.
- 14 This question was well answered, with the errors being both identified and corrected accurately by most candidates.
- 15 A reasonable number of candidates identified the alto A in the correct place, but many candidates failed to indicate a correct further entry, with an F sharp rather than an F natural being the most common mistake of pitch, and the tenor entry often being placed on the first rather than the second beat of the bar.
- 16 A lack of precision was the most common weakness in answers to this question with candidates tending to make some rather generalised points without providing sufficient detail to gain all four marks.
- 17 The level of response to this question was similar to the equivalent question in the instrumental music topic, with most candidates failing to demonstrate a strong sense of wider contextual awareness. Many of the candidates wrote about the Cecilian Movement in very general terms, but few of these answers referred to any actual music. Other candidates had some knowledge of the revival of the music of Bach and Handel in the nineteenth century, but again rarely referred to any specific examples of music to support their comparisons.

# MUSIC

<p><b>Paper 9800/12</b> <b>Listening, Analysis and Historical</b> <b>Study Sections C and D</b></p>
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## General Comments

The Examiners were pleased to observe that most candidates were well prepared for this Paper. Without exception they had all chosen Topic C3, Modernism in France, and answers in **Section C** often demonstrated a good understanding both of *The Rite of Spring* and of the Topic as a whole. In **Section D** the majority of candidates made full use of the opportunity to display a wide range of knowledge and opinion.

The fact that the Syllabus provides no choice of questions in **Section C** proved difficult for a few candidates, although they were very much in the minority. Questions are framed in careful accordance with the parameters that are outlined in the syllabus, for each Topic. It is essential that preparation for **Section C** should be based on this, rather than on any particular questions set in previous Papers. In the 2010 Paper, **Question 3(a)** on *The Rite of Spring* demanded an understanding of 'the development of ideas and motifs in the overall structure of the work', and **Question 3(b)** dealt with the 'surrealist attitude' pursued by some composers 'under the direct influence of Satie and Jean Cocteau' (these quotations come from page 19 of the syllabus). In the case of **Question 3(b)** the Examiners noted that there were a few candidates whose knowledge of Cocteau seemed to be minimal, even though this question was clearly flagged in the syllabus.

The time allowed for Paper 12 may have been a factor in explaining why some candidates wrote rather brief essays in answer to at least one question. On the other hand, the Examiners were glad to see that several candidates had managed to write full, detailed and surprisingly long answers to all three questions.

## **Section C**

### **(a) Question 3(a)**

There were several very good answers to this question and most candidates could point to numerous examples of the use of semitones in *The Rite of Spring*. Almost all knew that the bitonal chord in *The Augurs of Spring* is formed of two triads a semitone apart. Some had difficulty in accurately describing this chord. There were instances, for example, of one of the chords being described as a diminished 7th rather than a dominant 7th. Examples of similar harmony elsewhere in the work were less commonly described, although some candidates pointed to instances in the *Sacrificial Dance* and some of the other places listed in the mark scheme (which is available separately).

Most of the examples described were melodic rather than harmonic. Several candidates missed what might be considered the most obvious examples (e.g. the first melodic interval of the work) and tried to find connections with more complex concepts such as the Octatonic scale. The examples chosen to illustrate Stravinsky's use of this scale were sometimes not genuinely octatonic. There was much discussion of chromatic scales, such as those found on the first page of the score, and some description of major/minor ambiguities.

A number of candidates misread the score, taking no account of transposing instruments in their description of the notes in a chord or a melody. A few described instruments by the abbreviations used in the score. It was not always clear that these candidates knew which instrument they meant when they wrote about a C. *Ing*, to give only the most common example. In the case of this particular question, that did not make a material difference to the answer; nevertheless it suggested that the candidates concerned might not have been familiar enough with the sound of the music and that they were relying too much on visual rather than aural information as the basis of their answer.



**(b) Question 3(b)**

Those candidates who had learned about Jean Cocteau's importance in shaping the aesthetic outlook of both Satie and *Les Six* gave thorough and generally satisfactory answers to this question. Most of them wrote at some length about *Parade* and knew that it was a collaboration between Cocteau, Satie and a significant painter (though they did not all correctly name Picasso). Much emphasis was placed on the extra-musical instruments that appear in the score (the typewriter, *bouteillophone*, pistol and lottery wheel being the most frequently mentioned) and a few knew that these sounds were incorporated at Cocteau's insistence, rather against Satie's wishes. Some even knew that *Parade* includes a representation of a great wave that was fancifully supposed to have sunk the Titanic. The circus setting of *Parade* was accurately described, and a few candidates also described the cubist design of the costumes and the impact this presumably had on the way some of the characters could dance when they were wearing them. More emphasis was placed on the circus style of the music than on its mechanical characteristics: no one observed that every tempo in the score has the same metronome mark. The riot at the first performance was often mentioned, as was the lawsuit that followed Satie's insulting postcard to the critic Jean Poueigh (though no one mentioned him by name).

Most candidates wrote about *Le Coq et l'arlequin* and summarised some of its main points, in particular Cocteau's emphasis on the everyday art of the music-hall or the café-concert. They knew that this document came to serve as a kind of manifesto for *Les Six*; most could name at least five of the composers in this group and could name and describe a number of works by Milhaud, Honegger and Poulenc. The music by Milhaud most often cited included *Le Boeuf sur le toit*, *Saudades do Brasil* and *La Création du monde*; descriptions were mainly accurate, although some thought that *La Création du monde* had a biblical subject. Those who wrote about Honegger almost all mentioned only *Pacific 231*. The most commonly mentioned works by Poulenc were the *Concert champêtre* and (surprisingly in this context) the *Organ Concerto*, both of which were composed after the end of the period set for study and represent a more serious side of Poulenc's character than many of the earlier pieces that were directly influenced by Cocteau (such as *Cocardes*, the *Mouvements perpétuels* or *Le Bestiaire*).

There were fairly substantial accounts of the two main collaborations between members of *Les Six*, the *Album des Six* and *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. Several candidates wrote about the latter in terms which conveyed their sense of its ridiculous fun. It was disappointing, however, to note that few could write as meaningfully about the music as they did about the scenario.

There were a few candidates who had not studied this part of the syllabus in sufficient detail and who were not aware of who Cocteau was or of the extent and nature of his significance in the Topic. Some guessed that he must have influenced Stravinsky, and wrote essays about the development of Stravinsky's style. These candidates received some credit for their knowledge, if it was accurate, even though it was scarcely relevant to the question. Others guessed that he was a baroque composer and wrote essays about Neo-classicism. Again, these candidates received some credit for whatever accurate information their answers contained.

**Section D**

**(a) Question D1**

The candidates who answered this question had some difficulty in focusing on orchestration rather than on other aspects of baroque and classical concertos. Several wrote about the use of solo instruments, including much information about the variety of instruments found in baroque concertos and about the dominance of the piano in classical works. It was rather alarming to find that some candidates thought that Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* employed more than one solo instrument. Other candidates used this question as an opportunity to write about structure, focusing on *ritornello* form, sonata form and the relationship between them. While these essays demonstrated that a great deal had been learned, they were not really relevant to the question.

**(b) Question D2**

In answer to this question, candidates often missed the opportunity to write about nineteenth-century music in the wider artistic context of the romantic movement. There were few references to programmatic music based on literature or on naturalistic subjects, or to operas with historical or gothic horror settings. To most, romanticism in music was characterised only by an increased emphasis on personal emotion. Those who had studied instrumental music concentrated almost entirely on the symphony, often comparing Beethoven with Brahms or Tchaikovsky or giving a brief account of the development of the form throughout the century. Those who had studied vocal music wrote mainly about opera, usually comparing Rossini or Donizetti with Verdi and Wagner. Candidates demonstrated a commendable amount of knowledge, though their approach sometimes missed the real point of this question.

**(c) Question D3**

A wide range of opinions was expressed in answers to this question, covering most of the points listed in the mark scheme. Candidates often made a real effort to present a cogent argument, presenting different views and evaluating them before coming to their own conclusions, and citing relevant and appropriate examples. Such essays were often very well structured and expressed with considerable clarity.

**(d) Question D4**

A number of candidates took this question as an opportunity to summarise much of what they had learned about 'authenticity'. This often led them to a rather one-sided approach. Several others, however, presented a reasoned case for historically informed performance, setting out their arguments convincingly. Few drew examples from their own performing experience, thereby missing potential opportunities to make links between the historical and practical aspects of the syllabus, which the Examiners would have welcomed. There were nevertheless some very interesting essays, demonstrating quite a high level of critical thinking.

**(e) Question D5**

Here again, the best answers were those in which a variety of opposing or conflicting arguments were presented and evaluated before a final conclusion was stated. A point that was often made was that the composer is in a unique position to know about the intentions that lay behind a piece when it was being composed; there was a tendency to assume that this must lead to good (and 'authentic') performances. Candidates sometimes referred to composers' recordings of their own music as somehow definitive, but few drew contrasts between recordings made by the same composer at different times (Stravinsky being the most obvious example that the Examiners hoped they would know about). It was interesting to note that the candidates with the strongest views about this subject included some who had shown themselves to have some talent for composition in the work they had submitted for Component 3.

# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/02</b> <b>Performing</b></p>
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## General comments

The Examiners were made very welcome in all of the Centres that they visited, and would like to thank teachers for their assistance in helping the examinations to run smoothly. Performances were heard on a very wide range of instruments and in a range of styles, and the Examiners enjoyed hearing some fascinating repertoire in both the solo and ensemble performances. It was inevitable in a compulsory paper that there would be a range of ability, but the standard of performing was often very high, and the Examiners were able to award full marks in at least one section on a number of occasions.

In virtually every case, candidates performed for an appropriate amount of time, although there were a few recitals which were considerably over or under length. The repertoire chosen was, on the whole, appropriate for the candidates, although they should be advised that they will always be more successful if they play music which is well within their grasp with confidence, style and accuracy. Those who chose to play music which was just beyond their technical or musical limitations often displayed weaknesses in a number of assessment areas.

There was a tendency for vocal recitals to include at least one piece in a style which did not suit the candidate at all. Whilst it is important to demonstrate a range of techniques in a recital, some candidates had chosen to finish their already wide-ranging recitals with show songs in which they looked – and sounded – extremely uncomfortable. On the other hand, some candidates really came to life in the more popular final sections of their recital, and might have been more successful if they had included more pieces in this style throughout.

In a small number of cases, it appeared that candidates might have been more successful if their chosen instruments / skills for **Section A** and **Section B** had been reversed, although it is appreciated that insufficient repertoire for **Section A** might have been behind some of these decisions.

## Improvising

Only a small number of candidates chose to improvise, and the best examples of this were very impressive indeed, and candidates should not be deterred from choosing this option if it might suit them better than playing a second instrument. They will, of course, need plenty of preparation and guidance in order to undertake this option successfully.

## Sheet music

Copies of the sheet music are required by the syllabus, and although these were supplied in virtually every case, this had sometimes been left to the candidate to organise with varying degrees of success. The copies had occasionally been left in another part of the building, and a quick run was needed to fetch them (not the best preparation for a recital), or the pieces were presented in an incorrect order / with pages missing. The Examiners would appreciate it if Centres could check the copies of the sheet music in advance of the recital to avoid such problems.



# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/03</b> <b>Composing</b></p>
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## 1 **General Comments**

There was a commendably wide range of work in this Component. Several candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the styles they had studied for **Sections A** and **B**. In **Section C** there was a variety of responses to the commissions and several candidates submitted very creative compositions of a high quality.

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

The overwhelming majority of candidates chose the Bach Chorale harmonisation in the examination. There were a few examples of 2-part Baroque Counterpoint, Romantic Keyboard Accompaniment and Jazz, Popular and Show Styles; no one attempted the Classical String Quartet.

In some cases the example worked in the examination was rather better than those included in the Coursework submission. This was an encouraging sign, suggesting that the examination had represented, for at least some candidates, a genuine culmination of their period of study. At the opposite extreme there were some candidates who found the examination example very difficult and who left significant gaps in their completion.

The technical flaws in the examination examples, in all the styles represented, were broadly similar to those found in the Coursework exercises. These are briefly described below. The Examiners were pleased that well over a third of the candidates scored marks in the top two bands; more than two-thirds fell into the top three bands. No one fell into the two lowest bands.

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

The Examiners found a wide variation between Centres in their approach to this section. Every candidate's submission must include five exercises in each style; these exercises must all be dated and the dates must show that they have been worked at different stages during the course; it must also be possible for the Examiners to see at a glance which part or parts have been given, and which represent the candidate's work; and each exercise should require the completion of some 16 – 24 bars.

The dates on some candidates' work covered a very short period of time, often rather close to the final stages of the course. The reason for requiring all exercises to be dated is that this allows the Examiners to see evidence of a sustained period of study. It is expected that candidates will actually work several more exercises in each style than the five that are finally submitted, so that they can choose examples that represent their best work at different points in the course. There were several submissions in which no dates were shown on any of the Coursework exercises.

There was considerable variety in the methods used to distinguish given parts from those added by the candidate. The clearest methods by far are for the given parts to be typeset on the computer, with the candidate's working written by hand, or for the given parts to be written in ink with the candidate's work in pencil. It is more problematic if a whole exercise is typeset on the computer: in such cases it would be helpful if the given parts could use a different notation font, or at least a clearly different font size, so that there can be no ambiguity at all.

Some of the submitted exercises were substantially shorter than the syllabus requires. The Examiners are of course aware that most Bach Chorales are not long enough to allow for the completion of a full 16 – 24 bars, but this is an exception that does not apply to any of the other prescribed styles. It may be appropriate for some candidates, especially at an early stage in the course, to provide the complete texture at various points in the middle of an extract as well as at the beginning, but this practice ought not to be the norm in all the

submitted exercises. Questions from past examination papers set by other boards are almost always too short to fulfil the requirements of the Pre-U Syllabus.

It is most important that the complexity of the extracts chosen as Coursework exercises should be matched to the ability of individual candidates. In a number of cases the extracts chosen were rather too hard, and the teacher's marks (not required) and comments seemed to have been designed to compensate for this by being too generous.

**(a) Chorale Harmonisations**

The most comprehensive submissions included exercises in 3/4 time as well as 4/4. Since chorales in triple time pose somewhat different problems, this was very useful and instructive to the Examiners.

The most common problems in candidates' work concerned **(i)** the accurate identification of modulations; **(ii)** the identification of appropriate approach chords to cadences; **(iii)** the avoidance of consecutives, and of awkward intervals in the inner parts; **(iv)** the range of individual parts, especially taking the bass too low and the tenor too high.

**(b) String Quartets**

The most appropriate exercises were taken from Quartets by Haydn or Mozart. Candidates who submitted exercises taken from Beethoven usually found them too difficult.

The most common problems stemmed from a relatively weak grasp of string playing techniques. There was also a tendency to make the textures too busy, leading in some cases to problems with the basic harmony.

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

The most comprehensive submissions included both passages in which an upper part had to be added to a given bass, and where a bass had to be added to a given treble. All candidates should be able to do both and most candidates succeeded in doing so. There were also some examples in which the bass line had been given throughout.

The most common problems concerned the identification of implied harmony, and the expression of that harmony in an essentially melodic part. This sometimes led to very awkward voice-leading, sometimes with uncharacteristically angular intervals.

**(d) Early Romantic Keyboard Accompaniments**

There was a good range of exercises, often including extracts from instrumental pieces as well as songs.

The most common problems concerned **(i)** over-elaborate textures which sometimes led to difficulties with the basic harmony; **(ii)** the continuation of a figuration derived from the given *incipit*.

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

The most common problems concerned **(i)** identification of the implied harmony; **(ii)** the expression of that harmony in both the chord symbols and the bass part; **(iii)** relating the chord symbols to the given melody; **(iv)** relating the bass part both to the given melody and to the chord symbols; **(v)** continuing the melody in the style of the given passages.

**4 Section C: Commissioned Composition**

The quality of work in this Section was mainly very good and there were some highly inventive responses to the four commissions. The most popular choice, by a small margin, was the instrumental piece in arch form, closely followed by settings of Charlotte Mew's *I so liked Spring*. Substantially fewer candidates chose either the lyric from Meduza's *Land of Forgotten Dreams* or the pitch and/or rhythm cells.

**(a) Charlotte Mew: *I so liked Spring***

There were some eloquent settings of this poem, many of which created a highly evocative atmosphere. Some songs were excessively brief, lasting for not much more than a minute; in these there was often a sense that the musical ideas were rather underdeveloped or that insufficient care had been taken over the



accompaniment. A number of songs suffered from over-use of particular melodic shapes, or from a rather relentless use of the same accompaniment figuration throughout. On the other hand some candidates found inventive ways of differentiating the two stanzas of the poem, often through the use of a different key or a change of texture.

In some songs a little more care over the accentuation of the text would have improved the effectiveness of the setting. For example, the word 'because' was often set with the accent on the first syllable.

There were some very impressive recordings of live performances, which brought the songs to life in a very helpful and informative way.

**(b) Meduza: *Land of Forgotten Dreams***

The candidates who chose this option often demonstrated quite good control of a jazz or popular idiom. In some other settings the harmony was rather unadventurous, often restricted to primary triads.

The recorded performances were not always well balanced, with one or more instruments tending to drown the vocal line. It is not acceptable for the recording of a song to omit the voice part altogether.

**(c) Arch Form**

This option produced a wide variety of responses and a number of highly accomplished pieces. Most compositions were for fairly standard chamber ensembles. There was a wide range of styles, from classical pastiche to more contemporary idioms, some of which showed clear evidence of the candidates' listening informing their composition work. A number of candidates found it difficult to achieve a satisfactory balance between sections, and most tried hard to fulfil the requirement that the C section should draw on material from the A and B sections. In a few cases it was not altogether clear that the specified structure had been observed.

**(d) Pitch and/or rhythm cells**

In some of the pieces that employed only the rhythm, the cell seemed to act more as a straightjacket than as a source of compositional freedom. In a few cases the essential character of the cell, with its hemiola, was overlooked. The group of pitches was used both melodically and harmonically, often to good effect.

**Scores and recordings**

Most scores were produced on the computer. These were not always carefully enough edited, with incorrect groupings of notes or rests. There was a fairly general lack of adequate performance directions, especially of phrasing or articulation and sometimes even of tempo. Dynamic markings were sometimes rather inconsistent. The Examiners were pleased to see that some candidates had added markings or comments to their scores as a direct result of the rehearsal and performance of their pieces: this gives clear evidence of a continuing learning process.

Recordings of live performances are always preferable to synthesised reproductions of a computer score, even if the performers sometimes struggle to play the notes. Live performances can sometimes convey the character of a piece more effectively than the score, capturing the composer's creative intentions, and this is of great value to candidates. In the case of a song, the submission of a sequenced performance with no singer seems a fundamentally weak approach to the concept of realisation. Song composers need above all to try out the practical implications of their text setting decisions, and this requires live performances.

Although candidates are not required to write commentaries on their compositions, a number did so. When the focus was on providing a structural and technical guide to the piece, this was sometimes extremely informative and demonstrated how the commission had been worked through in a complex compositional process. In some cases, too, a commentary may have helped the candidate to think through exactly how the requirements of the commission had been met. There is no plan to make it compulsory for candidates to provide a commentary, and they should not be discouraged from doing so provided that the focus is clearly on explaining technical details of the compositional process.

The CDs submitted must be playable on a single-standard domestic CD player.

Most Centres provided separate CDs for each candidate. It may be more convenient and more economical to transfer all the recordings onto a single CD for the whole Centre, and that would be perfectly acceptable with the inclusion of a separate track list.

# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/41</b> <b>Dissertation</b></p>
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## General comments

The overall standard of the Dissertations was high. Centres' marking was generally consistent: middle range marks were usually the most accurate with higher-scoring work sometimes being slightly over-rewarded throughout. Where a Centre had a number of very able candidates plus one or two who were discernibly less comfortable with what was required, there was a tendency to undervalue what these less able candidates had, in fact, achieved.

In awarding marks for each of the five Assessment Criteria most Assessors' decisions usually fell into the appropriate band. What was often not clear, however, was why, for instance, a mark of 16 had been awarded rather than 13 (a difference of up to 3 marks in each of the categories can produce an overall mark that is 15 marks too high or too low). This was where more detailed comments would have been helpful to Moderators as they tried to understand how the descriptors had been interpreted and applied. The Moderators appreciated the informative remarks made by the handful of Assessors who did try to be specific in their comments.

More detailed observations regarding the application of each of the Assessment Criteria is given below after brief comments about titles, range of topics, teacher supervision and critical thinking.

Some of the most successful Dissertations were those where the title posed a genuinely challenging, pertinent question which the candidate then attempted to answer by reference both to a wide range of different opinions in up-to-date scholarly texts and to their own critical examination of the music itself. Nearly all candidates were clear about their focus, whether discussion of the place of a particular genre in a composer's work, an assessment of stylistic innovation or some sort of detailed comparison. A few attempted slightly too broad a subject which led to an overweighting of 'context' – a recital of background historical information – at the expense of really close study of any significant examples of the repertoire. Candidates had generally been well-guided by their teachers, though care needs to be taken to ensure that the ultimate choice is of a topic and focus with which the candidate him/herself feels confident and is entirely happy. It was probably most often the case that the repertoire from which the music was chosen as the focal point of the Dissertation was something already very familiar to the candidate and for which there was demonstrable personal enthusiasm. But, in the case of a small number of candidates who seemed not to be entirely at ease with their topic, there was an impression that this was because it reflected the Centre's interests rather than their own individual strengths.

There was a wide range of topics. Investigations of specific aspects of a composer's work, style or influence ranged from Byrd through composers such as Gluck, Beethoven, Chopin and Schoenberg to Sondheim. Some focused on a single key work, others on their significance in the development of a genre, on assessing the extent of their influence, or on significant factors that influenced them. Topics which presented a broader, more historical, sweep included ones on Greek music and mediaeval harmony. Several investigated differences in jazz styles or compared the music of pop groups; music for film also attracted serious study.

There was evidence of appropriate teacher supervision in nearly all cases. In advising each candidate about their choice of topic it is important not only to ensure that adequate resources will be available to the candidate but also to make an informed judgement about how far (s)he is equipped with the appropriate skills. When decisions about scope and methodology are being made attention needs to be drawn to the Assessment Criteria, particularly to the importance of Aural perception, Analytic techniques and the Substantiation of judgements. Most candidates had understood the necessity for scrupulous acknowledgements of all close dependence on other commentators, and had used footnotes appropriately. Some were also very judicious in their precise references to suitable musical examples to support their judgements. Candidates who relied solely on a few MSS examples embedded in their text might have



benefited from a suggestion from their teacher to include short, really relevant, audio extracts on an accompanying CD.

Defined in detail through the Assessment Objectives, critical thinking is the predominant, overarching skill that is looked for in the Dissertation. It was for this reason that candidates who tried to answer a question rather than 'Give an account' had a head start. They had set themselves the task of balancing arguments and reaching a conclusion based on musical evidence. Candidates whose sweep was too wide found themselves relaying information – and, indeed, the process of selecting what is relevant from what has been read is an important skill and many did well in this respect – which they had not time to assimilate and could not therefore apply. Some, too, simply did not know enough of the music mentioned to be able to show first-hand knowledge of it.

### Assessment Criteria

**Aural perception:** Several candidates demonstrated extremely good aural skills, particularly those who had transcribed part or all of the jazz or popular music items they were discussing. But, it should be noted, the descriptors for each of the positive bands all include an appraisal of the candidate's ability to 'focus on significant features'. The critical thinking aspect of the criterion lies in discriminating between what is significant in what has been heard and what is not. Some topics, by their very nature, offered only limited opportunities for the candidate to demonstrate a high level of aural awareness. This is something that might be borne in mind when choosing a topic. Others had not listened to enough relevant music, although plenty should have been available.

**Contextual understanding:** 'Understanding' is the active word here. There was a distinct difference between candidates who had read widely and diligently to produce quite lengthy 'scene-setting' preambles to their central discussion and those who needed only a few sentences of introduction because their knowledge had been so thoroughly assimilated that it was implicit in their whole approach, their wider understanding informing their judgements. Evidence that the reading had been done was pervasive. It was unfortunate that, in a few cases, too much of the early part of the Dissertation had been devoted to a careful account of prior history with the result that, by the time the more valuable musical discussion was getting into its stride, the realisation of the approach of the word limit forced an abrupt end.

**Analytic/investigative techniques:** The techniques appropriate to each particular topic will always be *sui generis* – this is the nub of the 'methodology' which will drive the Dissertation. There was, therefore, a wide variety of techniques used but many candidates used a combination of aural and score-based 'traditional' analytic techniques; there was a consistent search for significant features and fairly sound understanding of appropriate technical vocabulary. Achievement ranged from candidates who showed a very sophisticated grasp of harmonic language to ones who struggled to pinpoint the real meat of the matter, spending too long describing self-evident surface features in over-simple language.

**Substantiation of judgements:** The descriptor for the highest band demands examples 'chosen independently of other commentators': a pleasing proportion of candidates managed this extremely well. Some of the less confident ones took the easy option of reproducing musical examples from one or more of the texts they had used. This was particularly evident in rehearsals of history prior to the period of the composer/genre under discussion that offered assessments of music which the candidate clearly had not themselves heard. The highest band also requires that 'all' their judgements be substantiated: this is a tall order which few candidates, even the most diligent among them, managed.

**Communication:** The standard of text presentation was very high, texts were well laid out with few typos, misidentified examples or sloppy track references, and many bibliographies met the best scholarly standards. The same could not, however, be said of discographies. In a small number of Dissertations it was difficult to follow the discussion because insufficient musical material had been supplied to enable the statements to be verified. But the text and its exemplar materials are not ends in themselves, they are the vehicles by means of which the candidate demonstrates critical thinking applied to a musical enquiry – the question to be asked is 'Is the argument convincing?' Centres are to be congratulated on the high proportion of candidates who were recognised to have worked keenly over a sustained period of time, to have learned a great deal from their study and had successfully communicated their findings.

# MUSIC

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<p><b>Paper 9800/42</b> <b>Advanced Recital</b></p>
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## General comments

The Moderators were delighted to hear some very impressive recitals, ambitious in their scope, which demonstrated a clear commitment to the instrument and repertoire being performed. It was wonderful to see a number of candidates performing concertos with their School orchestras; other candidates constructed varied programmes consisting of a number of smaller contrasting pieces, or performed complete works of a different type, often song cycles. This paper is designed to allow complete flexibility over the type of programme performed, and in all cases the recital performed by candidates was entirely appropriate to them.

## Written project

The written project provides the greatest potential for improvement in future years. The project is worth 30% of the marks for this paper and is, therefore, extremely important. The Moderators felt that some candidates had perhaps not appreciated the weighting which this project carries, compared with the recital itself. Most candidates had made a reasonably successful attempt to compare two recordings, and in the best examples had really thought carefully about important points of comparison. Less successful projects often missed important issues, or were less accurate in their listening. The greatest weakness was in linking the listening to the candidates' own performance. The mark scheme includes a number of marks for this, but in some cases the candidates had not made this link successfully, and in a small number of cases had not attempted to make it at all. Some of the excerpts provided to illustrate the points made were well chosen and carefully referenced in the text; in other cases, however, the listening was not always focused (usually resulting in excerpts which were over-long for no particular reason) or it was not obvious how they linked to the text. On the other hand, a few candidates included so many excerpts that they sometimes missed the bigger picture, and focused on minutiae rather than important interpretative features. With careful guidance, it should be possible for future candidates to improve their work in this section of the paper.

## Marking

Centres' marking of the candidates' work was always carefully reasoned with helpful comments on the mark sheets. Adjustments were made to some Centres (both upwards and downwards) to ensure a consistent application of standards – individual feedback has been provided on this for each Centre.

## DVDs

The Moderators are pleased to report that all of the submitted DVDs worked perfectly. It is still important to submit an audio recording made on separate equipment, as the tone quality of certain instruments was sometimes better served by audio equipment than integrated camera microphones. However, the Moderators encountered no difficulties with any of the submitted recordings.

Occasionally, the positioning of the camera itself could have benefited from being changed. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is a public recital and therefore the audience must also be considered when positioning the camera, there were some recitals where the soloist was either hidden by their instrument, or (in the case of pianists) had their back to the camera. The Moderators would appreciate being able to see as much of the candidate performing on their instrument as is reasonably possible.