

MUSIC

<p>Paper 0410/03 Performing</p>

General comments

The coursework presented this year was of a variable standard. At best, there were some excellent solos matched by genuine ensemble opportunities which allowed candidates to demonstrate the full range of their skills. However, it is disappointing to report that many of the issues raised in previous reports – e.g. unsuitable ensembles and over-marking – still remain.

Solos

Most solo performances were adequately matched to the candidates' abilities, allowing them to demonstrate a range of musical and technical skills. There were a large number of vocal solos this year, often involving candidates singing hymns, in which the candidate's technical ability was very limited. Centres must be realistic in their marking – if a vocalist has never received a singing lesson (as seemed to be the case in some examples) is it really correct to be awarding them high marks for technical control?

Ensembles

Once again there were some examples of excellent ensemble opportunities given by Centres to their candidates, who played music in either its original form or in arrangements created with great care by their teachers. However, it is also necessary to comment that some Centres are still ignoring the comments about ensembles given in this report each year and this is quoted below.

“There were a number of pieces submitted as ensemble performances which were in fact solos, and it was necessary to significantly reduce these candidates' marks. An ensemble performance should normally consist of three or more live performers; the candidate's part should not be consistently doubled, and the candidate should demonstrate true ensemble skills with the other players. A general rule of thumb is if the candidate's part could be described as a solo, then it is unlikely to qualify as an ensemble. For instance, some candidates played or sang pieces accompanied by two instruments (for instance piano and drums, or piano and bass), but they were still clearly performing as a soloist; in pieces like this, the accompanying instruments respond to the needs of the soloist, whereas in a true ensemble all the performers will be interacting with each other. Another problem was vocal “duets” in show styles or call-and-response hymns, which actually consisted of the singers singing in alternation – never together – and therefore demonstrating no ensemble skills. Exceptions to the need for at least three instruments include acting as an accompanist (e.g. on the piano, accompanying another instrumentalist or singer) and piano duets. **If there is any doubt about the suitability of a piece, then please contact CIE who will be more than happy to provide guidance.**”

Assessment

Although many Centres marked the coursework realistically and accurately, it is disappointing that there was still a significant amount of lenient marking. There were many Centres where it was necessary to make substantial reductions to the number of marks awarded. Centres must re-familiarise themselves with the distance training materials, as these provide the benchmark standard for this component. Again, Centres are reminded that to be gaining the highest marks, candidates need to perform for at least four minutes, at approximately Grade 4 or 5 level. Some performances which lasted for barely two minutes were being given extremely high marks. The key point to note in assessing the performances is that candidates must demonstrate the skills described in each of the criteria – if they are performing for less than four minutes, it is not a consistent demonstration of the skills expected for the highest marks at IGCSE. For example, they may play the notes accurately for two minutes of music, but they have not demonstrated that they have the ability to do so for a further two minutes.

As in previous years, some Centres included very useful comments supporting the marks awarded in the space provided on the working mark sheet. All Centres are asked to do this: it not only helps the Moderator, but also focuses the assessor on the skills that have been demonstrated, and should lead to more objective marking.

Presentation of coursework

Most Centres now submit performances on CD, which is very welcome. However, it is vital that Centres check the final version of the tape/CD they submit: once again this year, some CDs were incomplete, and some CDs had not been finalised properly, meaning that they could only be played on a computer, not a proper stereo. Please could all Centres listen to the CD before it is submitted so that these problems can be avoided in the future. Cassette tapes are a perfectly valid format, but the Moderators encountered some tapes with very low recording quality this year, which made some of the moderating difficult.

There were again many Centres who submitted the coursework without any accompanying sheet music. It is a requirement of the syllabus that copies of the sheet music should be sent, with the sole exception of music which has been improvised. These copies should be photocopied, which will be destroyed after use for moderation. It is extremely difficult to moderate ensemble performances in particular when there is no sheet music to clearly show the candidate's part.

Centres are reminded that the performing and composing coursework must be sent in separate packages, and that a separate recording is needed for each.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 0410/04 Composing</p>
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General comments

The overall standard of compositions in this examination session was rather disappointing. Individual pieces were often very brief; this meant that they could not score very high marks under several of the assessment headings.

Unfortunately internal marking by Centres was often very generous, with the result that the Moderators found it necessary to reduce the marks in many cases, often by a considerable amount.

Individual Assessment Criteria

(a) Ideas

Some of the basic ideas in the submitted pieces were very simple. Several consisted of little more than broken chords, sometimes in a very obvious sequential pattern. To gain high marks, candidates need to demonstrate a degree of musical imagination. There were many pieces which showed only a small range of simple ideas.

(b) Structure

The brevity of so many of the submitted pieces meant that they were often cast in only a single section, with virtually no contrast. Some candidates had put in a repeat mark as a simple way of increasing the duration of a piece, but this in itself does not necessarily lead to a better sense of structure. Candidates are not expected to work in complex forms, but some degree of contrast (and the ability to control it) is necessary for access to high marks under this heading.

(c) Use of Medium

Most candidates had written music which was capable of being played on the instruments they had chosen, even if few of them were able to write really idiomatically for those instruments.

(d) Compositional Technique

The most common problem here was in the harmonisation of melodies. Most candidates had chosen to compose in a traditional, tonal style that rarely went beyond the confines of simple diatonic harmony. However, there were many examples of harmony that did not fit the melody, poor formation of cadences and over-use of 2nd inversion chords.

(e) Score Presentation / Notation

Several handwritten scores were rather untidy and suffered from poor vertical alignment or clumsy formation of notes and rests. Computer-generated scores were often easier to read, but there were many instances of inadequate editing, including incorrect grouping of notes and, in particular, a failure to replace strings of quaver or semiquaver rests with the correct longer values.

Administration

The Moderators are grateful to those Centres which completed the paper-work in accordance with the instructions. In some Centres, however, there were various problems, including:

- incorrect addition of marks;
- incorrect transcription of marks from the Working Mark Sheet to the Mark Summary Form and to the MS1;
- use of holistic adjustments for inappropriate reasons (or for no apparent reason at all);
- omission of important documentation (e.g. no individual Working Mark Sheets, no Moderator's copy of the MS1).

In some extreme cases, initial marks on individual candidates' Working Mark Sheets had been raised by a holistic adjustment; the adjusted mark had been transferred to the Mark Summary Form, and a further upward adjustment had then been made under the heading of 'Internally Moderated Mark'. The internal moderation of marks is to be applied only in cases where there is more than one teaching group, in order to ensure that all candidates have been assessed to the same standard. It must not be used in any other circumstances.

Centres are reminded that the Syllabus requirements for the Composing Component change next year. Among the significant differences are (a) a reduction in the number of compositions required and (b) the abolition of holistic adjustments.