

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Paper 1: Historical Studies Topics in 20th and 21st Century Music

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
63	13	42	8	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>20.6%</i>	<i>66.7%</i>	<i>12.7%</i>			

Marker 1:

This was a good set of results, with many candidates showing a real engagement with the issues that the course had dealt with and also a decent grasp of the diverse repertoire. Some of the very best papers also revealed some extensive listening, reading and thinking outside the material contained in the lectures. Perhaps the most pleasing factor to emerge was a sense of enthusiasm for the music of the period and also an optimism about the possibilities for the future. Several of the quotations included in the questions were misunderstood, but sometimes in a creative way that still allowed some interesting answers to emerge. Most of the scripts were legible, and some well-made arguments were a pleasure to read.

Marker 2:

The questions on this year's paper were varied in terms of the kinds of answer they invited. Whilst some seemed to require relatively simple, factual answers ("What were the features of musical modernism...?"), others provided scope for more imaginative and wide-ranging responses ("assess the impact of Experimentalism..."). The answers to those requiring straightforward, facts-based answers tended to fare better, and I was somewhat disappointed that the big, existential questions about the fundamental nature and scope of music were seldom addressed in the questions that allowed for them.

Be brave! It is important and stimulating to lock horns with the thornier, "why are we here"-type issues and in this context, taking risks might well have paid off.

Some of the questions appear to have caused confusion: evidently, many candidates did not understand the expression "all roads lead to Rome", and several people took Experimentalism to denote just about anything written in the 20th Century.

Paper 2: Analysis (19th & 20th Century)

Section A – 20th Century

Marker 1:

In the main, candidates responded well to a challenging set work. The best responses showed a firm grasp of Perle’s theory and practice, while offering critique of other literature on the piece where appropriate. For instance, a range of cases was made for the application of Hepokoski and Darcy’s Sonata Theory, some more thoughtful and convincing than others. Aside from a few essays on question 5, answers were split roughly evenly between questions 3 (‘Analyse passage x’) and 4 (‘The prevailing smooth and urbane style disguises a radical instability of harmony, tempo and motive. Discuss’). A number of less successful or at best run-of-the-mill answers to the latter chose to wholly disagree with the question, a somewhat counterintuitive stance given the fact that the question did *not* take the form of a contentious or polemical quotation. The best answers to question 3 balanced a detailed examination of the passage in question with a clear overall vision of the passage’s recapitulatory function.

Section B – 19th Century

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
62	8	49	5	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Marker 1:

As in many previous years, there was a large difference in numbers between those tackling the first unseen (a song by Joachim Raff) and its companion piece (a piano work by Emmanuel Chabrier). This year the imbalance was 48/15 in favour of the Raff.

The Raff song was an excellent choice for an exam. It enabled students to flex their muscles in quite different ways, while containing enough knotty corners to separate the sheep from the goats. That said, the third stanza of the poem, with its seemingly wayward metrical arrangement, confused everyone. The repetitions in the text were presumably added by the composer; removing all of them restored syllable counts that matched exactly those of the second, third and fourth lines of all the other stanzas. The first line of this stanza was effectively taken over by the piano, which played the melody associated elsewhere with this text. (In the fourth stanza the opening line was divided between piano and voice – something that again eluded everyone.) The decision to omit the first line of the third stanza can almost certainly be linked to what would have been an eightfold repetition of part of the text. In fact,

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

internet sources for the poem suggest that Raff invented the third stanza; however, no-one taking the examination could have known this, and this knowledge has no bearing on the reading presented above.

The Chabrier was probably the more challenging option. However, there were some strong answers. That said, no-one really got to grips with modal elements in the harmony; as a result, chromaticisms were often misinterpreted – sometimes quite badly. Incidental accidentals were similarly misconstrued, with chromatic neighbour-notes all too often taken as indicators of key.

Some general points. Students should beware of treating the unremarkable as remarkable. The Raff had a flattened seventh near the start, but it was hardly earth-shattering. (How many preludes in the 48 start in precisely this fashion?) It would have been more valuable to comment on the prevalence of this particular harmonic nuance throughout the song. Similarly, students should beware of fantastic equations: it's not enough simply to assert that a G sharp in bar 3 is linked to an A flat in bar 15, to choose a fictitious example; such statements must be backed up with compelling evidence. Also, there is no point submitting a score with annotations, if the latter are not directly linked to passages in the essay itself. Some students made effective use of permission to submit the score; others expected the examiners to plough through copious jottings and annotations – an unreasonable expectation in the circumstances.

Marker 2:

As ever the song option (Raff) proved to be much more popular than the wordless one (Chabrier). Both offered plenty of scope to the best candidates to produce sophisticated harmonic and formal analyses, while weaker candidates tended to opt for a literary focus without making more than superficial connections to the musical treatment. It was a pity that only one candidate made use of a reduction to explore harmonic issues in the Raff, while only one other investigated motivic relationships in the Chabrier with the aid of a sheet of diagrams. These forms of presentation ought not to be considered as cosmetic but should be more widely practiced as a means to unlocking vital aspects of the music, which are not ideally suited to prose.

Paper 3: Applied Tonal Skills

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
62	12	42	8	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

General comments:

A few submissions in all categories were let down by a lack of detail or neatness in presentation. Competence and clarity in notation are fundamental to the assessment of this course and candidates should ensure that they aim to make the best possible visual impression rather than hoping that the quality of their musical ideas should suffice alone.

Style composition

Marker 1:

There was a very noticeable increase in both the number and quality of ritornello and ground bass submissions this year, many of them also beautifully recorded. Although the quality of recordings is, generally, not a decisive factor in the marking of these submissions, a committed and well-rehearsed performance often helps to reinforce a sense of serious musical and imaginative identification with the style being imitated and, therefore, to consolidate a strong impression. The opposite is also, potentially, true. One of the most popular options and also one of the most variable in quality was the set of songs. Although there were a few fine examples, many struggled to establish and sustain a clear and consistent sense of style. Given the specific nature of most of the other stylistic briefs it might be advisable for candidates to indicate the intended stylistic model for the songs on the submitted score.

Marker 2:

The standard was generally high (with relatively few 2.2s), suggesting that the wide choice of stylistic models gives all candidates a chance to draw on their own particular knowledge and interests. Beyond the most common errors (parallel movement, unprepared dissonances, poor harmony and voice-leading), the most common weakness in all genres was in the larger-scale planning/organisation, resulting, most commonly, in wild, illogical key schemes, and/or lopsided structures with unsatisfactory proportions. There was some excellent observation of the style of individual composers (in particular, Romantic piano trio textures and procedures): candidates are encouraged to work closely from specific models.

Text-setting in songs was generally intelligent and effective; weaker candidates misplaced the word stress (when setting foreign languages) or wrote vocal lines that were not responsive to either the declamatory rhythm or the meaning of the words.

Fugue

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
48	6	34	8	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Marker 1:

This was a very popular option with 48 of 66 candidates choosing to write a fugue. The standard of submissions was generally high, although marks tended to cluster even more in the middle range than for the paper as a whole. First class answers (of which there were only five) needed to demonstrate competence in the construction of a fugal exposition, effective overall formal planning, tonally, texturally and registrally, and a consistent sense of style. Some otherwise well-conceived submissions were let down by lapses in part writing, a lack of consideration for playability or an over-reliance on mechanical sequence in episodes.

Marker 2:

Common weaknesses included rambling or over-repetitious episodes (sometimes also with clumsy, root position, rhythmically-basic, functional bass parts), poor control of modulation and texture (both a lack of variety, with too much continuous four-part texture, and/or the use of two-part texture out of convenience rather than by design), physically unplayable writing (for keyboard) and the familiar errors of parallel movement, 6/4 chords and unprepared dissonances. The better fugues displayed inventive exploration of the possibilities presented by the subject, strong harmony and confident use of dissonance, conjunct and purposeful part-writing, and good continuity from one section to another.

Students are reminded that submitted fugues should be bound.

Orchestration

Marker 1:

The standard was noticeably higher than last year and it may have been that the shorter piece used for this year's exam helped candidates to produce more detailed and inventive work than before. Most candidates realised that the construction of the Liadov piece, with its high level of internal repetition cast in a variety of textures and registers, demanded clearly contrasted orchestral blocks, although some weaker answers failed to demarcate the sections of the piece through variety in the instrumental palette. The best rendered it with a wonderful sense of colour that showed sensitivity to the stylistic world to which the piece belongs.

Film Score

Marker 1:

There was some really exceptional work in this category, although only eleven candidates elected to take this option. Some made very effective use of a pared down, minimalistic soundworld that showed fluency and sensitivity in handling the stock in trade of this branch of recent screen composition. Two submissions showed real flair and originality in realising the emotional and conceptual undertones of the film in very different and highly effective ways. Weaker submissions appeared not to engage with the shifts in pace and atmosphere presented in the film.

Paper 4: Introduction to Performance Studies

Overall Results for the Paper

29 students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
Examination (29)	6	22	1	-	-	-
Recital option (27)	14	12	1	-	-	-
Essay option (2)	-	2	-	-	-	-
Overall	9	20	-	-		
<i>Percentage (overall)</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>

Exam and essay:

Marker 1:

The examination results were generally high at 66 on average, while the recital marks tended to be even better, with an average of over 69. The Essay Option results were also strong. The two examiners were impressed by most of the scripts, and the fact that close to 20% of them were in the first-class band is noteworthy. The considerable amount of 'coaching' offered during the review lecture and the last supervision seems to have paid off. There were problems of focus in some cases, but in general students demonstrated both knowledge and understanding, and it was clear that thorough preparation had taken place. Some of the recitals received stratospheric marks, and over 50% of them were in the first-class category. This too is remarkable.

Overall, then, the performance of students on this course was extremely commendable, with a high proportion (over 30%) receiving a first-class mark.

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Recitals

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
27	14	12	1			
<i>Percentage</i>	52	44	4			

Marker 1:

The overall standard of recitals and presentation was excellent with some performances being outstanding.

Marker 2:

This year, I attended and marked all the Part IA recitals, in addition to some recitals for other year-groups. The overall standard was high, with relatively few candidates in the 2:2 bracket (or lower). At the top end, there were some extremely stylish performances marked by technical assurance and interpretive insight. However, even the weaker candidates had clearly engaged with the requirements of the paper. In fact, the presentation of recitals has improved dramatically in recent years, and there are now very few candidates who seem totally unaware of expectations. That said, some clearly aren't taking full advantage of the coaching sessions and informal advice offered by the Director of Performance – often to their considerable disadvantage.

Paper 5: Portfolio of Compositions

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
22	4	16	2	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	18.2%	72.7%	9.1%			

Marker 1:

This was a largely impressive set of submissions, showing a generally high level of craft, and a good deal of imaginative thought. Among the large number of candidates awarded II.1 marks, there were several where it had proved to be difficult to sustain the highest flights across all three pieces, but where there were clear signs of a personal voice emerging. The best portfolios were extremely impressive, and will hopefully encourage those candidates to choose

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

composition as an option in Part II. The submissions also contained a few pieces of quite exceptional ambition, not always realised to their fullest potential, but showing strong imagination. I think all the CDs worked this time, which was a great improvement on earlier years.

Marker 2:

There were some imaginative and satisfying submissions amongst these portfolios and, as in previous years, a good spread of styles and approaches. However, what tended to be missing was the feeling of any of these compositions existing in relation to contemporary music as it stands in 2016. In other words, almost none of the compositions submitted had a broad sense of history or context. One felt that some of them could have been written at almost any time over the last (say) eighty years.

I would strongly encourage students taking this option (and those going on to take Part II Free Composition) to familiarise themselves with the prevailing styles and trends in contemporary music by listening as widely and as intelligently as possible. This will both inform and enrich future compositions.

Paper 6: Dissertation

No reports provided

Paper 7: Notation

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
	7	5	5			
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>41.2</i>	<i>29.4</i>	<i>29.4</i>			

Marker 1:

This was an easier paper than the preceding two years, at least in terms of the transcriptions. I was struck therefore by the number of candidates that had difficulty with these and failed to finish. Alteration continues to be a frequent cause of difficulty. Nevertheless, there were some very good answers here; and it was gratifying to see the 'gobbets' question answered more competently than in the past.

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Marker 2:

There were some very good answers: those who got lower marks had sometimes struggled with the transcription, or not provided an appropriate answer to a part of the question (such as defining the song-type).

Paper 8: Keyboard Skills

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
14	4	7	3	0	0	0
Percentage	29%	50%	21%	0%	0%	0%

Marker 1:

A relatively large number of candidates took Keyboard Skills this year, with a commensurately broad range of ability in evidence. Generally, the best work was produced in the figured bass test, where most candidates seemed to be aware of what was required of them. However, it was slightly alarming to see how many didn't know how to couple and uncouple manuals; there's really no excuse for this, as all those taking Part IB Keyboard were offered an induction session on one of the Faculty harpsichords. In this test, there were many highly inventive touches, but the performance of some candidates was brought down by a failure to listen to and watch the violinist. In general, the weakest test was that involving C clefs. Here, too many seemed to lack confidence in the soprano and tenor clefs; the best performers took care to shape lines and to bring out individual voices – something much prized by this examiner. Overall, a surprisingly large number of tests were marred by inconsistent tempos, with many candidates starting too fast, and adjusting later; particularly notable in this respect was the harmonisation test, where perhaps the minority played the melody entirely accurately!

Marker 2:

There were some impressive performances, although very few candidates shone in all five tests. The c-clef score-reading proved challenging to many, with several confusing the alto and tenor clefs in the inner parts and struggling with part crossing. A surprisingly large number of candidates opted for an unrealistic tempo in the harmonisation exercise and misread the rhythm of the melody, doubling the length of some notes whilst halving the length of others. However, there were some attractive readings and candidates who used chromaticism effectively were rewarded. The vocal score piano reduction was generally well managed, although there were some misreadings of accidentals and only a few candidates played the chiming bells (written above the main stave) with any sense of colour or effect. Given the number of semiquavers later in the exercise, many would have done well to choose a steadier tempo at the start. In the transposition there were moments of major/minor confusion, but it was good to hear some near-perfect readings. In the figured bass exercise, those whose realisations complemented the violin line were rewarded, and there were some elegant countermelodies in the right hand.

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

There was a good deal of indiscriminate spreading of chords, and few candidates observed the *piano/forte* markings. Several candidates rushed, causing the violinist to follow them rather than vice versa. Indeed, even the strongest candidates failed to listen to the violinist carefully and it was worrying that a number of candidates were unaware of how to couple manuals on the instrument.

Paper 9: Introduction to Ethnomusicology

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
15	7	7	1			
<i>Percentage</i>	46.7	46.7	6.7			

Marker 1:

Overall this was a very impressive set of exam scripts. Many of the essays demonstrated sophisticated, critical engagement with key issues in ethnomusicology, grounded in extensive reading. In a few cases, students had clearly read well beyond the compulsory reading for the course, undertaking significant independent research. In the strongest essays, some students were able to intervene critically into current ethnomusicological debates, synthesising a range of perspectives from the secondary readings. The weaker essays, on the other hand, failed to cohere around a single argument, addressing the question. In some cases, students had misunderstood some of the secondary readings they used.

Marker 2:

I was generally very pleased with the quality of these exam papers. There were many sophisticated answers that made good use of the literature, as well as expanding beyond the reading list. Some students also went that little bit further by critiquing the literature and offering their own original perspectives. In future, I would encourage students to consider their handwriting style, as some papers were at a disadvantage due to poor legibility. I would also encourage students to think carefully about the structure of their answers, making sure to spend 5-10mins on planning each answer before writing.

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Paper 10: Elective History 1

(i) Soviet Music and Power in the 1920s

Marker 1:

The majority of candidates answered the same three questions this year, perhaps showing a slightly unadventurous approach to revision. In general, there was often room for more individual exploration of the period's history and repertoire.

The best answers balanced a clear grasp of the historical sweep with detailed discussion of musical examples and/or specific historical detail. As ever, candidates must take care to actually answer the question they are responding to. For instance, a surprising number failed to address one of the key tenets of question 5, that of the various 'dilemmas' facing composers in the 20s. Several of these essays, despite interesting content, were thus unable to achieve high marks.

(ii) Popular Music of the Black Atlantic

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
	4	9	3	0	0	0
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Marker 1:

Generally good answers, although many examples and quotations were merely reproduced from lecture material. The best responses were those that offered original thought and critically engaged with both theory and history.

Marker 2:

Generally I was pleased with the quality of the exam papers. The best answers were those that made extensive use of the literature and that combined theoretical perspectives with historical content. However, there are a couple of things I would like to note: students should make sure to produce legible

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

handwriting; some papers were at a disadvantage because of poor handwriting. Also, please make sure to write in a clear and concise manner, without resorting to dense, unintelligible prose.

Paper 11: Elective History 2

(i) Winterreise

Marker 1:

A good set of answers in general. As in previous years, there were some excellent answers to the compulsory q.1, though not all candidates devoted enough attention to the poetic text. For the other questions, some took q.2 as an invitation to think about death in the cycle in general rather than in the terms of the quote, setting symbolic death against actual death. There were some excellent answers to q.4 and also to 5b; relatively few people attempted 5a.

Marker 2:

Overall, the standard was high, with the majority of scripts demonstrating a detailed knowledge of the work and an enthusiastic response to the course. The compulsory question was generally well-answered, with a number of exceptionally strong answers that paid close attention to all the elements of the question (literary as well as musical). In a small number of cases (particularly in relation to question 5b), candidates did not engage sufficiently with the specific question, only referring to the terms of the question towards the end of their essay. A number of candidates also fell into the trap of trying to shoe-horn irrelevant material in to their answers.

(ii) Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
7	1	5	1			
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>14.28</i>	<i>71.42</i>	<i>14.28</i>			

MUSIC TRIPOS PART IB: EXAMINERS' REPORTS 2016

Marker 1:

It is difficult to generalise from such a small sample. Answers to Question 1 were often marred by candidates' failure to graph long-range connections between the two halves of the piece. Answers to Question 2 were in several cases pleasingly detailed; the better accounts managed to give some interpretation of what the graph was seeking to represent, including consideration of the poetic text, while weaker ones spent too much time simply drawing attention to what the analyst had chosen not to represent.

Marker 2:

Nearly all candidates exhibited a good basic understanding of Schenkerian theory, so there was only one mark below 60. For the first question (the CPE Bach), most candidates failed to get fully to grips with the emphasis on degree 5 rather than 3 in the ornamented repeat sections. For the second question (the Schubert), most candidates dealt well with the limitations of the graph they were given for comment, but only a few came up with detailed suggestions for improvement. Both pieces raised challenges concerning convincing support for degrees 4 and 3 of the *Urlinie*. (Schenker himself was unwilling to accept the cadential 6/4 as adequate support for degree 3.) All candidates failed to deal with this matter in sufficient depth.

Paper 12: Music and Science

No of students taking paper	1	II.1	II.2	III	Pass	Fail
	3	7	2			
<i>Percentage</i>						

Marker 1:

There was a tendency to focus of a rather small number of questions; nevertheless, some answers to these questions showed evidence of reading well beyond the prescribed materials. This course demands considerable breadth, and the best candidates were able to demonstrate that they had absorbed the core concepts and were able to deploy these effectively in response to what were rather taxing questions this year.