

AURAL TESTS: included in the Practical exams for all subjects

Listening lies at the heart of all good music-making. Developing aural awareness is fundamental to musical training because having a ‘musical ear’ impacts on all aspects of musicianship. Singing, both silently in the head and out loud, is one of the best ways to develop the ‘musical ear’. It connects the internal imagining of sound, the ‘inner ear’, with the external creation of it, without the necessity of mechanically having to ‘find the note’ on an instrument (important though that connection is). By integrating aural activities in imaginative ways in the lesson, preparation for the aural tests within an exam will be a natural extension of what is already an essential part of the learning experience.

In the exam

Aural tests are an integral part of all Practical graded exams.

The examiner will be ready to prompt, if necessary, where there is hesitation. For any test that requires a sung response, pitch rather than vocal quality is the object. The examiner will be happy to adapt to the vocal range of the candidate, whose responses may be sung to any vowel (or consonant followed by a vowel), hummed or whistled (and at a different octave, if appropriate).

Marking scheme

Information on how the aural tests are assessed can be found in the guide for candidates, teachers and parents, *These Music Exams*, available to download from www.abrsm.org/exams.

Specimen tests

Examples of the tests are given in *Specimen Aural Tests* and *Aural Training in Practice*, available for purchase from music retailers and from www.abrsm.org/publications.

Deaf or hearing-impaired candidates

Deaf or hearing-impaired candidates may opt to respond to alternative tests in place of the standard tests, if requested at the time of entry. The syllabus for these tests is available free on request from ABRSM (E accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk). Examples of the alternative tests are available for purchase from Allegro Music (T +44 (0)1885 490375; E sales@allegro.co.uk).

Minor modifications (2011)

There will be minor modifications to some aural tests, taking effect worldwide from 1 January 2011. Full details will be available in July 2010 at www.abrsm.org/exams. Revised editions of *Specimen Aural Tests* and *Aural Training in Practice* will also be issued in mid-2010.

Aural Tests GRADE 1

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To tap the pulse of a passage of music in 2 or 3 time played by the examiner. The examiner will commence playing the passage, and the candidate will be expected to join in as soon as possible by tapping the beat, stressing where the strong beat falls. The candidate will then be asked to state whether it is in 2 or 3 time.
- B** To sing, as an echo, three short phrases limited to a range of three notes in a major key played by the examiner. The echoes should follow each phrase in strict time without an intervening pause. The key-chord and tonic will first be sounded and the pulse indicated.
- C** To recognize a rhythmic change to a two-bar phrase played twice by the examiner, with the change being made in the second playing. Candidates will be required to recognize and tap or describe the change. The pulse will first be indicated. The examiner will be prepared to play both versions of the phrase a second time if necessary.
- D** To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to contrasted dynamics (*p/f*), gradation of tone (*crescendo/diminuendo*), and articulation (*staccato/legato*), of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Questions on the selected features will then follow. Candidates are encouraged to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.

Aural Tests GRADE 2

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To tap the pulse of a passage of music in 2 (including $\frac{6}{8}$) or 3 time played by the examiner. The examiner will commence playing the passage, and the candidate will be expected to join in as soon as possible by tapping the beat, stressing where the strong beat falls. The candidate will then be asked to state whether it is in 2 or 3 time.
- B** To sing, as an echo, three short phrases limited to a range of five notes in a major key played by the examiner. The echoes should follow each phrase in strict time without an intervening pause. The key-chord and tonic will first be sounded and the pulse indicated.
- C** To recognize a rhythmic or melodic change to a two-bar phrase in a major key played twice by the examiner, with the change being made in the second playing. Candidates will be required to recognize and tap, sing or describe the change. The key-chord and tonic will first be sounded and the pulse indicated. The examiner will be prepared to play both versions of the phrase a second time if necessary.
- D** To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to contrasted dynamics (*p/f*), gradation of tone (*crescendo/diminuendo*), articulation (*staccato/legato*), and recognition of tempo changes (*rallentando/accelerando*, etc.), of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Questions on the selected features will then follow. Candidates are encouraged to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.

Aural Tests GRADE 3

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To tap the pulse of a passage of music in 2 (including $\frac{6}{8}$), 3 (including $\frac{9}{8}$) or 4 time played by the examiner. The examiner will commence playing the passage, and the candidate will be expected to join in as soon as possible by tapping the beat, stressing where the strong beat falls. The candidate will then be asked to state whether it is in 2, 3 or 4 time.
- B** To sing, as an echo, three short phrases limited to a range of one octave in a major or minor key played by the examiner. The echoes should follow each phrase in strict time without an intervening pause. The key-chord and tonic will first be sounded and the pulse indicated.
- C** To recognize a rhythmic or melodic change to a four-bar phrase in a major or minor key played twice by the examiner, with the change being made in the second playing. Candidates will be required to recognize and tap, sing or describe the change. The key-chord and tonic will first be sounded and the pulse indicated. The examiner will be prepared to play both versions of the phrase a second time if necessary.
- D** To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to contrasted dynamics (*p/f*), gradation of tone (*crescendo/diminuendo*), articulation (*staccato/legato*), recognition of tempo changes (*rallentando/accelerando*, etc.), and recognition of major and minor tonality, of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Questions on the selected features will then follow. Candidates are encouraged to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.

Aural Tests GRADE 4

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To sing or play from memory a four-bar melody played twice by the examiner. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and named, and the pulse indicated. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- B** To sing five notes from score in free time within the range of a third above and below the tonic in the key of C, F or G major. The test will begin and end on the tonic and will not contain any intervals greater than a third. The examiner will play and name the key-chord and tonic, and, if necessary, play each note after it has been attempted. Candidates may choose to sing the test from the treble or bass clef.
- C1** To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to contrasted dynamics (*p/f*), gradation of tone (*crescendo/diminuendo*), articulation (*staccato/legato*), recognition of tempo changes (*rallentando/accelerando*, etc.), recognition of major and minor tonality, and general perception of the character of the piece, of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Questions on the selected features will then follow. Candidates are encouraged to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.
- 2** To clap the rhythm of a short extract played twice by the examiner from the above piece and state whether it is in 2, 3 or 4 time.

Aural Tests GRADE 5

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To sing or play from memory a short melody played twice by the examiner. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and named, and the pulse indicated. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- B** To sing six notes from score in free time within the range of a fifth above and a fourth below the tonic in any major key up to two sharps or flats. The test will begin and end on the tonic and will not contain any intervals greater than a third, except for the rising fourth from dominant to tonic. The examiner will play and name the key-chord and tonic, and, if necessary, play each note after it has been attempted. Candidates may choose to sing the test from the treble or bass clef.
- C1** To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to contrasted dynamics (*p/f*), gradation of tone (*crescendo/diminuendo*), articulation (*staccato/legato*), recognition of tempo changes (*rallentando/accelerando*, etc.), recognition of major and minor tonality, and general perception of texture, rhythm, form, style and period, of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Questions on the selected features will then follow. Candidates are encouraged to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.
- 2** To clap the rhythm of a short extract played twice by the examiner from the above piece and state whether it is in 2, 3 or 4 time.

Aural Tests GRADE 6

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To sing or play from memory the *upper* part of a two-part phrase played twice by the examiner. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and named, and the pulse indicated. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- B** To sing a short melody from score, with an accompaniment played by the examiner, in any major or minor key up to three sharps or flats. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and the pulse indicated. Candidates may choose to sing the test from the treble or bass clef. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- C** To identify the cadence at the end of a phrase, played twice by the examiner, as perfect or imperfect, and to state whether it is in a major or minor key. The key-chord will first be sounded.
- D1** To answer questions on the features of a piece played by the examiner, including the general perception of texture, form (including phrase structure), style and period, of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Candidates will be expected to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.
- 2** To clap the rhythm of a short extract played twice by the examiner from the above piece and state whether it is in 2, 3, or 4 time.

Aural Tests GRADE 7

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A** To sing or play from memory the *lower* part of a two-part phrase played twice by the examiner. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and named, and the pulse indicated. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- B** To sing a short melody from score, accompanied by a lower part played by the examiner, in any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and the pulse indicated. Candidates may choose to sing the test from the treble or bass clef. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- C1** To identify a cadence at the end of a phrase, played twice by the examiner, as perfect, imperfect or interrupted. The key-chord will first be sounded.
 - 2** To identify the two chords forming the above cadence as tonic, subdominant, dominant, dominant seventh or submediant in root position, or tonic in second inversion. Candidates may alternatively use the equivalent roman notation. The key-chord will first be sounded and each chord will be played again.
 - 3** To identify whether a short passage, played once by the examiner, beginning in a major key modulates to its dominant, subdominant, or relative minor. The key-chord will first be sounded and named. Candidates may alternatively state the letter name of the new key.
- D1** To answer questions on the features of a piece played by the examiner, including the general perception of texture, form (including phrase structure), style and period, of which the examiner will select one or two and advise the candidate accordingly before playing the piece. Candidates will be expected to use Italian terms in their answers where appropriate.
 - 2** To clap the rhythm of a short extract played twice by the examiner from the above piece and state whether it is in 2, 3, 4 or $\frac{6}{8}$ time.

Aural Tests GRADE 8

Minor modifications (2011): see note on p. 80.

- A1** To sing or play from memory the *lowest* part of a short three-part phrase played twice by the examiner. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and named, and the pulse indicated. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
 - 2** To identify the cadence at the end of a further (following) phrase, played twice by the examiner, as perfect, imperfect, interrupted or plagal. The key-chord will first be sounded.
 - 3** To identify up to four chords in the above cadential progression, played twice by the examiner, as tonic (root position, first or second inversions), supertonic (root position or first inversion), subdominant (root position), dominant (root position, first or second inversions), dominant seventh (root position), or submediant (root position). Candidates may alternatively use the equivalent roman notation. The key-chord will first be sounded.
- B** To sing a short melody from score, accompanied by a higher part played by the examiner, in any major or minor key up to four sharps or flats. The key-chord and starting note will first be sounded and the pulse indicated. Candidates may choose to sing the test from the treble or bass clef. A second attempt will be allowed if necessary.
- C** To identify two modulations, each played once by the examiner, beginning in a major or minor key. The passages may modulate to the dominant (including dominant minor if in a minor key), subdominant, relative minor or major, or (from a major key only) to the supertonic minor. Candidates will also be required to name the new keys. In each instance the key-chord will first be sounded and the key named.
- D** To discuss matters relating to any of the musical features of a piece played by the examiner.