

Improve Grade 1 your aural!

Paul Harris and John Lenehan

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© 2006 by Faber Music Ltd
First published in 2006 by Faber Music Ltd
3 Queen Square London WC1N 3AU
Music processed by Music Set 2000
Design by Susan Clarke
Illustrations on page 9 by Drew Hillier
Printed in England by Caligraving Ltd
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0-571-52455-9

CD recorded in Rectory Studio, High Wycombe, March 2006
Created and produced by John Lenehan
Thanks to Godstowe School Chamber Choir 2006 and Laurel Hopkinson
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Why is aural important?



You may wonder why you have to do aural at all. The answer is, that aural will help you improve as a musician. And this may surprise you – it will help perhaps more than *any other* single musical skill.

Aural is all about understanding and processing music that you hear and see, in your head. By doing so, you will find that your own playing improves enormously. You will be able to play more expressively and stylistically, be more sensitive to quality and control of tone, your music reading will improve, you will be able to spot your own mistakes, be more sensitive to others when playing or singing in an ensemble, be more aware of intonation, improve your ability to memorise music and improve your ability to improvise and compose.

All the many elements of musical training are of course connected. So, when working through the activities in this book you will be connecting with many of them. You'll be listening, singing, clapping, playing your instrument, writing music down, improvising and composing – as well as developing that vital ability to do well at the aural tests in your grade exams!

Aural is not an occasional optional extra – just to be taken off a dusty shelf a few days (or even hours) before a music exam. It's something you can be developing and thinking about all the time. And as you go through the enjoyable and fun activities in these books you'll realise how important and useful having a good musical ear (being good at aural) really is.

How to use this book

When you have a few minutes to spare (perhaps at the beginning or end of a practice session), sit down with your instrument, by your CD player, and open this book. Choose a section and then work through the activities – you needn't do much each time. But whatever you do, do it carefully, repeating any activity if you feel it will help. In fact many of the activities will be fun to do again and again. And make sure that you come back to the book on a regular basis.

So, good luck and enjoy improving your aural skills!

Paul Harris and John Lenehan

For U.S. readers:

Bar = Measure

Note = Tone

Tone = Whole step

listening activities

track
5

1 Clap along with the pulse, joining in as soon as you can. From time to time the pulse on the recording will stop. Keep going steadily and evenly all the time, until you hear the whistle.

track
6

2 This time, instead of clapping the pulse out loud, hear it in your head.

track
7

3 In this example, there is a lot more silence. Continue clapping the pulse throughout the track. Are you precisely with the pulse each time it returns?

track
8

4 This time hear the pulse in your head. Are you precisely with the pulse each time it returns?

track
9

5 In this exercise the pulse is 4-in-a-bar. After two introductory bars, one beat in each bar is missed out (the same one each time). Clap only the missing beat. Which beat is it?

track
10

6 Here's a similar exercise but this time in 3-in-a-bar. Again clap the missing beat. Which beat is it?

track
11

7 Here's an exercise to help you develop your own inner sense of pulse. You'll hear three bars of a pulse in 2-time with counting, and then it will stop. Continue counting on your own and silently in your head. In which bar and on which beat does the sound occur? What is the sound?

track
12

8 Here's a similar example in 3-time. In which bar and on which beat does the sound occur? This time the sound is played by an instrument. Can you tell which one?

track
13

9 Here are four examples of music in 2-time. Clap (or tap) the pulse, joining in as soon as you can.

track
14

10 Here are four more examples, now in 3-time. Again, clap (or tap) the pulse, joining in as soon as you can.

track
15

11 Clap (or tap) the pulse of each of the musical excerpts on this track, joining in as soon as you can. After each one, write down whether it was in 2-time or 3-time.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

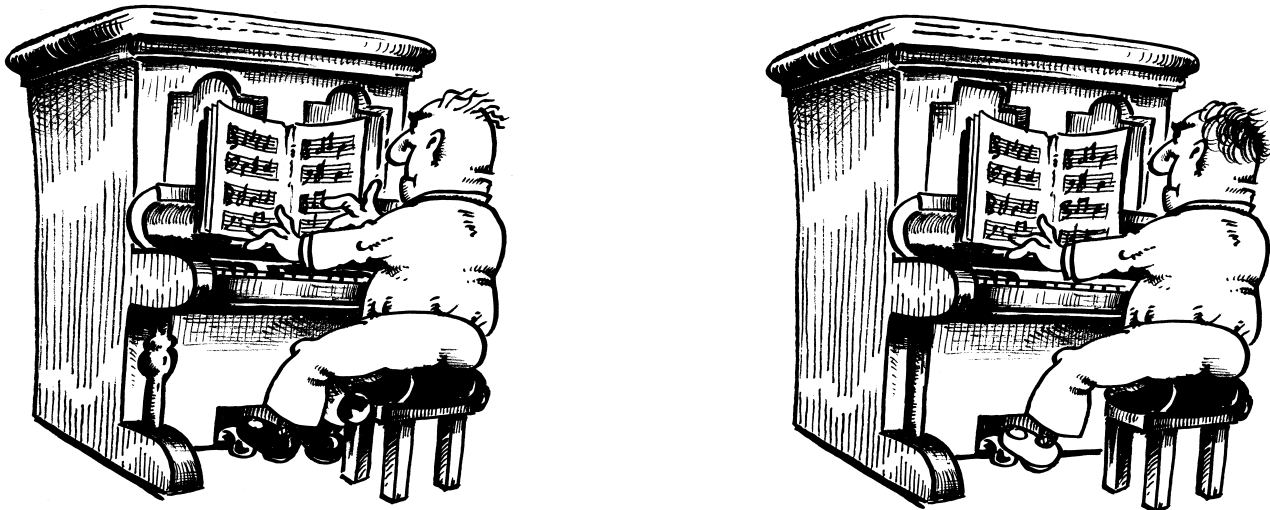
Section 3 Hearing changes

- Have a look at these pictures and try to spot the eight differences:



That wasn't too difficult! Hearing the difference between two musical phrases is not difficult either. You just have to be very awake because it has to be done from memory, and it all happens in a very short time.

- Cover up the right-hand picture below. Now look at the picture on the left and study it for about 30 seconds.



- Now swap – cover up the left-hand picture and study the one on the right. Try to spot the differences *without looking back at the first picture*.

Not quite so easy, because you have to really remember the first picture. This is similar to the way you have to think when hearing changes in musical phrases – it's all in the memory ...

Section 4 Learning to listen to music

Learning to listen carefully to yourself and to other people playing music will help you improve your playing enormously. There are all sorts of features to listen out for, but for the Grade 1 exam you will only have to think about *dynamics* (loud and quiet playing) and *articulation* (smooth and detached playing).

From the moment you get up in the morning there will be many times when you hear music. Always take the opportunity to ask yourself some questions about it:

- Is the music loud (*forte*) or quiet (*piano*)?
- Is the music detached (*staccato*) or smooth (*legato*)?
- Does the music gradually get louder (*crescendo*) or quieter (*diminuendo*)?
- What instruments are playing?

listening activities

track
48

- 1** As you listen to each of the three short pieces on this track, write down *f* (*forte*) for the loud sections and *p* (*piano*) for the quiet sections.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

track
49

- 2** As you listen to each of the three short pieces on this track, write down L (*legato*) for the smooth sections and S (*staccato*) for the detached sections.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

track
50

- 3** Now write down < (*crescendo*) or > (*diminuendo*) as you hear them.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____