

Improve **Grade 2** your aural!

Paul Harris and John Lenehan

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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 really 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
Upbeat = Pick-up
Semitone = Half step
Note = Tone

track
9

6 Here are four pieces of music in 2-time. Clap (or tap) the pulse and join in as soon as you can.

track
10

7 Here are four pieces in 3-time. Again, clap (or tap) the pulse and join in as soon as you can.

track
11

8 The examples on this track will be either in 2-time or 3-time. Clap or tap the pulse of each of the musical excerpts, joining in as soon as you can. After each one, write down whether it was in two or three.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

track
12

9 In this exercise you'll hear a series of short rhythmic phrases in 2-time over a steady pulse. Clap or tap back exactly the rhythm that you hear like an echo. The first example is done for you.

track
13

10 Here are some more similar exercises, now in 3-time. Clap or tap back the exact rhythm.

track
14

11 This time, instead of repeating the rhythm, improvise your own rhythmic answer to each rhythm.

track
15

12 Listen to the phrase on this track, which will be repeated four times. Write down the rhythm on the line below:

|| $\frac{2}{4}$ _____ ||

track
16

13 Now here's a phrase in 3-time, which will be repeated four times. Write down the rhythm on the line below:

|| $\frac{3}{4}$ _____ ||

14 Ask your teacher to play you one of the pieces you are learning. Clap or tap the pulse. How many beats are there in the bar?

Section 2 Pitch

On your instrument, play the first five notes of any major scale – choose one that is comfortably in your singing register. Now sing those notes, firstly to *lah*, then to the numbers 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5. Now sing 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1.

Now sing the following patterns. Play the first note (any comfortable note) on the piano or on your instrument, then sing the pattern and then play it to hear whether you were accurate.

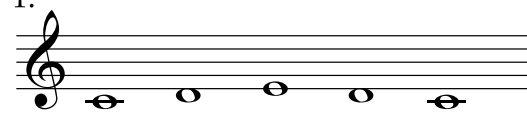
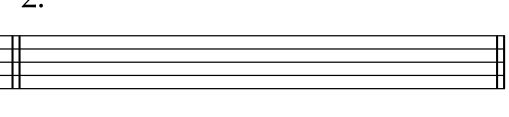
1 1 – 2 – 3 – 2 – 1

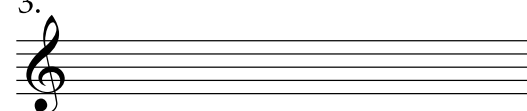
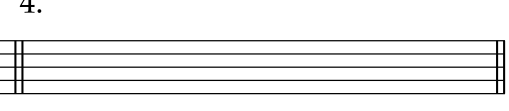
2 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 3

3 1 – 2 – 3 – 5 – 3

4 1 – 3 – 5 – 3 – 1 What is this pattern part of?

Here is the first shape from the previous activity written out in C major. Write out the others in the same way:

1.  2. 

3.  4. 

Now look at each phrase and hear it in your head. Then sing each phrase reading the music.

Section 4 Learning to listen to music

The new feature in Grade 2 is tempo (speed) changes. There will either be a *rallentando* (getting slower) or an *accelerando* (getting faster).

listening activities

track
81

- 1** Listen to these examples and then write down whether the phrase ended with a *rallentando* (*rall.*) or an *accelerando* (*accel.*)

1 _____ **4** _____
2 _____ **5** _____
3 _____

track
82

- 2** This time the *rall.* or *accel.* will be combined with a *crescendo* or *diminuendo*. After hearing each phrase, write down whether there was a *rall.* or *accel.* at the end and whether it was accompanied by a *crescendo* (*cresc.*) or *diminuendo* (*dim.*). The first one is done for you.

1 *Rall./Cresc.* **4** _____
2 _____ **5** _____
3 _____