

Improve your aural!

Grade 5

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

Note = Tone

Tone = Whole Step

Section 1 Clapping rhythms

track
2

Listen to this track – you don't have to remember this piece. Instead just be aware of any melodic or rhythmic patterns in the music. When we listen to speech we absorb both the general meaning and groups of words or phrases – rarely do we focus on one individual word. Similarly in music there are usually patterns to hear which makes remembering longer rhythms or melodies much easier. When we try to remember a longer rhythm or melody we might be trying *too hard*. Simply listen and absorb. Stay focused, think forwards, and don't allow any of the following (or similar) thoughts to slip into your consciousness:

'This is too long'

'I can't remember the opening bit'

'I can't do this'

Simply remain cool, calm and collected!

listening activities

track
3

1 Now, in a state of complete calmness, listen to each of these rhythms. Clap them back straight away. Don't think about them!

2 Here are some more rhythms to clap back. After you've clapped each rhythm, write down whether it was in 2, 3 or 4-time.

track
4 _____

track
5 _____

track
6 _____

track
7 _____

track
8 _____

track
9

3 After you've heard each phrase on this track, improvise your own rhythmic answer. The first one is done for you as an example. Use elements from the given phrase in your response.

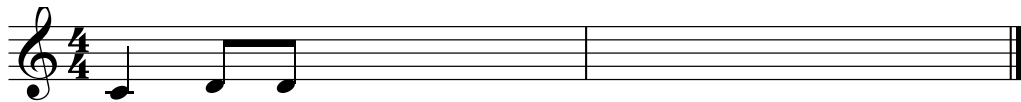
4 Using a piece you are currently learning, clap or tap the rhythm of the whole piece with your right hand (on a table for example) and the pulse with your left hand. Now repeat, swapping hands. Now tap the pulse with your right foot and clap or tap the rhythm.

Section 2 Pitch

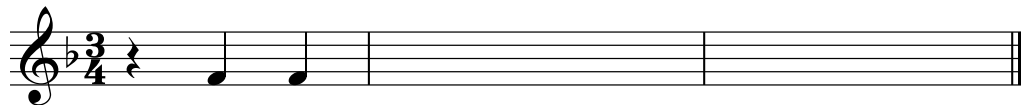
listening activities

- 1** Listen to the following phrases, each of which you'll hear three times. Play the tracks again if you need to. Then write each down (both the rhythm and the melody).

track
10



track
11

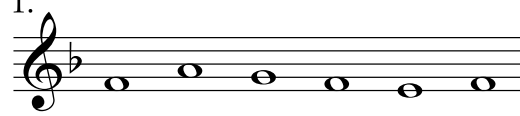
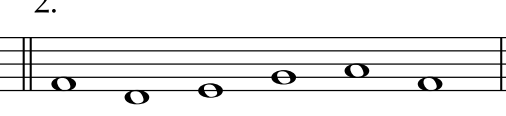


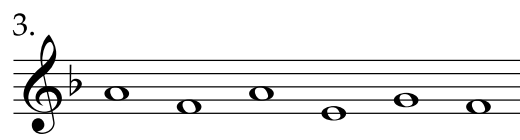
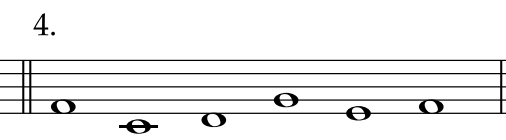
- 2** Now sing the melodies from the notation, and then play them on your instrument. Then, in your head, hear the melodies backwards. Do you recognize the tunes? You'll find the answers on p.16.

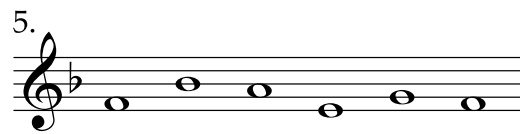
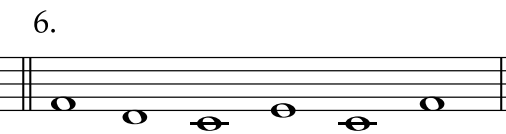
tracks
12-17

- 3** On these six tracks you'll hear tunes for you to repeat. Each one is played twice.

- 2** On this track there are six more six-note patterns. Follow the music below. One note in each group has been changed. Tick the note that is different.

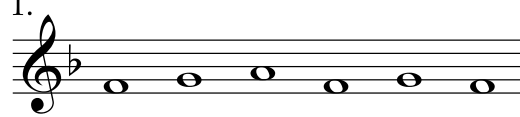
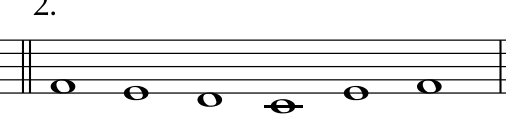
1.  2. 

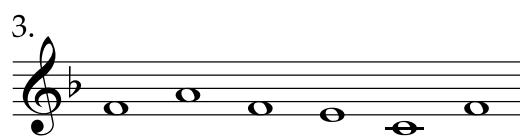
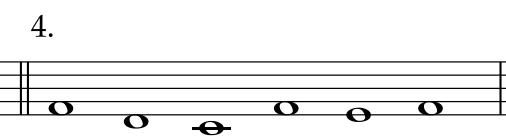
3.  4. 

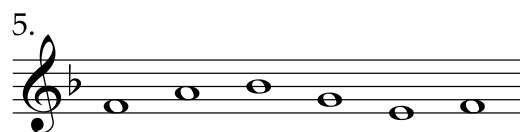
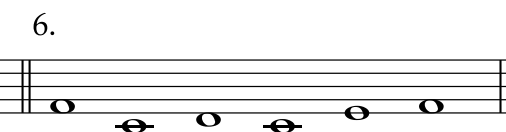
5.  6. 

Now sing each example as written.

- 3** Here are six more patterns for you to sing. Play the first note, then hear the pattern in your head and finally sing the pattern out loud.

1.  2. 

3.  4. 

5.  6. 

- 4** Now sing the above patterns using the rhythm  with the backing track. You'll hear the correct phrase repeated by a saxophone.

Section 5

Making connections

These fun activities show you how aural connects with all the other aspects of music. Choose one or two each time you practise.

track
41

... with instruments

Each of the following four examples are duets. Write down which instruments are playing in each duet.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

track
42

On this track you'll hear two trios. Which instruments are playing in each one?

1 _____

2 _____

... with transposition

Play the first four bars of *Twinkle, twinkle, little star* in C major. Now play the same phrase in F, G, D and B $\flat$ majors.

Now make up your own four-bar phrase in C major. Transpose it (by ear) to the keys of F, G, D and B $\flat$ majors.

track
43

... with improvisation

On this track you'll hear a cheerful and lively piece. After each two-bar phrase, improvise your own response. The key is F major – just use the notes: F G A C D (For B $\flat$ instruments, improvise in G major using the notes: G A B D E. E $\flat$ instruments improvise in D major, using the notes: D E F $\sharp$ A B.)