

Improve Grade 6 your aural!

Paul Harris

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Why is aural important?

track
1

You may wonder why you have to do aural at all. It's because it will help you – perhaps more than *any other* single musical skill – to improve as an all-round musician.

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, improve your sight-reading, 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 or 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.

For U.S. readers:

Bar = Measure
Note = Tone
Tone = Whole step
Semitone = Half step

The answers to all the questions in this book are available to download in PDF format from fabermusic.com

So, good luck and enjoy improving your aural skills!

Paul Harris

Sight-singing is a very useful skill. It will help develop your musical (or inner) ear. This in turn will help you to learn pieces more quickly, sight-read more accurately and to compose and arrange music. In Grade 6 you will have to sight-sing a four-bar phrase with piano accompaniment. (If you find this difficult, the *Improve your sight-singing!* series is a thorough method with lots more exercises that will help.)

Listening activities

track
9

- 1** Listen to the following phrases and fill in the missing note in each one. You'll hear the key chord and the first note of each example. Use your pause control between each one.

1 **Allegro**

2 **Andante**

3 **Allegretto**

4 **Con brio**

5 **Moderato**

6 **Con moto**

Give yourself the starting note, and then sing each one from your completed notation. Finally play each on your instrument.

track
10

- 2** Now sing each tune above with the accompaniments on this track.

Allegretto

6

mf

mp

track 11

4 This time sing each melody out loud, with the accompaniment. After a pause the melody will be played with the accompaniment, for you to check.

track 12

5 In the exam you will have about 15 seconds preparation time. Either sing the melody aloud or hear it in your head before singing it with the accompaniment.

Con moto

1

mf

mp

Animato

2

mf

mp

Gently

3

mf

mp

Dolce

4

mp

p

Section 4

Listening to music

There are no new features to listen for in Grade 6 but you will be expected to listen and hear *more details* now.

track
18

Texture

1 Listen to the six examples and connect the boxes:

A single line of music	played 1st
Single line doubled in octaves	played 2nd
Two independent lines played at the same time	played 3rd
Three independent lines played at the same time	played 4th
A tune with accompaniment	played 5th
Chordal writing	played 6th

track
19

2 More often than not, however, the texture will change or develop during a piece. The next series of pieces begin with one texture and end with another. Note down the textures (two for each piece) using:

S for a single line of music **SO** for a single line doubled at the octave

2 for two independent lines **3** for three independent lines

T for tune and accompaniment **C** for chordal

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

track
20

3 The piece on this track includes all six textures – it's quite short so you'll have to think fast! Put them in order, using the same symbols as before:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____

track
21

Form or structure

4 Composers have many ways to structure their music. Listen to this track, which is the first four phrases of the famous *William Tell Overture* by Rossini. The phrases could be described as

1 A 2 A¹ (i.e. A slightly altered) 3 A 4 B

track
22

Here are some more passages consisting of four very short phrases. Describe them in the same sort of way:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 Have a look at the pieces you are currently learning. What form are they in? How are the phrases related?

Style and period

You will have to identify the style and period of a piece of music. Here are some useful signposts to help you identify the four main musical periods:

Baroque

- Use of ornaments
- Two or more independent melodic lines (often known as contrapuntal writing)
- Use of imitation between the parts
- Clear textures and spread chords

Classical

- Regular (often four-bar) phrase lengths
- Often uses tune and alberti bass accompaniment
- Often tidy, balanced and symmetrical

Romantic

- Expressive and vivid (and often rapidly contrasting) use of dynamic levels and other markings
- Colourful harmonies
- Atmospheric, moody, virtuosic, thicker and more varied textures