

Improve your aural!

Grades 7–8

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- Singing (or playing) the lowest part of a three-note phrase
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Why is aural important?



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

Singing (or playing) the lower part of a two-part phrase

This is really no more difficult than singing the *upper* part of a two-part phrase! But you do need to concentrate your listening carefully.

Listening activities



- 1** In this first set of examples you will hear a short three-note phrase in two parts. Each part is played by a different instrument. After you've heard each example, sing the lower part. Use your pause control between examples if you need more time.



- 2** In the next six examples the two parts are again played by contrasting instruments – after you've heard each one twice, sing the lower part. The lower line will then be played for you to check.



- 3** You will hear the six examples again, just once this time. Write down on which degree of the scale the lower part ends.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____



- 4** The next set of examples is played on the piano – as in the exam. Listen carefully to each one and then sing the lower part. Again the lower line will then be repeated for you to check your answer.



- 5** In Grade 8 you have to sing back the lowest of three parts. Here's some early practice for you! You'll hear the examples on two different instruments (the upper two lines will be played by the same instrument) which will help you to hear the lowest part more easily. Sing after you've heard the phrase twice.

Cadences

The *interrupted cadence* is introduced at Grade 7. Using the punctuation analogy, this cadence is perhaps best represented by a question mark. Its effect is to delay the end of a phrase. Like a perfect cadence, an interrupted cadence begins with chord V but is then followed by chord VI (rather than chord I).



CD1 track
10

There is an element of surprise about an interrupted cadence! Listen to the example on this track.

CD1 track
11

- 1** On this track you'll hear four interrupted cadences in baroque, classical, romantic and 20th/21st-century style. Connect the boxes.

Baroque style

played 1st

Classical style

played 2nd

Romantic style

played 3rd

20th/21st-Century style

played 4th

CD1 track
12

- 2** Here are nine cadences. They will be perfect (V – I), imperfect (I/IV – V) or interrupted (V – VI). Describe the cadence and then write down the two chords. The first one is done for you.

1 Imperfect I – V 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____ 6 _____

7 _____ 8 _____

9 _____

Pieces of music are rarely written without moving through different keys. The process of moving from one key to another is called *modulation*. This adds variety, colour and tension to a work.

Listening activities 1

CD1 track
14

- 1** In each of this first set of examples you will hear a musical phrase made up of five chords. Write down whether the final chord is the same as the first chord (S) in which case there has been no modulation, or if it's a different chord (M) indicating a modulation has taken place.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

CD1 track
15

- 2** In the next, longer examples listen carefully and decide whether the piece ends in the same key (S) or has modulated to a new key (M).

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

In Grade 7 there are three possible keys for music to modulate to. They are:

- The *sub-dominant* key (e.g. if we begin in C major, then a modulation to F major)
- The *dominant* key (e.g. if we begin in C major, then a modulation to G major)
- The *relative minor* key (e.g. if we begin in C major, then a modulation to A minor)

Modulating to the relative minor (i.e. a modulation from a major key to a minor key) is easy to spot. The other two need more practice. Some try to remember the keynote of the opening key (often by singing it quietly while the music is being played) and then relating it to the new keynote at the end of the example. This may work, but is not recommended – it can be unreliable.

A modulation to the dominant key (V) requires the sharpening of the 4th degree of the scale, producing a brightening effect. Listen to track 16.

A modulation to the sub-dominant key (IV) requires a lowering of the 7th degree of the scale, producing a flattening effect. Listen to track 17.

As you listen to more examples you will become more and more confident in hearing the moment when the key changes.

CD1 track
16

CD1 track
17

Listening to music

In addition to discussing musical features, in Grade 7 you will be asked to suggest a possible composer. This doesn't mean you'll need to know *precisely* who wrote the piece, but to pick a name from the right historical period. Here are some well-known composers from each period. If you know any more, add them to the lists.

Baroque	Classical	Romantic	20th/21st century
Bach	W. A. Mozart	Schumann	Bartók
Handel	Haydn	Chopin	Stravinsky
Vivaldi	Clementi	Liszt	Copland
Purcell	Turk	Tchaikovsky	Shostakovich
Scarlatti		Brahms	Malcolm Arnold
		Albeniz	John Williams
		Grieg	

You may notice that a number of famous names do not feature in the list (Beethoven, Debussy and Rachmaninov, for example). These composers are harder to classify as their compositional style puts them in more than one period. It's sometimes misleading to think of composers fitting into neat categories.


1

Listen to the examples on this track and connect the boxes. Think carefully about the features that lead you to your answers.

Bach	played 1st
W. A. Mozart	played 2nd
Tchaikovsky	played 3rd
Malcolm Arnold	played 4th