

# Aural Tips - Grade 6

- Some tests allow for a second attempt or for an additional playing by the examiner, if necessary.
- The examiner may prompt if needed, although this may affect the assessment.
- Marks are not awarded for each individual test or deducted for mistakes; instead they reflect the candidate's overall response in this component.

## A. Repeat THE UPPER part of a melody.

- It will be within the range of an octave and in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats.
- If necessary, the examiner will play the phrase again and allow a second attempt (although this may affect the assessment).
- When given the key chord, sing an arpeggio in your head to remember the overall tonality.
- Focus on the upper part, which will form the melody of the phrase and will rely on melodic progression.
- Sing along in your head on the 2nd playing to gauge accuracy and familiarise yourself with notes and rhythm.
- You can sing any sound (such as 'La la' or 'Do do') or you could hum or whistle if you prefer.
- Try to copy articulation and dynamics also
- Try to complete the phrase, even if you can't remember every note!

## B. Sing a melody from a score whilst an accompaniment is played.

- Prepare well in advance - practice sight singing at every opportunity!
- [Practise HERE!](#)
- When given the key chord, sing an arpeggio in your head to remember the overall tonality.
- Note the key and take time to work out tricky intervals before you begin. Use your theoretical knowledge to spot arpeggios, cadences etc.
- Use the sound of the accompaniment to check if you are on the right note and in tune as you are singing
- The melody will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. Try to include articulation and dynamics also
- Use the time given to read through the score and have a go.

## c. Identify the cadence at the end of a phrase as perfect or imperfect. (root position)

Listen to examples. You will begin to recognise them in time by ear.

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## Perfect V-1

- Sounds finished/final/complete
- Bottom note will go from the dominant to the tonic

## Imperfect ?-V

- sounds incomplete or suspended / unfinished
- Bottom note will hang in suspense at the dominant.

d. (i) Answer questions about two features of a piece played by the examiner.

Before playing, the examiner will tell the candidate which two features the questions will be about.

The first Q will be about

- **texture or structure**
  - Texture is basically a way to describe how the music or sound is organised.
  - It describes Tempo, melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre.
  - **A thick texture** is if there are many layers, or a lot of melodies and harmonies being played at the same time.
  - **Thin texture** is one where there is a more sparse, simple sound. Less layers.
  - An **open texture**, or a spacious texture, is when a piece of music has a large gap between the highest and lowest notes.
  - A **closed or tight texture** is where all of the singers or instruments are playing notes that are really close together.
  - **Monophonic** - single line melody. No harmonic accompaniment
  - **Homophonic** - multiple different notes playing, but they're all based around the same melody. Could be a melody and accompaniment for example
  - **polyphonic** - when there are multiple independent melodic lines occurring at once.
  - **Comment on things like a chordal base, single melody lines, arpeggio accompaniment, alberti bass, a contrapuntal melody and so on**

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These descriptions are intentionally sparse but they suffice for the purpose of an exam help sheet.

**The second will be about**

- **Dynamics**
  - **Note any sudden or gradual changes in dynamics, extremes of either, interaction of dynamics between hands and any subtle changes**
- **articulation,**
  - **Is it consistent throughout? Is it the same in each hand, does it change a lot or even once? How does this affect the overall feel of the piece.**
- **Tempo**
  - **As above**
- **Tonality**
  - **As above**
- **Character**
  - **What gives the music its overall character, how does it make you feel?**
- **style and period,**
- **texture/structure.**

**STYLE & Period of the piece**

**The four periods you may be asked about in an exam are**

**Baroque**

- Energetic / lively rhythm / strong/ spirited
- Polyphonic - interweaving melodies
- Regular cadences
- May modulate to related keys
- 18th century dance character melody (minuet, gigue, courante);
- Limited range of pitch (harpsichord was smaller than a piano)
- Limited use of dynamics ( the harpsichord is not possible to play louder or softer);
- Use of ornamentation: trills, turns, mordents
- Possibly a detached articulation.
- Imitation between voices

Listen to J.S. Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Couperin, Rameau

**Classical**

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- Regular, clear phrases/stepwise melodies, scale passages (2/4 bars is common)
- Repeated themes
- Elegant and refined melody
- Simple texture: melody with accompaniment, simple harmony, melody with chords or Alberti bass / broken chord accompaniment.
- Simple chords and cadences
- Little to no pedal
- Simple dynamics such as crescendo and diminuendo.

Some composers to listen to: Mozart, Beethoven (early period), Clementi, Haydn.

## Romantic

- Flexible tempo;
- Use of rubato
- Lyrical & expressive
- dramatic melodies;
- Dramatic modulations
- Use of pedal;
- Thicker texture with extensive use of chords and melodic lines moving through the voices;
- Tonal but harmonically complex
- Wider use of dynamics and different nuances eg: pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff and so on.

Some composers to listen to: Brahms, Chopin, Grieg and Schumann

## 20th Century.

- Rhythmical - use of syncopation and jazzy themes
- Angular, unusual melodies
- Irregular phrases
- Discordant harmonies and unusual, clashing chords & chord progressions
- Sudden dynamics /rhythmic changes
- unpredictable

Some composers to listen to: Bartók, Debussy, Prokofiev, Ravel, Stravinsky.

## Clap rhythm

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- Clap along in your head on the 2nd playing to gauge accuracy and familiarise yourself with rhythm
- You can sing any sound (such as 'La la' of 'Do do') or you could hum or whistle if you prefer.
- Clap without hesitation & keep in time.
- **It helps if you had decided on 2 time, 3 time or 4 time when you first heard the piece to notice the musical details.**
- **After you have clapped the rhythm you will say if the piece was in 2 time, 3 time or 4 time., but if you didn't make up your mind then, hearing the phrase to be clapped will help you.**

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