The Leinster School of Music & Drama

Piano Teacher Handbook

2019 - 2020

The Leinster School of Music & Drama
Griffith College Dublin, South Circular Road, Dublin 8. Ireland

Website: lsmd.ie

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General Information and Exam Regulations

(a) This handbook is to be used *in conjunction* with the syllabus.

(b) This hand book is designed specifically to clarify some requirements that form part of the new syllabus. Teachers should at all times consult the syllabus for the requirements such as scales, sight reading and aural tests.

(c) Candidates must adhere strictly to the repertoire in the syllabus. Where there is an own choice option, this applies to one piece only of the programme.

(d) The editions listed in the syllabus are suggested editions. Alternative editions of similar standing are equally acceptable.

(e) Candidates are not compelled to adhere to the fingering indicated in any of the pieces. Any appropriate fingering will be accepted.

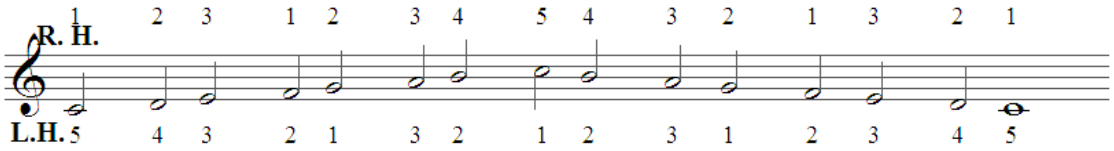
(f) Scales should be fingered in accordance with recommendations. At examinations marks will be deducted for inappropriate fingering.

(g) No photocopied music is allowed at any time other than for an awkward page turn.

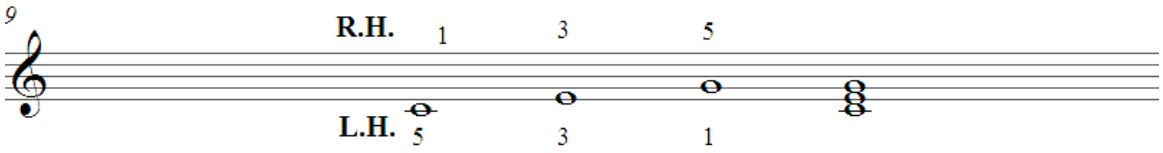
Introductory Grade

Technical Studies:

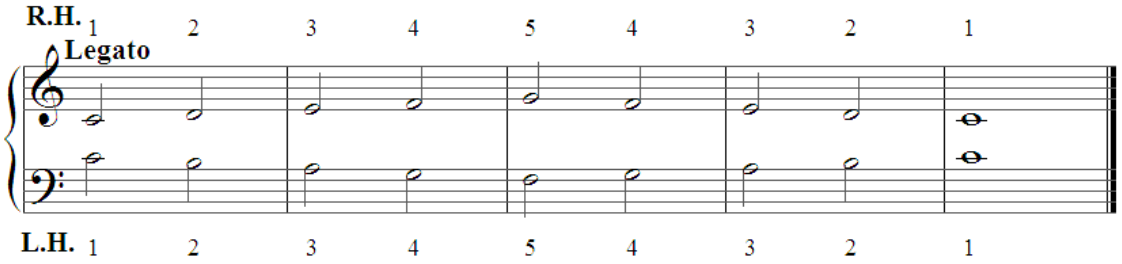
- Scales of C and G major, one octave hands separately.



- Chords of C and G major in broken position.

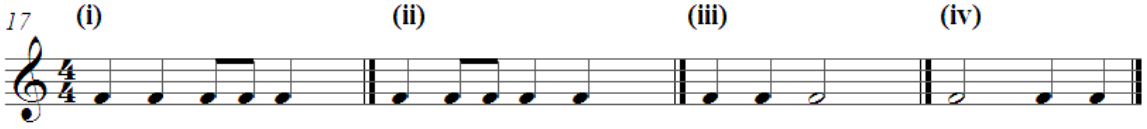


- Five finger exercise, hands together over middle C, played legato.

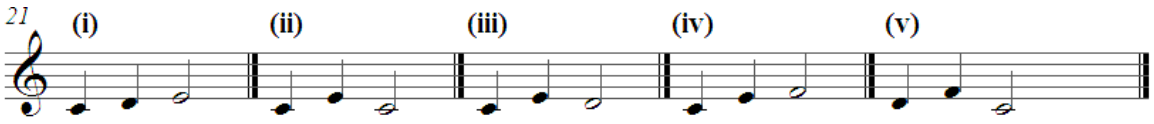


Aural Observation:

- To recognize two notes played by the examiner as being either ascending or descending
- Identifying a short phrase from one of the prepared pieces.
- To clap back a short rhythm played by the examiner. The following are samples only



- To sing back a few notes played by the examiner. The following are samples only

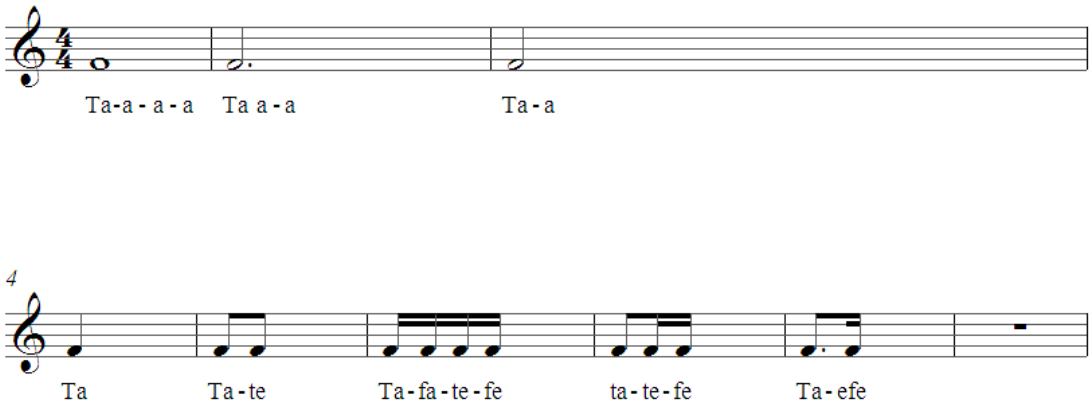


French Time Names[1]

In teaching time and rhythm, teachers are recommended to use French time names in preference to counting by numbers

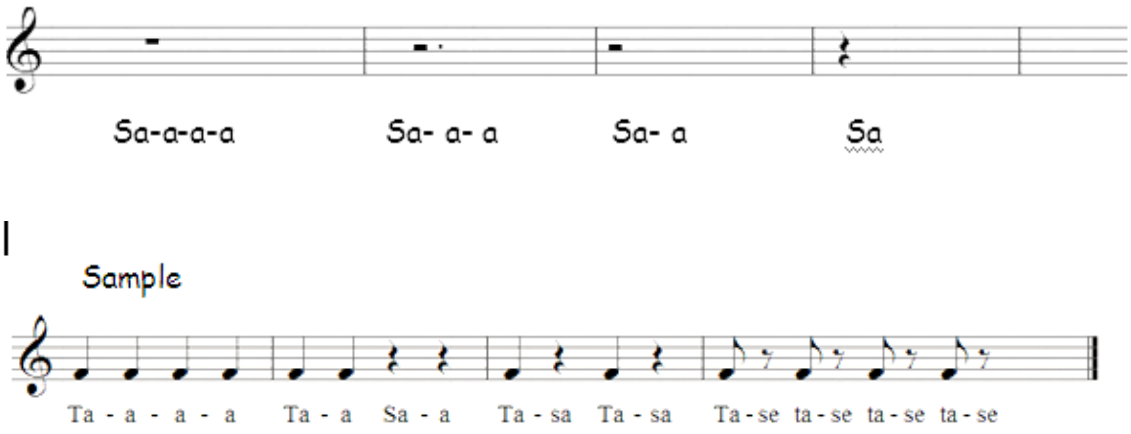
In this system each note has a name; each pulse or beat is divisible into halves, quarters, eights etc.

The following is a list of notes beginning with the semi breve and dividing into smaller divisions:-



Rests

Each note has a corresponding rest. The time names for the rests begin with S instead of T



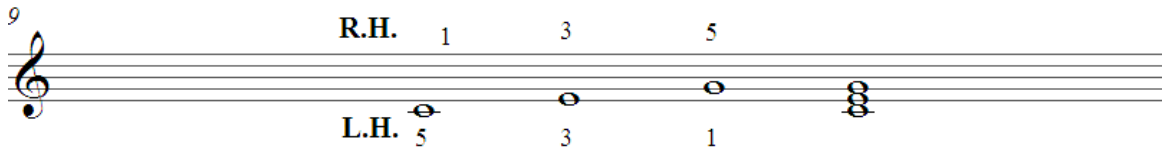
[1] Kodaly/Orff or other recognised methods will also be accepted.

Primary Grade

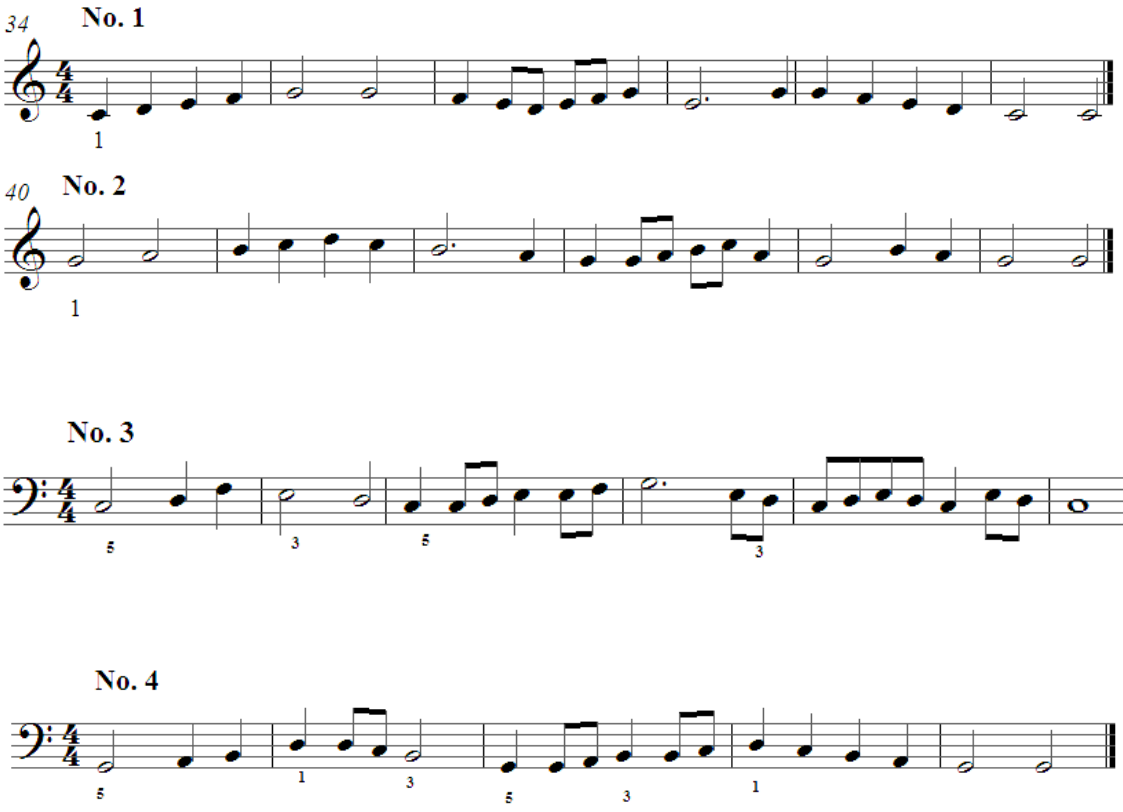
Technical Studies:

- C, G, F majors, one octave hands separately.

- Chords of the above keys in close position, hands separately

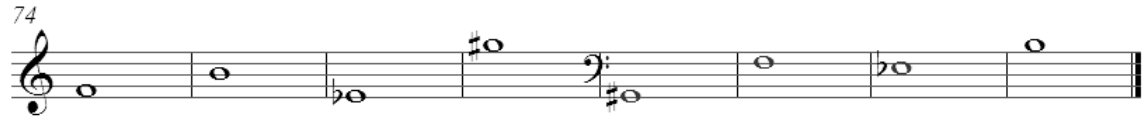


- Preparation of four musical sentences from a recommended list. The following are the four sentences



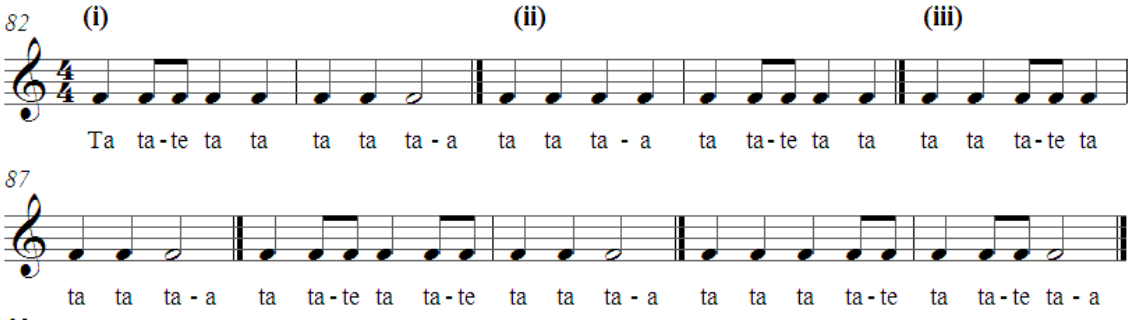
Sight Reading and Comprehension:

- Understanding the treble and bass clef and one ledger line above and below both staves together with the sharp and flat. Candidates will be required to identify and play two notes in the Treble and two notes in the Bass which may include the sharp or the flat.

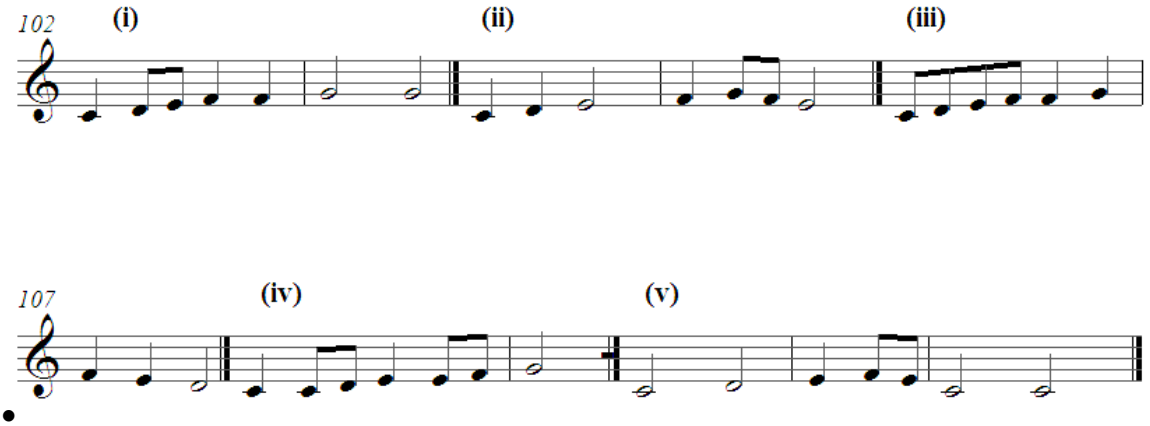


Aural Observation:

- To clap at sight a two bar phrase consisting of crotchets, quavers and minims using *French Time Names. In clapping back at the examination, it is not necessary to use the French times aloud. The following are examples only



•To clap back a short phrase played by the examiner



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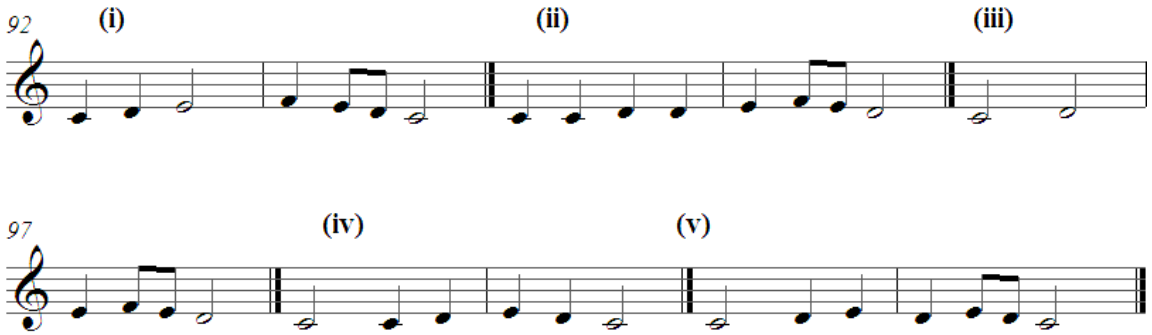
- Sing back a two bar phrase played twice by the examiner

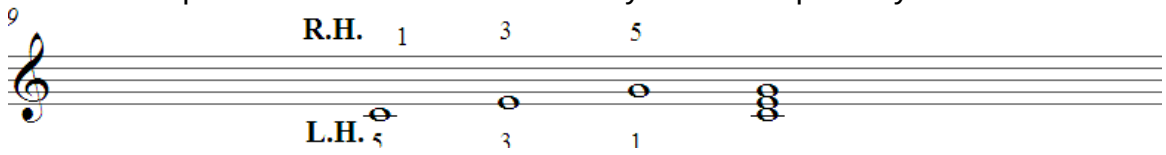


Preparatory Grade

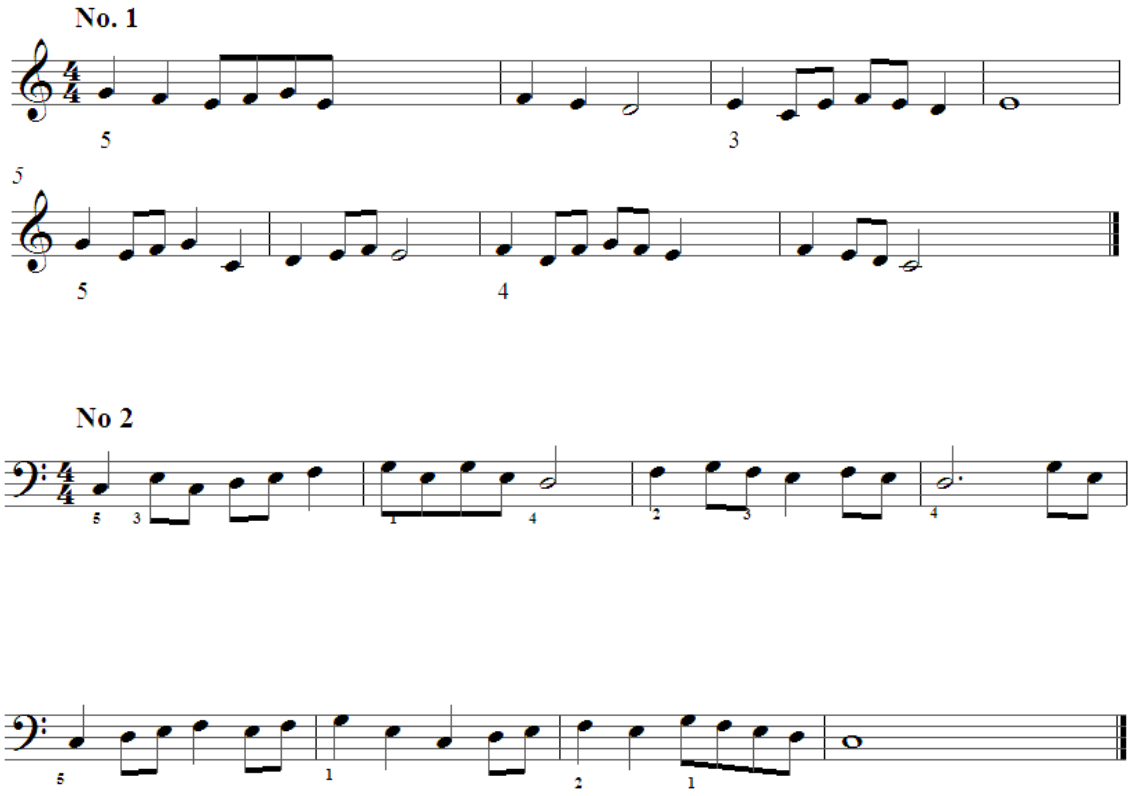
Technical Studies:

- C, G F majors, A and D minor, one octave hands separately.

- Three note close position chords of the above keys hands separately as attached.

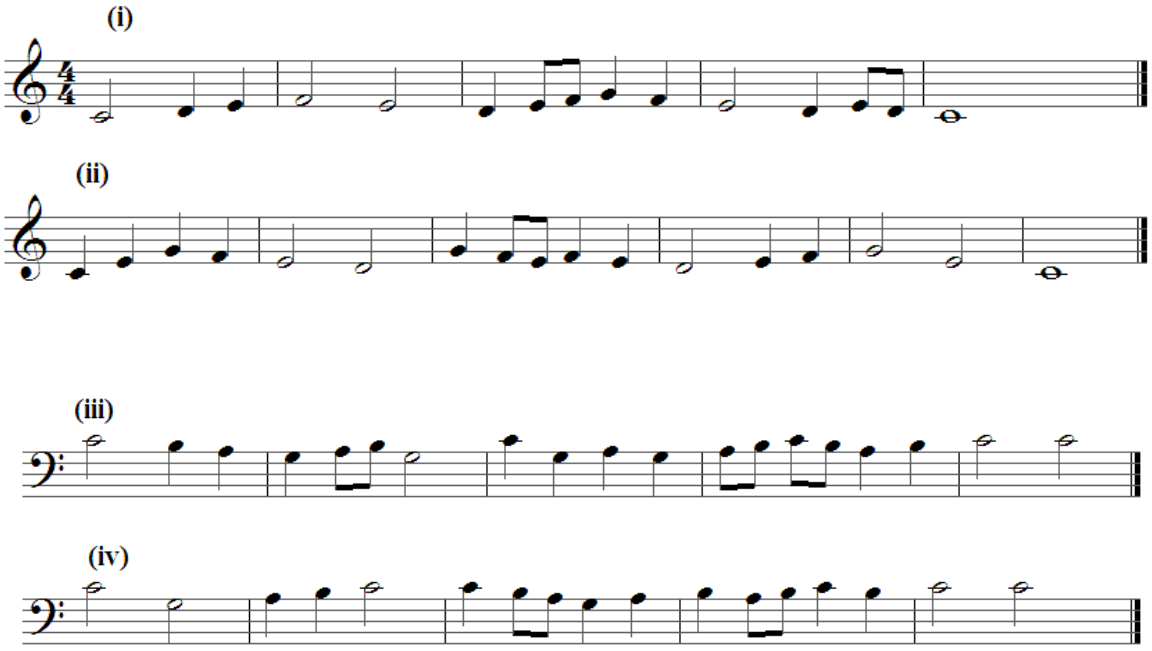


- Preparation of two musical sentences, one in the treble and one in the bass, from a supplied list. Candidates will be required to perform one sentence at the exam. The following are the sentences.



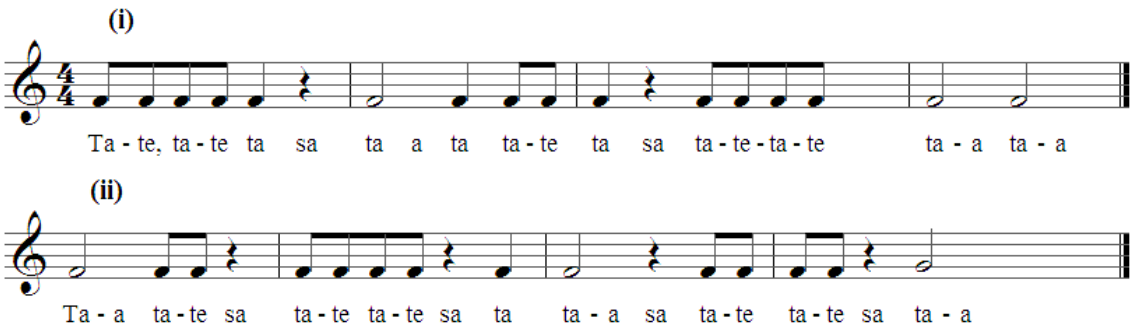
Sight Reading and Comprehension:

- Recognizing time signatures, key signatures and marks of expression in the prepared pieces.
- Sight reading a short passage containing mainly movement by step over the five fingers with the right hand and left hand separately. The following is an example of the standard required.

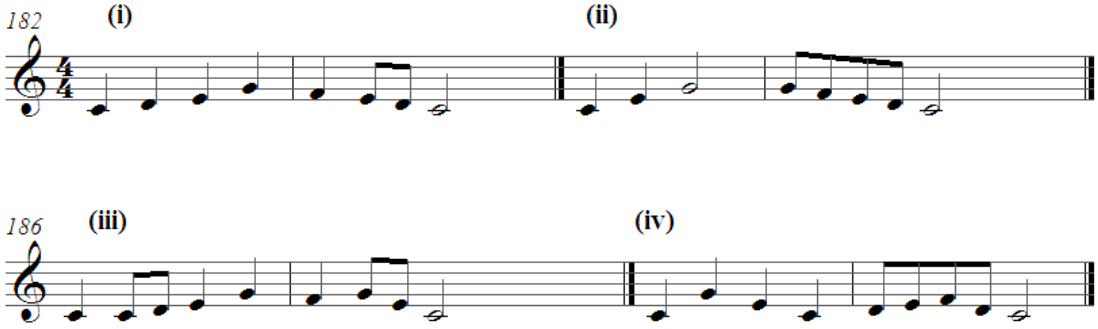


Aural Observation:

- To clap at sight a short phrase in 4/4 time using more *French time names including minim, crotchets, quavers and crotchet rests



- Sing back a short melody played by the examiner of a higher standard than the previous level.



- Clapping along to a short passage played by the examiner in 4/4 or 3/4 time

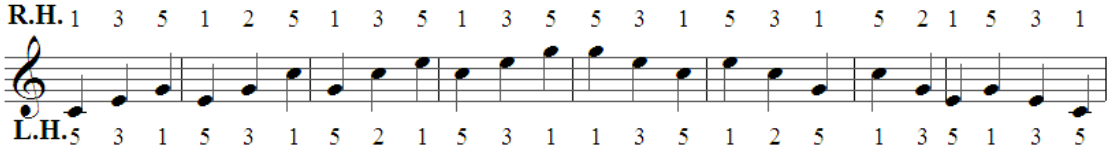
Grade 1

Technical Studies:

- C, G, D, A, F majors; A and D minors, two octaves hands separately and one octave hands together.

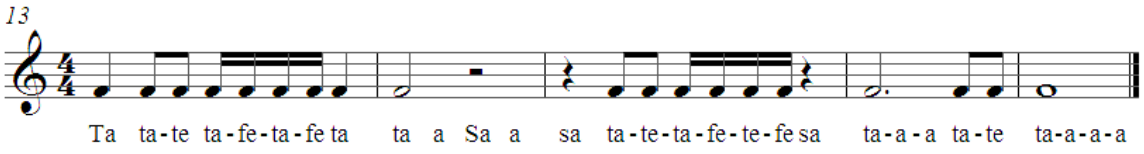
- Contrary motion one octave in the keys of C and G majors.

- Three note broken chords and inversions of C and G majors A and D minors. The following is the broken chord of C major

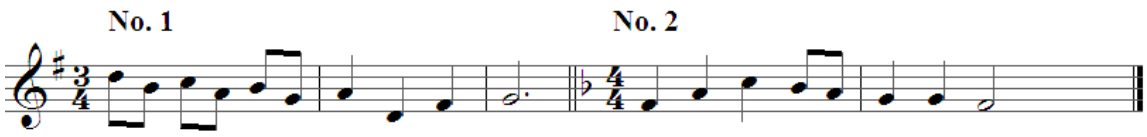


Aural Observation:

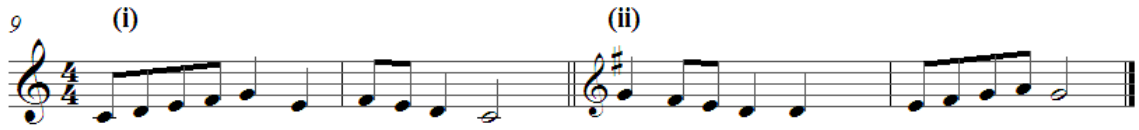
- To clap a rhythm at sight in simple time using *French time names, using crotchets, quavers, minims, crotchet rests and semiquavers only



(a) To clap back the rhythm of a short melody played twice by the examiner



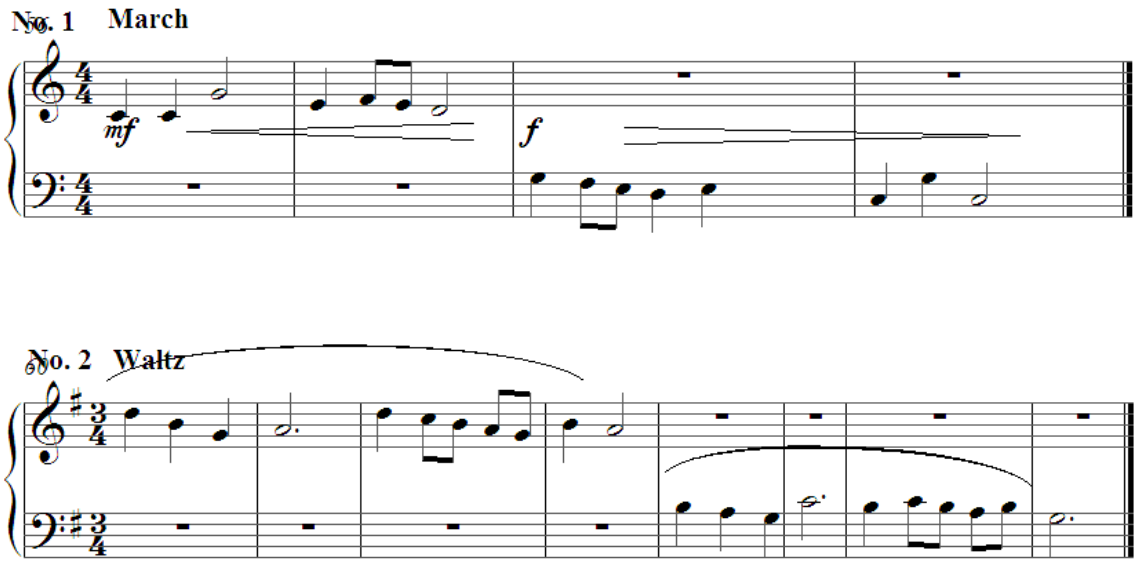
(b) To sing back a short melody played twice by the examiner. The following is an example of the standard required



(c) To identify the time of a short piece played by the examiner as being in either 2/4 or 3/4 time

Sight Reading and Comprehension:

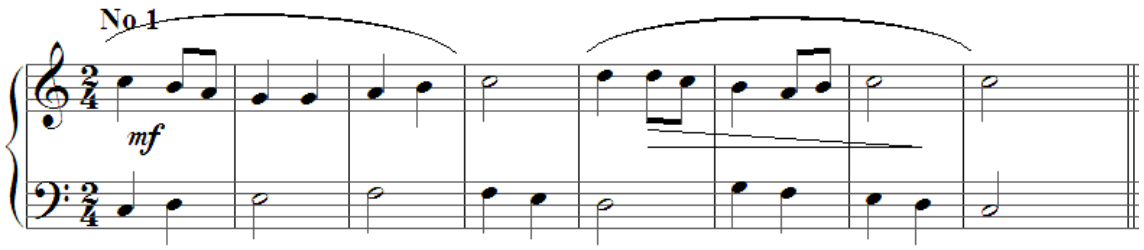
- To sight read a short passage with each hand separately in the key of C or G . The following are examples of the standard required.

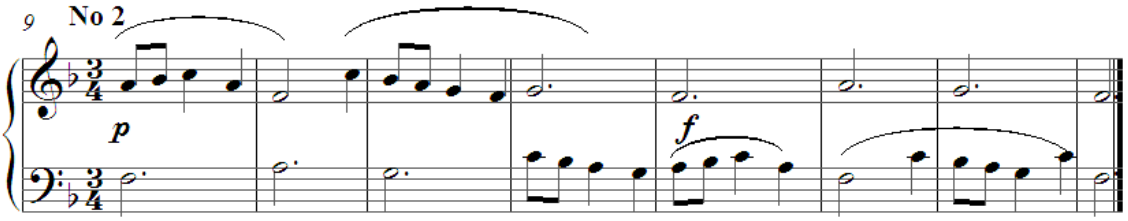


Grade 2

Sight Reading and Comprehension:

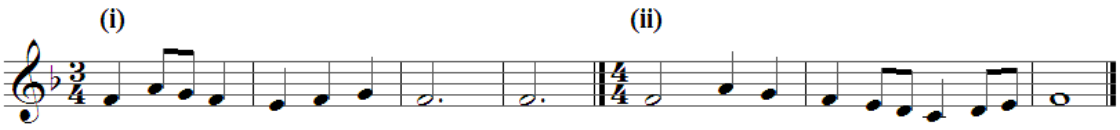
- To sight read a short passage hands together in the keys of C, G or F major. The following are examples of the standard required.



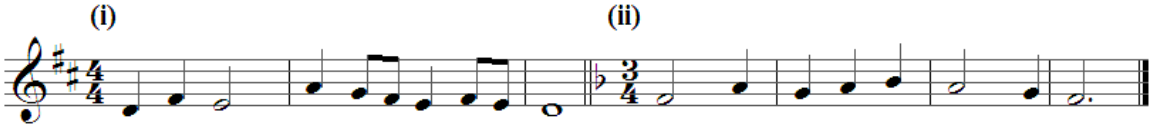


Aural Observation:

- To clap back the rhythm of a four bar melody in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4 time played twice by the examiner and to state whether it was in 2/4,3/4 or 4/4 time.

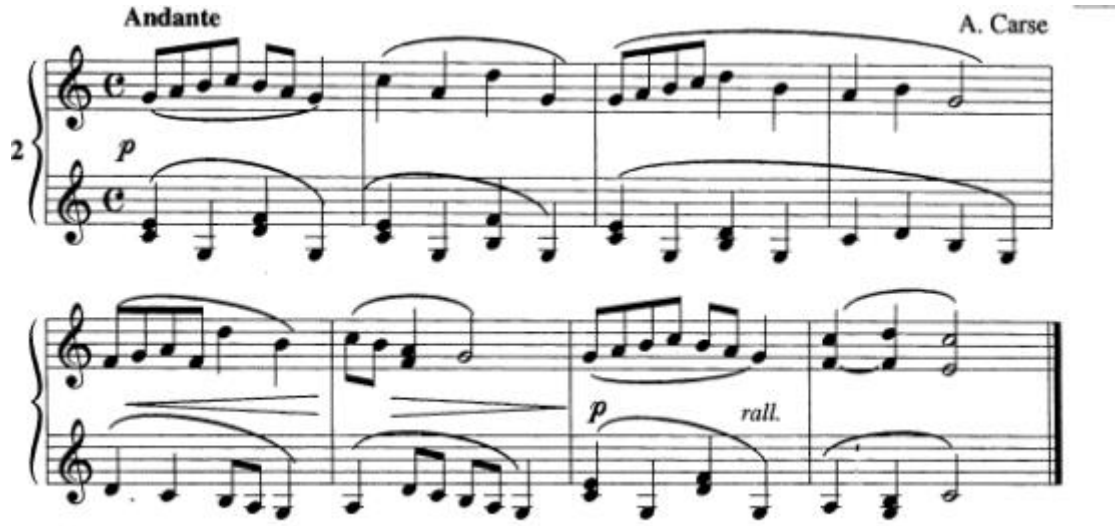


- To sing back a short melody played twice by the examiner



- To listen to two notes played by the examiner, played both separately and together and identify the interval as major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th or perfect 5th

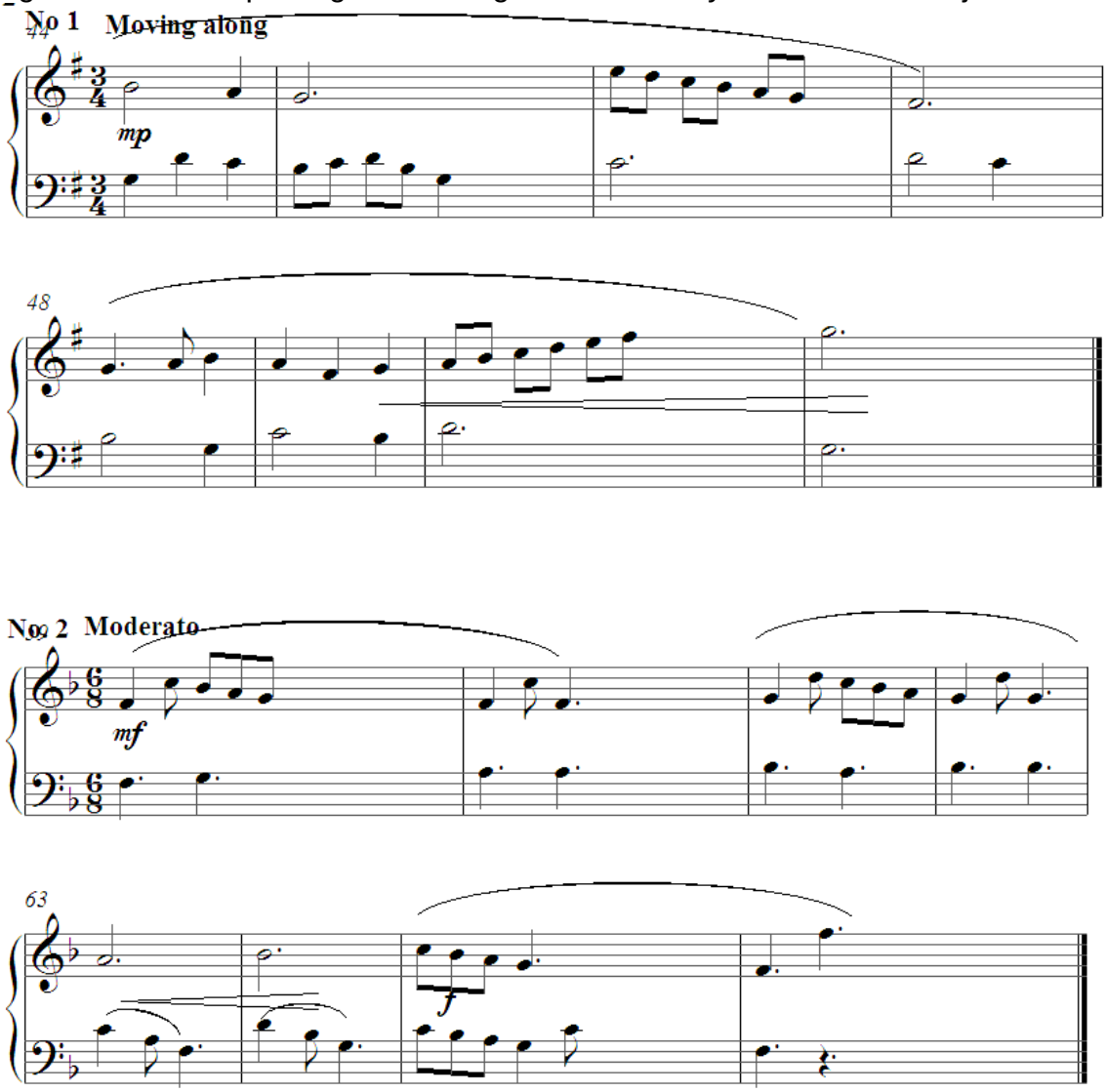
- To listen to a short piece played by the examiner and identify obvious features i.e. whether the piece was played forte or piano, legato or staccato, *rall* at the end etc.

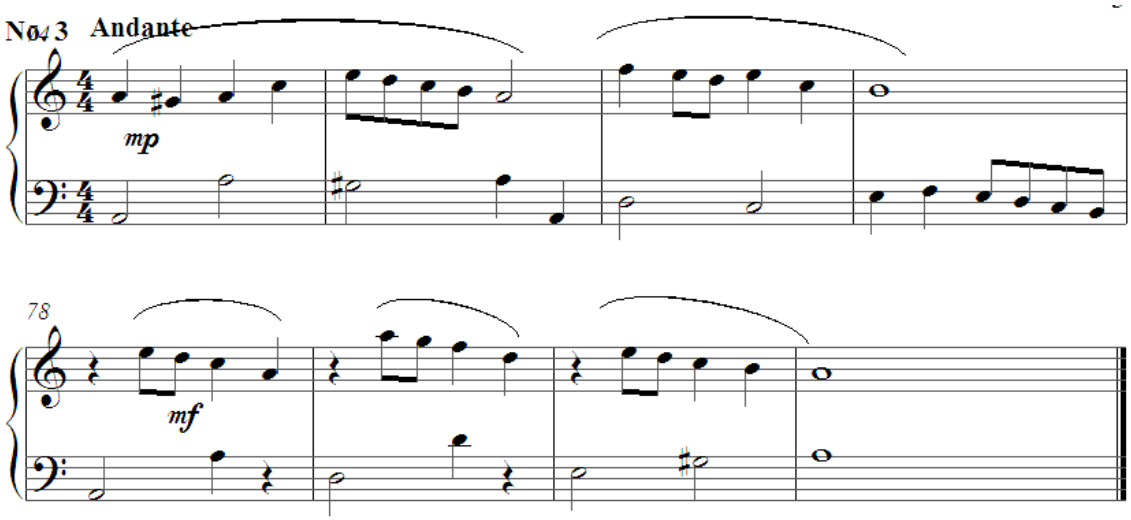


Grade 3

Sight reading and comprehension:

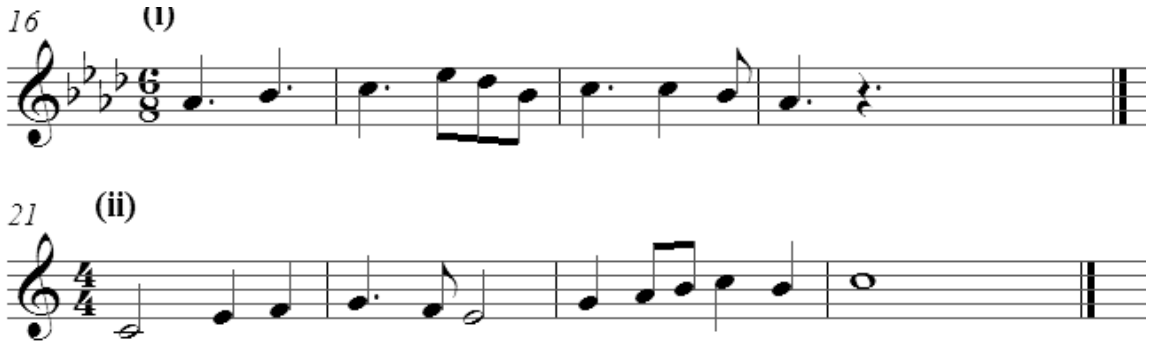
- To sight read a short passage hands together in the keys of C, G or F major, A or D minor



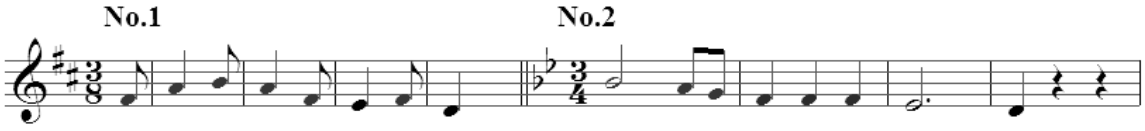


Aural Observation:-

- To clap back the rhythm of a four bar phrase played twice by the examiner, and to state which time the extract is in (3/4, 4/4, or 6/8)

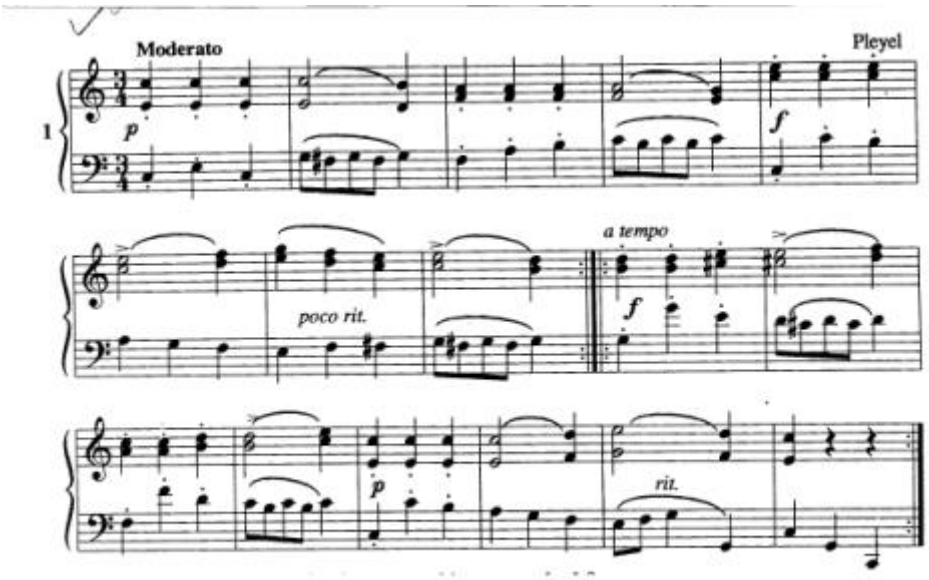


- To sing back a short melody played twice by the examiner



- To identify perfect and major intervals up to an octave, and the minor 3rd. These will be played separately and together.

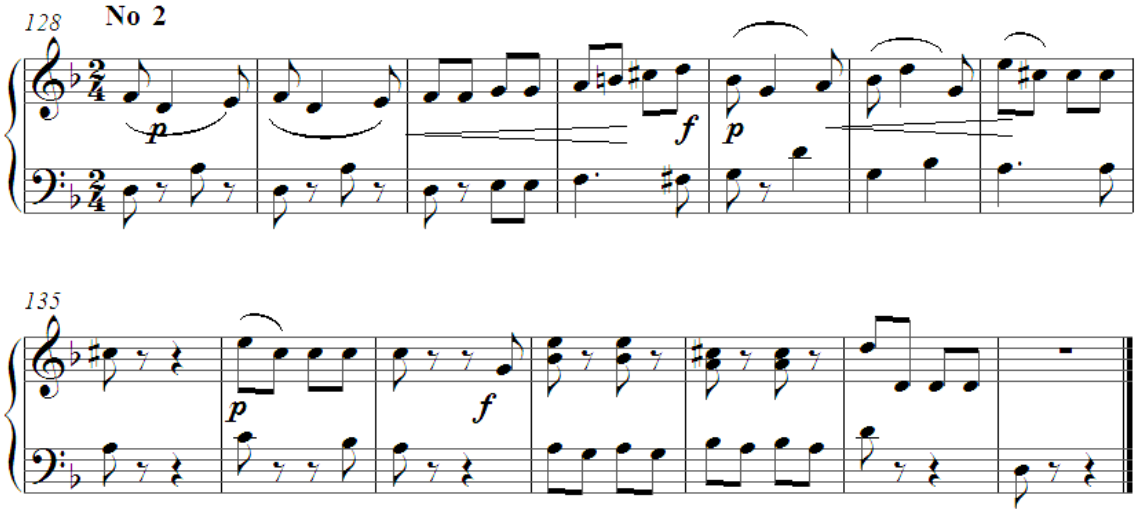
a. After hearing a piece played twice by the examiner, to comment on whether the piece is in the major or minor key, variation of dynamics generally.



Grade 4

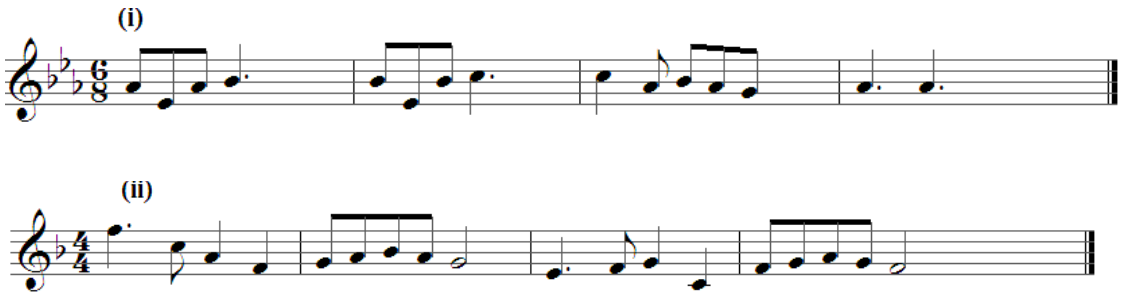
Sight reading and comprehension:

- To sight read a short passage hands together in the keys of C, G,D, F or B flat major, A, E, or D minor

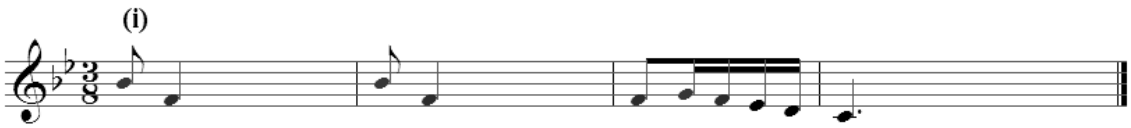


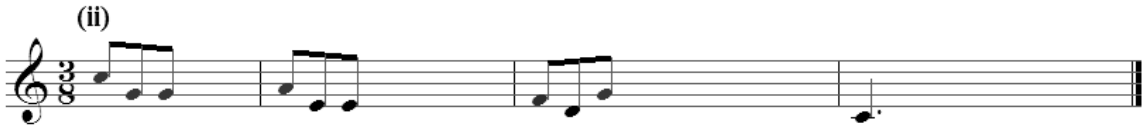
Aural Observation:

- To clap a four bar rhythm played twice by the examiner in simple or compound time. This will be either in 2/4, 3 /4., 4/4 or 6/8

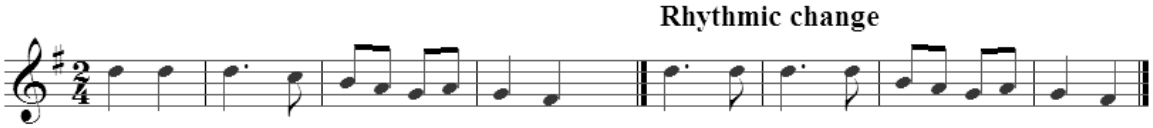


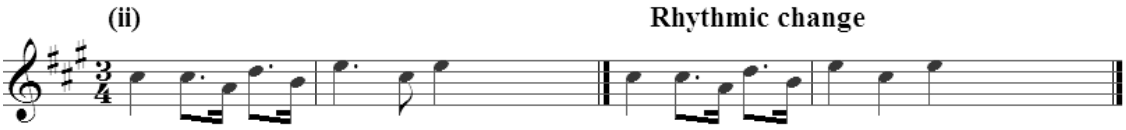
- To sing back a short melody played twice by the examiner



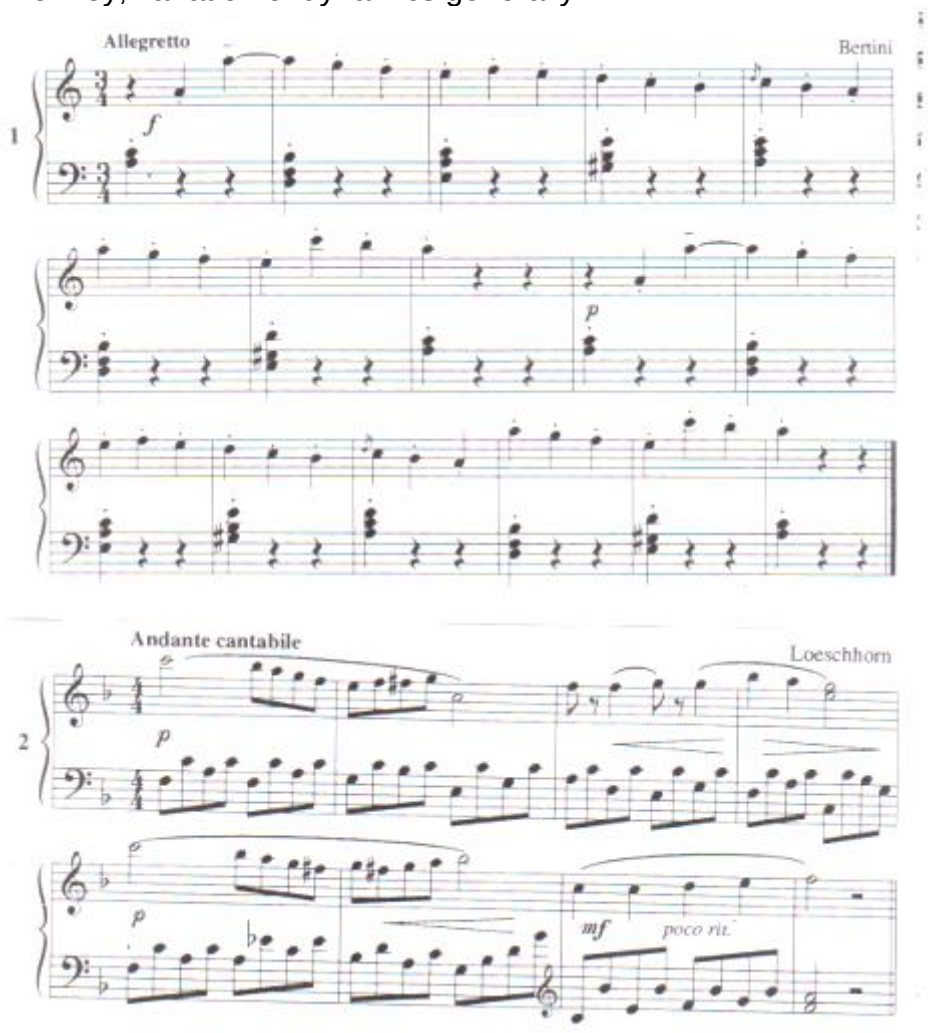


- To recognize a rhythmic change in a two bar phrase i.e did the change occur in the first or second bar.





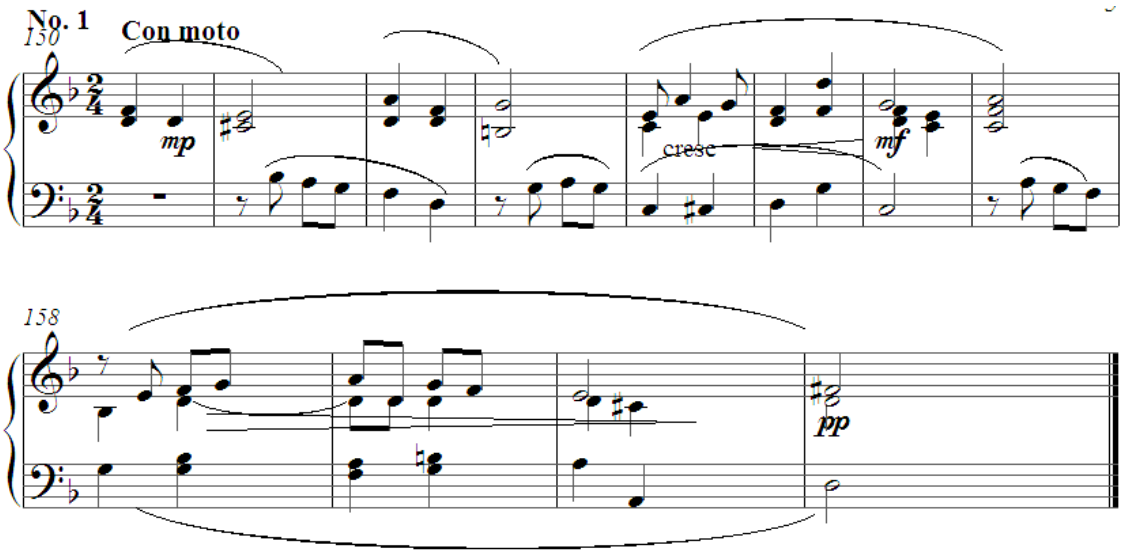
- After hearing a piece played twice by the examiner, to comment on whether the piece is in the major or minor key, variation of dynamics generally

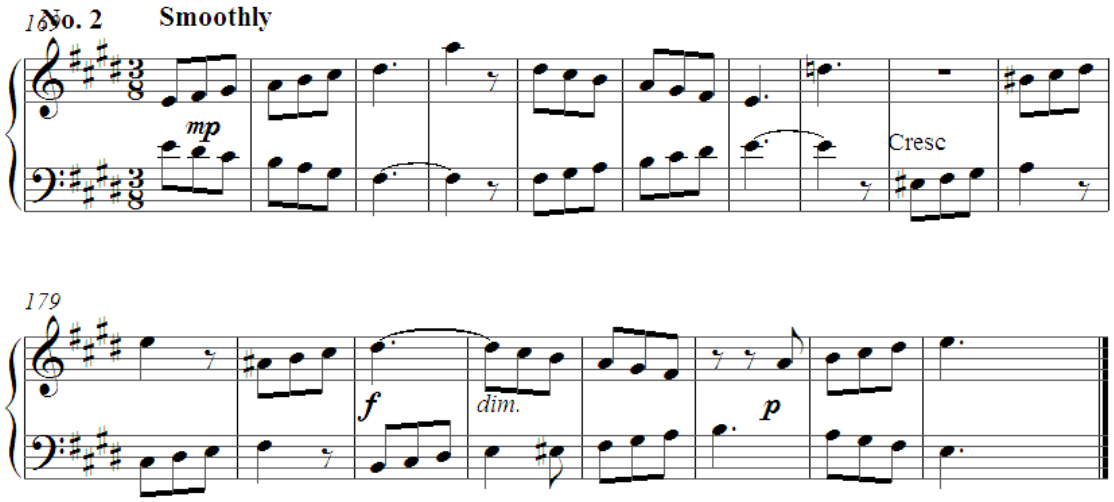


Grade 5

Sight reading and comprehension:

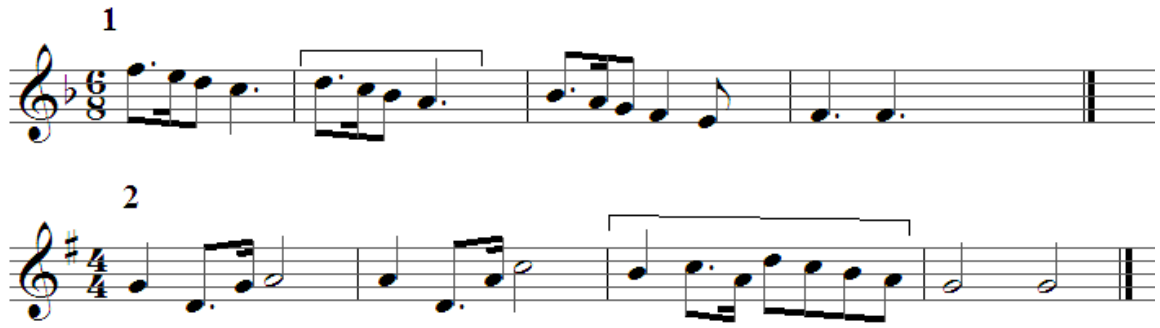
- To sight read a piece of moderate difficulty, hands together in any major or minor key.



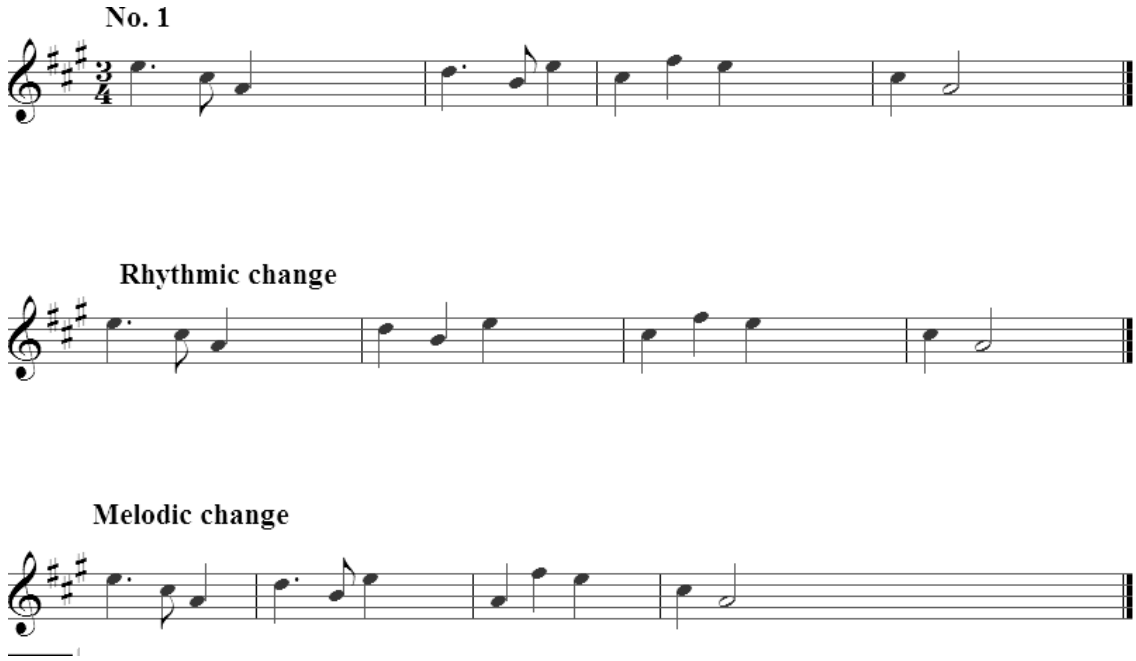


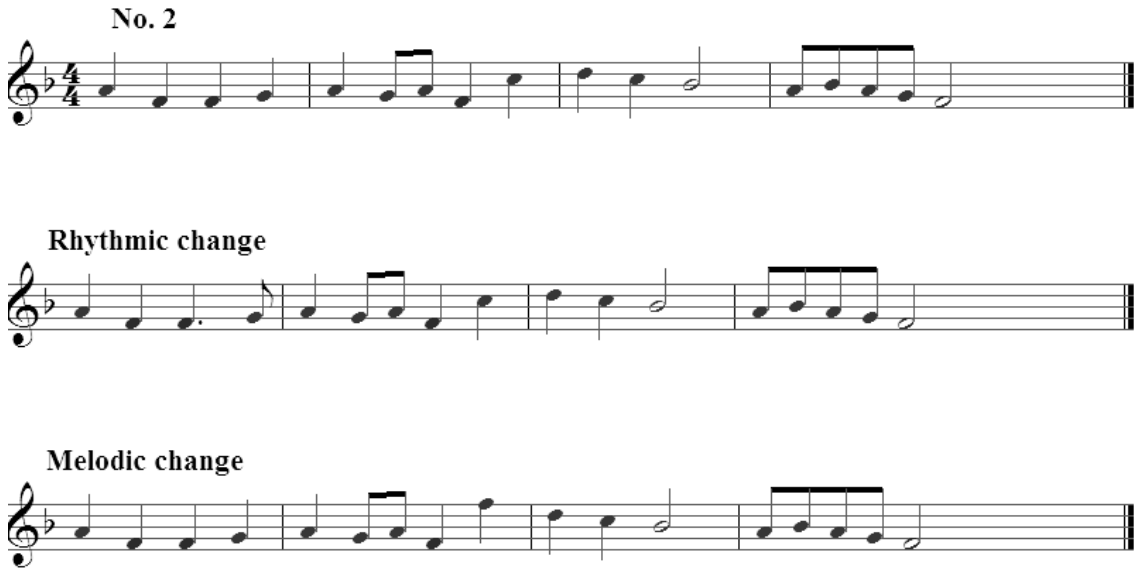
Aural Observation:

(a)To clap a four bar rhythm of suitable standard played twice by the examiner and state the time signature.

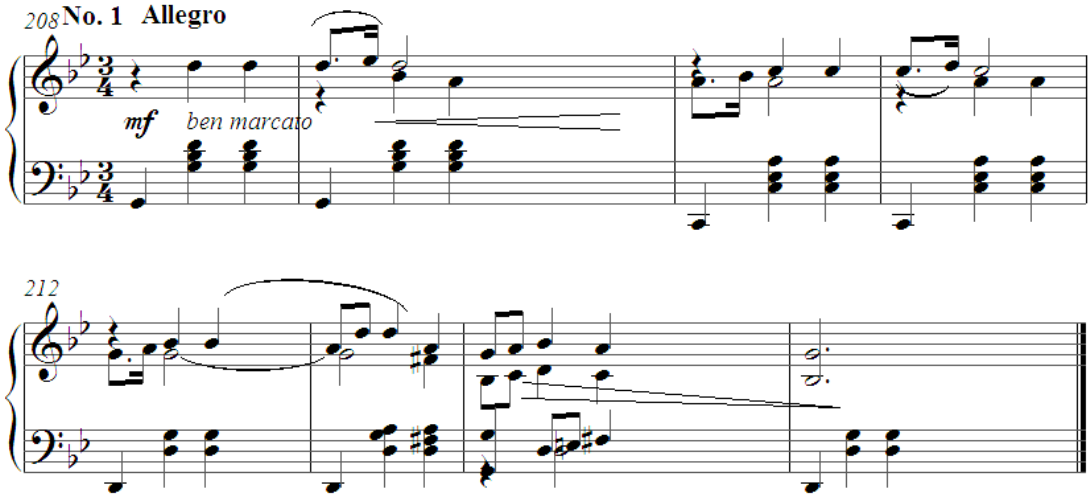


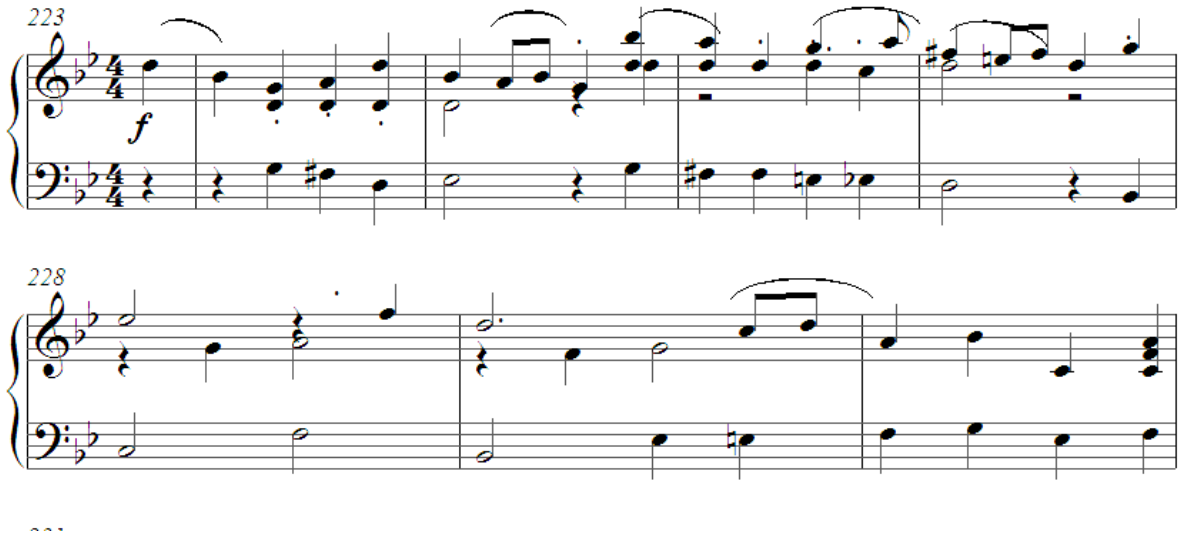
- Having identified the time signature the candidate will be asked to identify note values within one of the bars
- To recognize a rhythmic or melodic change to a four bar phrase in a major or a minor key played twice by the examiner with the change being made in the second playing.





- To identify certain features of a piece played by the examiner. The features will be confined to dynamics (*p, f etc.);* gradation of tone (cresc, dim, etc); articulation, (staccato or legato); tempo changes and recognition or major and minor tonality.

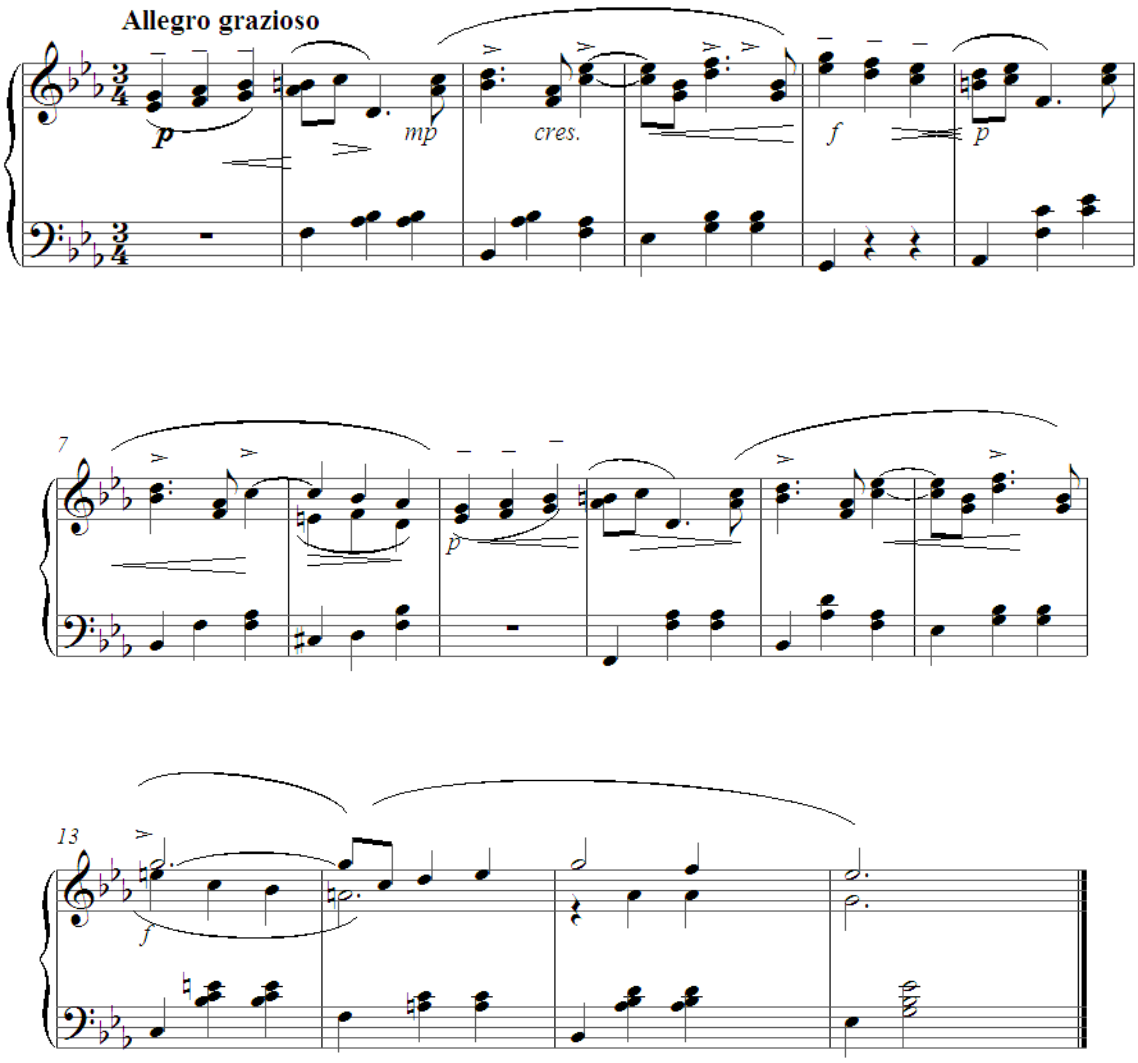



223
f
228

Grade 6

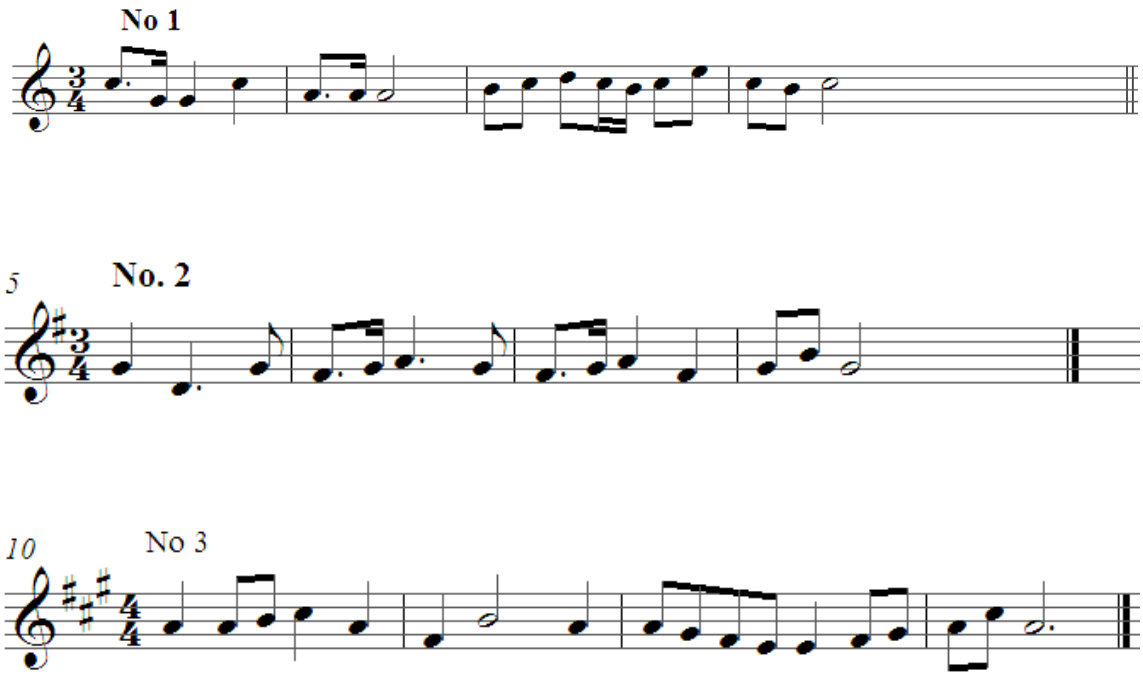
Sight Reading and Comprehension:

To sight read a piece of a degree of difficulty suitable to this grade, hands together in any major or minor key. Example below:-



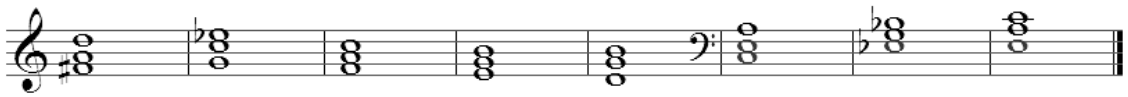
Aural Observation:

1. Having listened to a four bar phrase in 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8 played by the examiner to clap back the rhythm and identify the time signature.

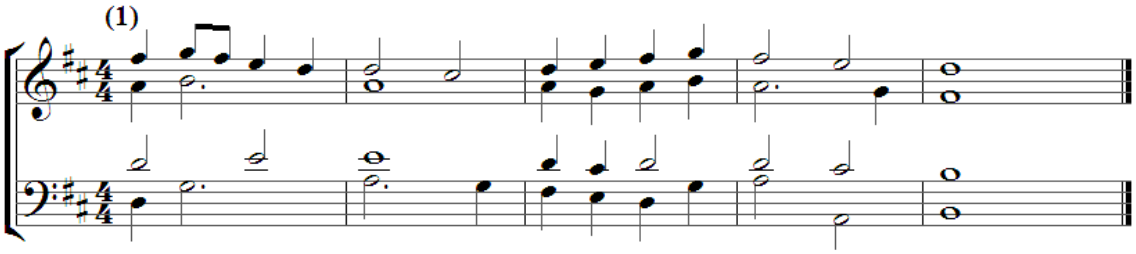


2. To identify time values within the same passage.

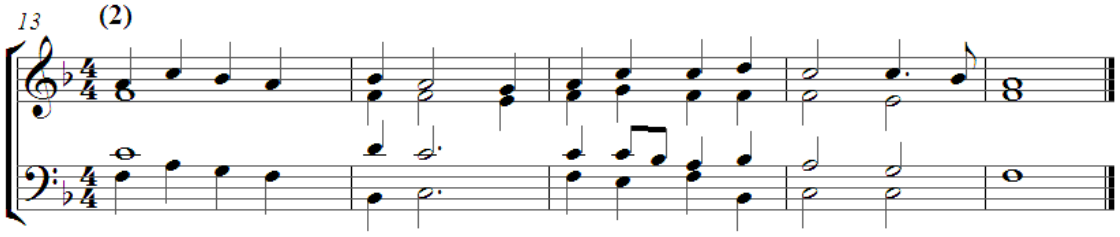
3. To recognize a triad as major or minor, root position or 1st. inversion



4. To recognize a cadence as either perfect or interrupted.

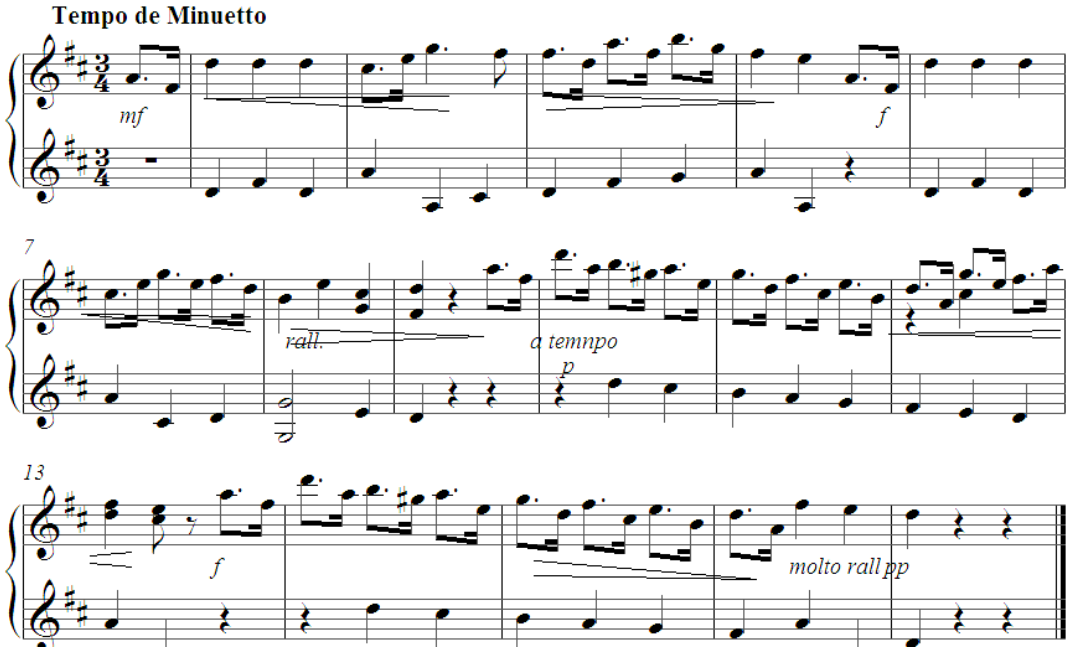


Interrupted



Perfect

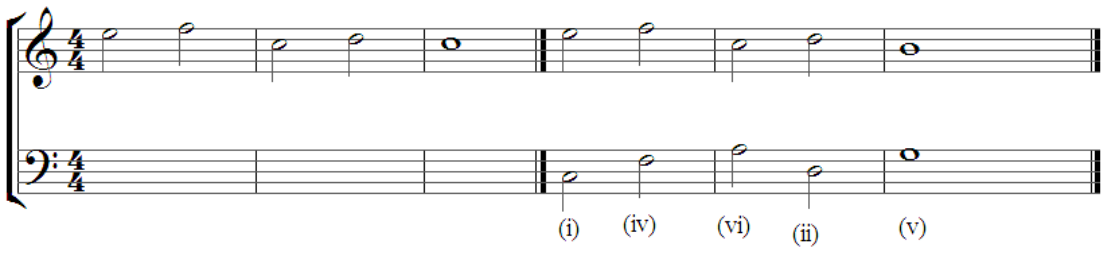
5. Observation test on a piece played by the examiner. Questions may include tempo, tempo changes, dynamics, gradations of tone, articulation and recognition of tonality as major or minor



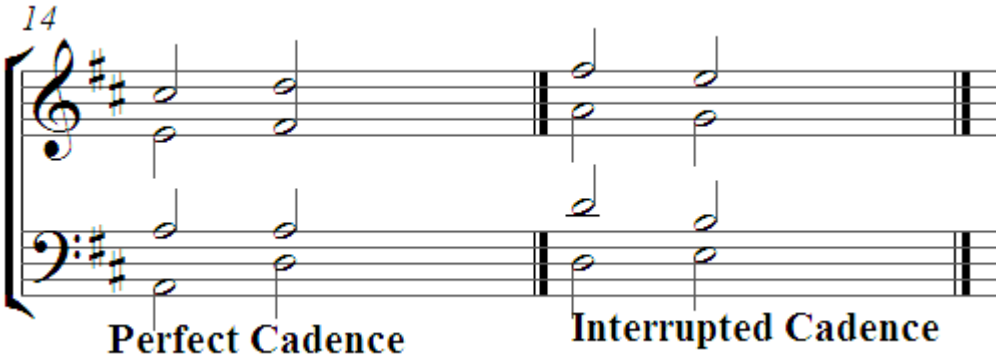
(i) Describe the opening bars, dynamics etc.
(ii) Are there any tempo changes in the piece
(iii) Describe the ending, dynamics, tempo changes etc

Candidates may select the following as an alternative to the above tests:

- To indicate suitable chords for a series of 5 notes in the treble at the keyboard, in the keys of C, G, D or F major

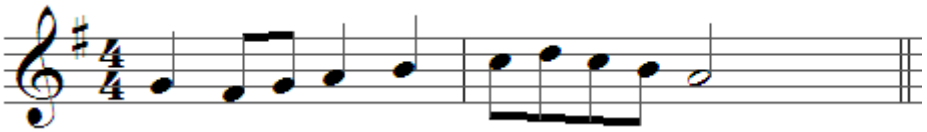


- To harmonize a perfect or interrupted cadence in the key of C, G,D or F major

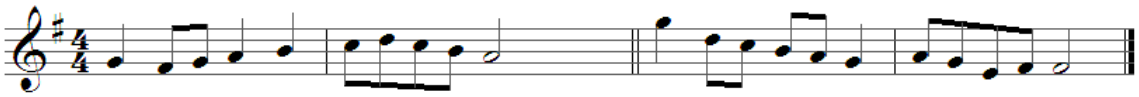


To compose an answering phrase to a given two bar melody in the key of C or G major at the keyboard

Given phrase:-



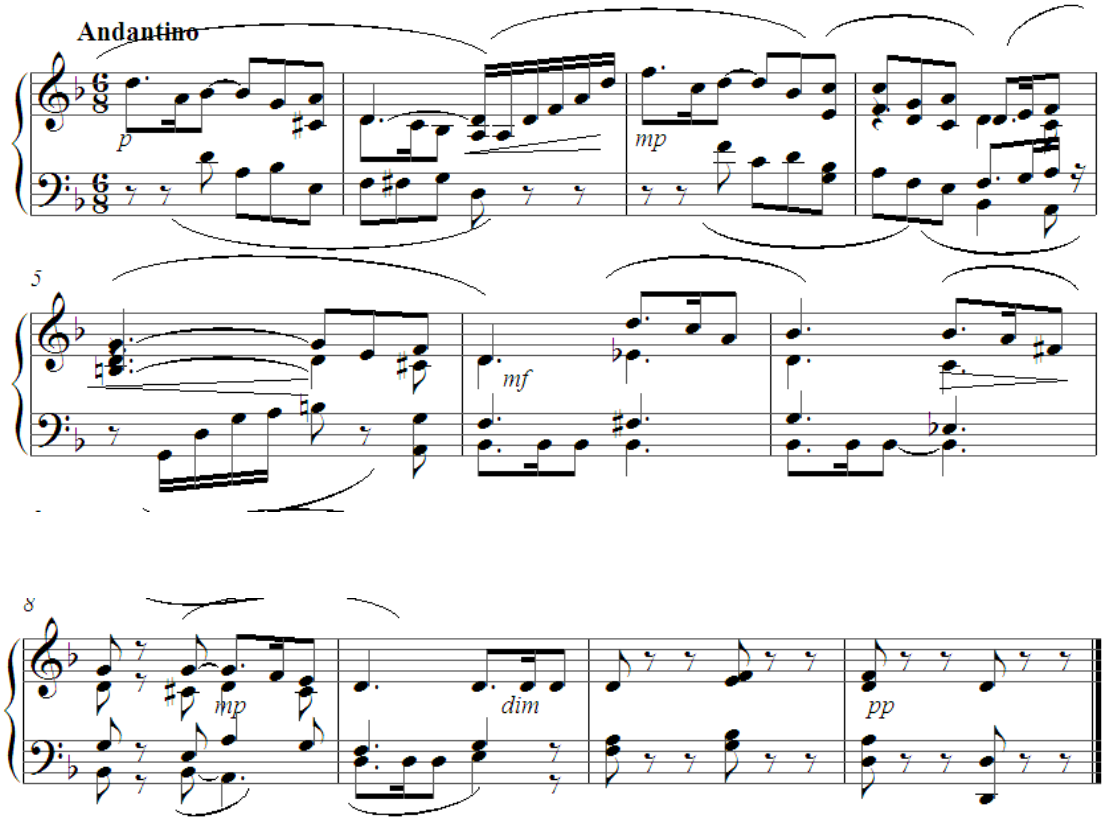
Sample Answering phrase



Grade 7

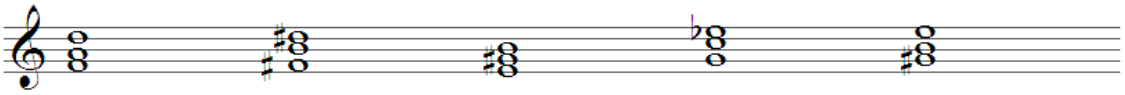
Sight reading and comprehension:

- To sight read a piece of a degree of difficulty suitable to this grade, hands together in any major or minor key. Example below.

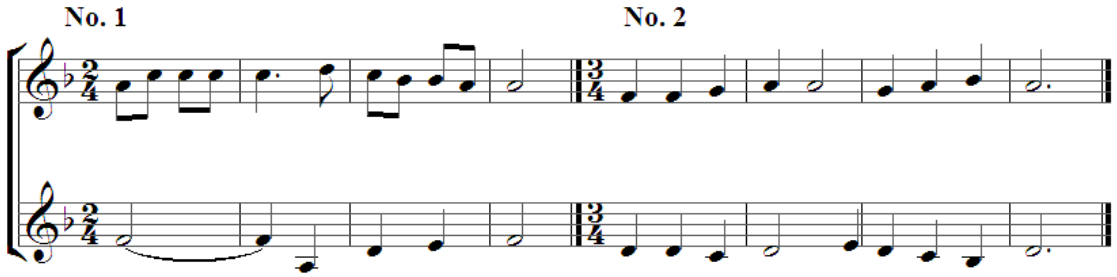


Aural Observation:

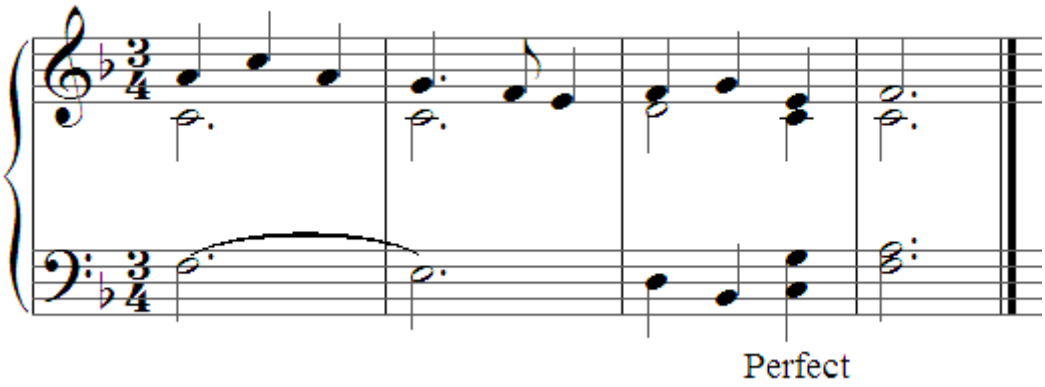
1. To state whether a triad is major or minor and whether it is in root position, 1st or 2nd inversion. 3 examples may be given

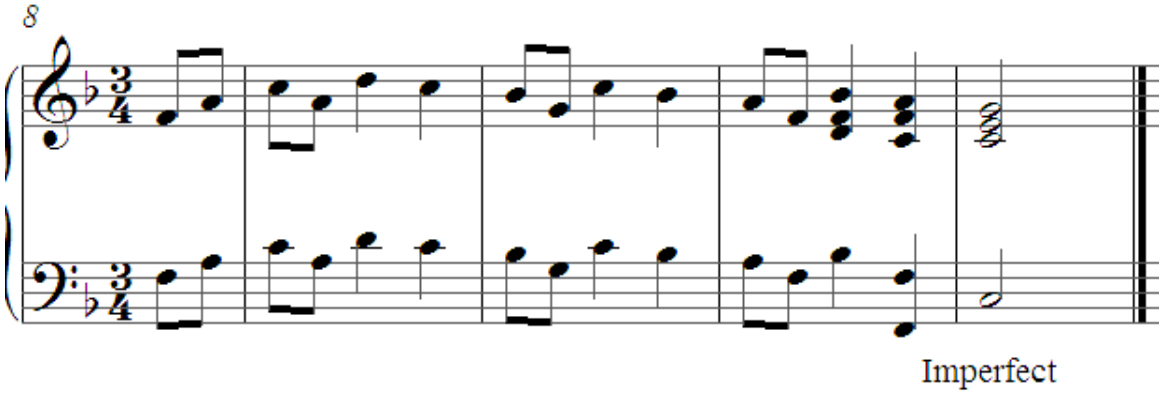


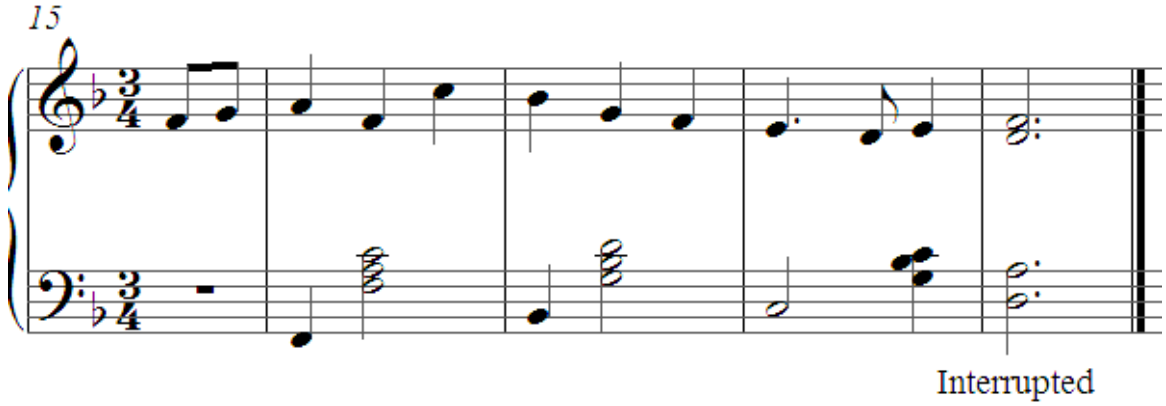
2. To sing the upper part of a 2 part phrase played twice by the examiner.



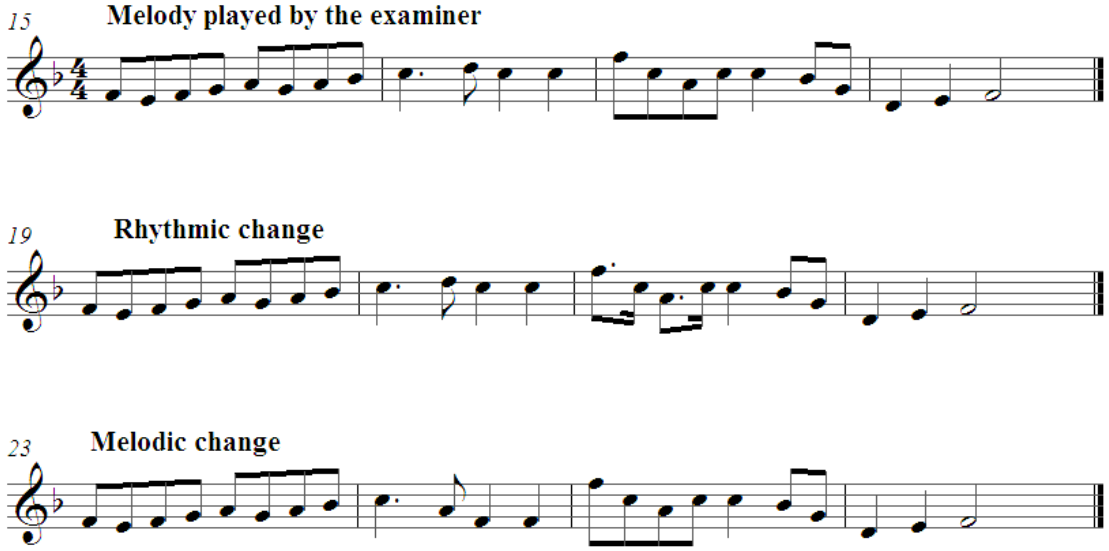
3. To recognize the final cadence of a passage as either perfect, imperfect or interrupted,



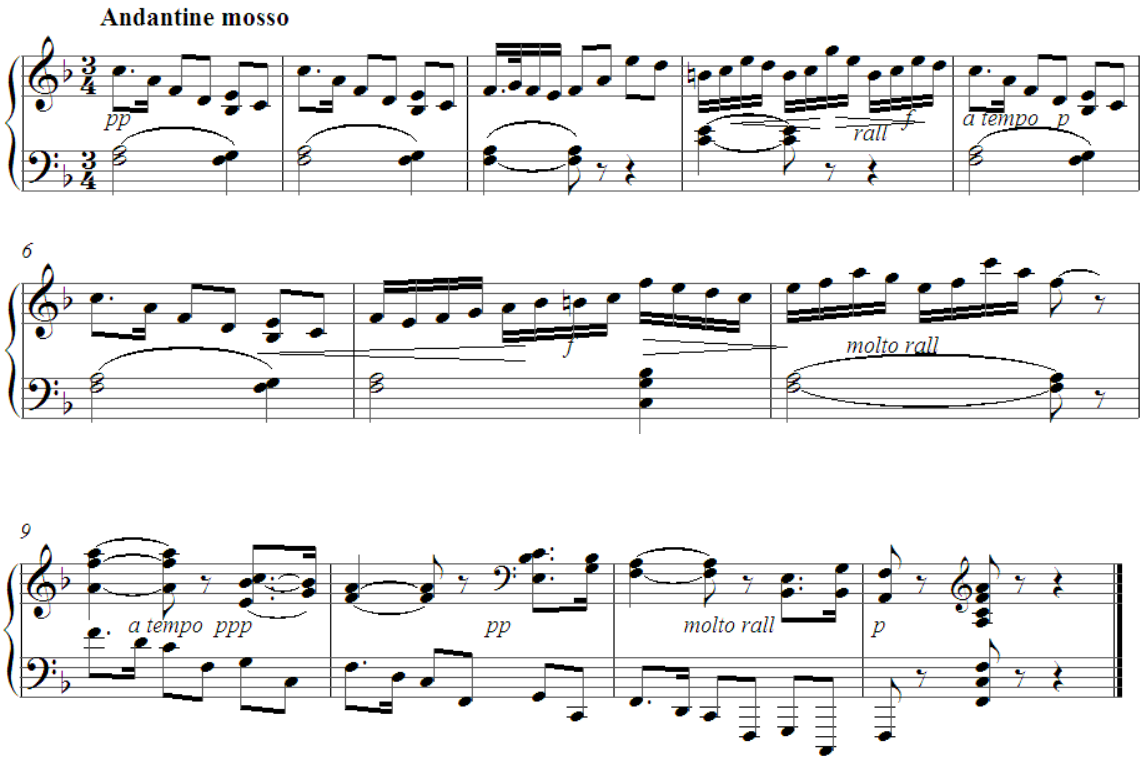




4. To identity a melodic or rhythmic change in a short phrase played twice by the examiner



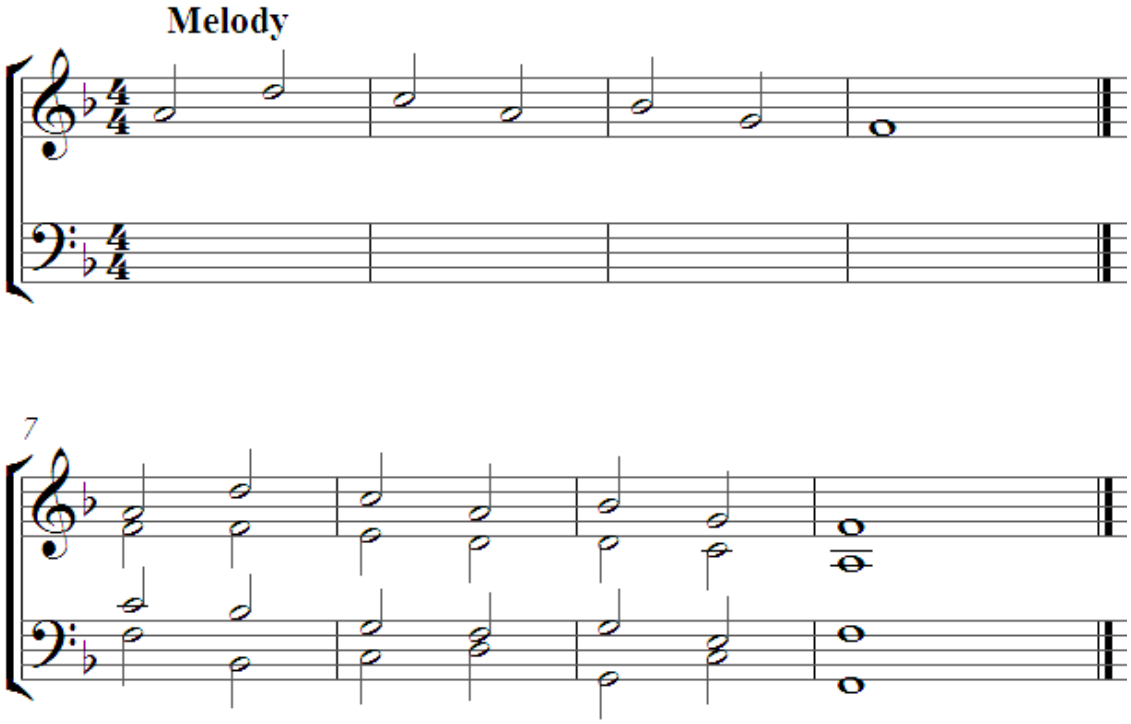
5. Observation test on a piece played by the examiner. Question may include tempo, tempo changes, dynamics, gradations of tone, articulation etc



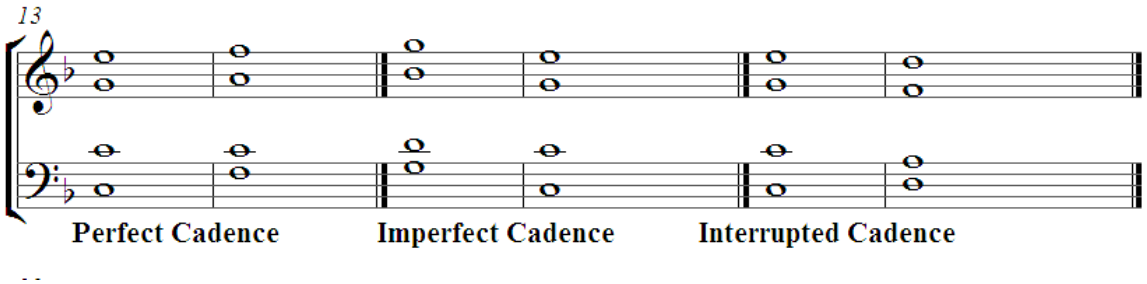
(i) Describe the tempo of this piece
(ii) Are there any variations of tempo?
(iii) Describe the range of dynamics used.
(iv) Are the changes in dynamic level gradual or abrupt
(v) Is the piece mainly legato or staccato

Candidates may select the following as an alternative to the above tests:-

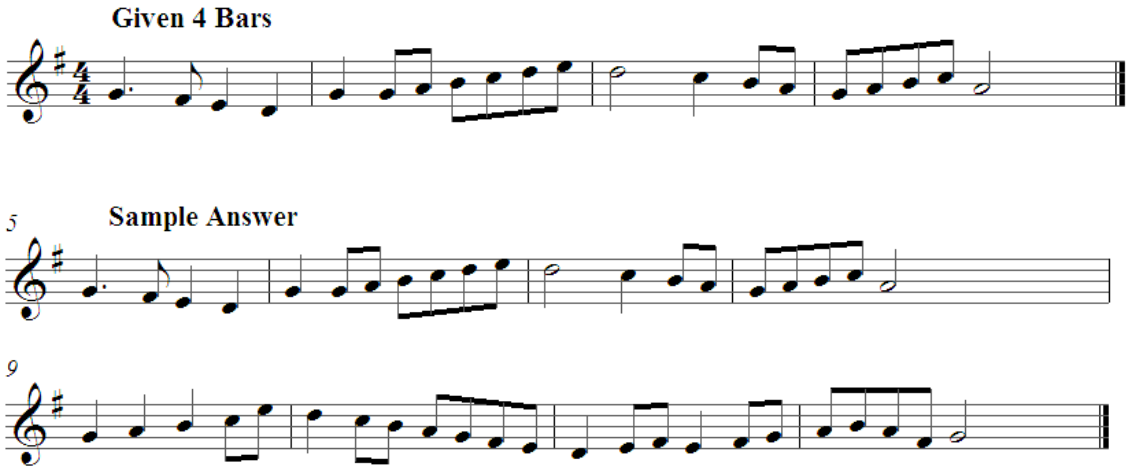
- To harmonize a short melody at the keyboard in the keys of C, G, D or F major.



- To harmonize a perfect, imperfect cadence or interrupted cadence in the key of C, G,D or F major



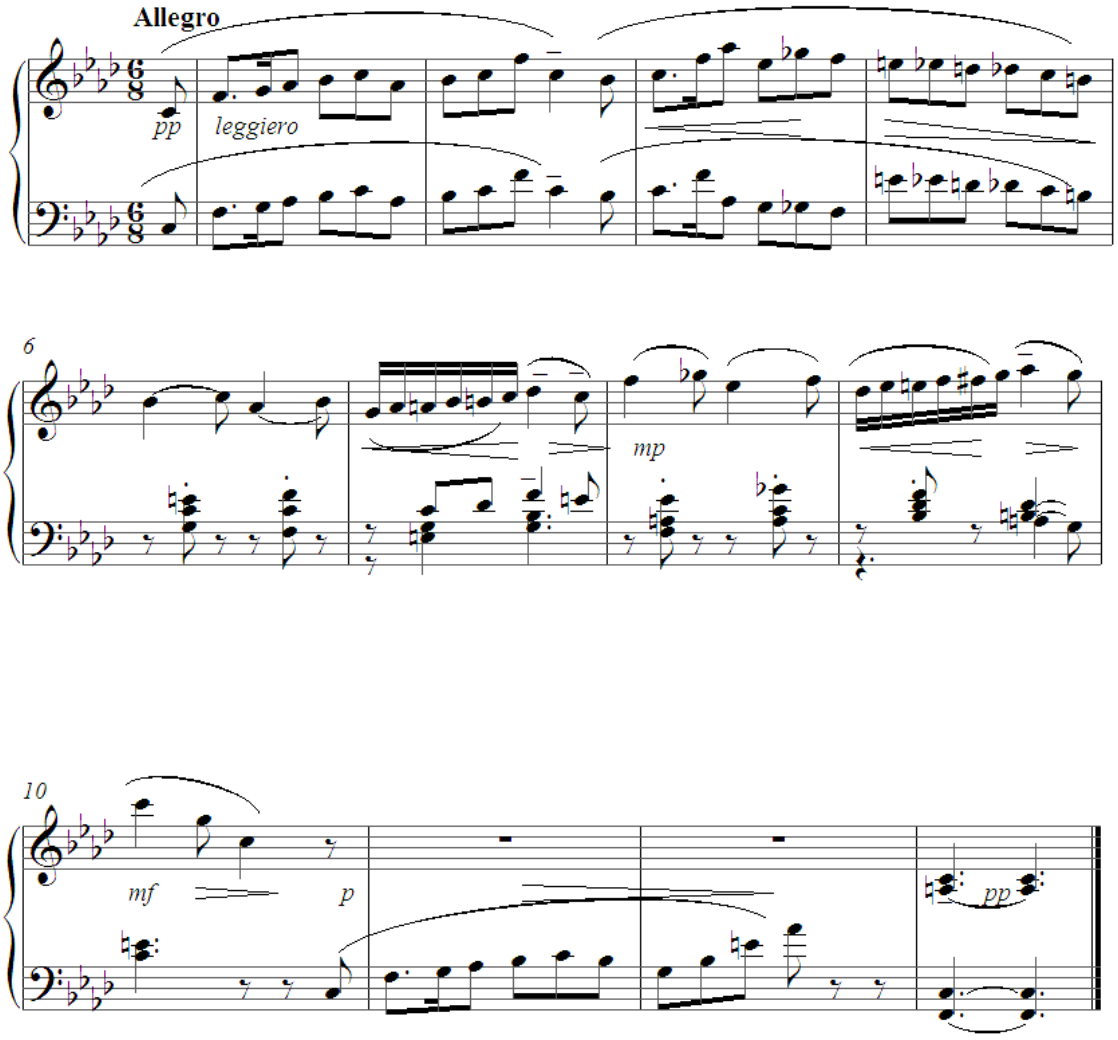
To compose an answering phrase to a given four bar melody in the key of C or G major at the keyboard



Grade 8

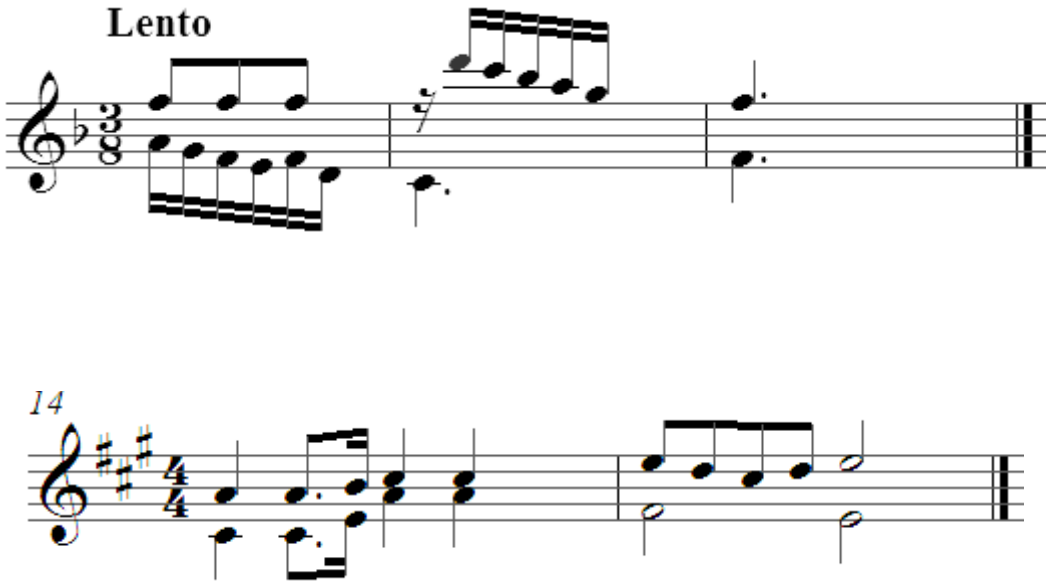
Sight reading and comprehension:

- To sight read a piece of a degree of difficulty suitable to this grade, hands together in any major or minor key. A high degree of accuracy will be expected. Example below.

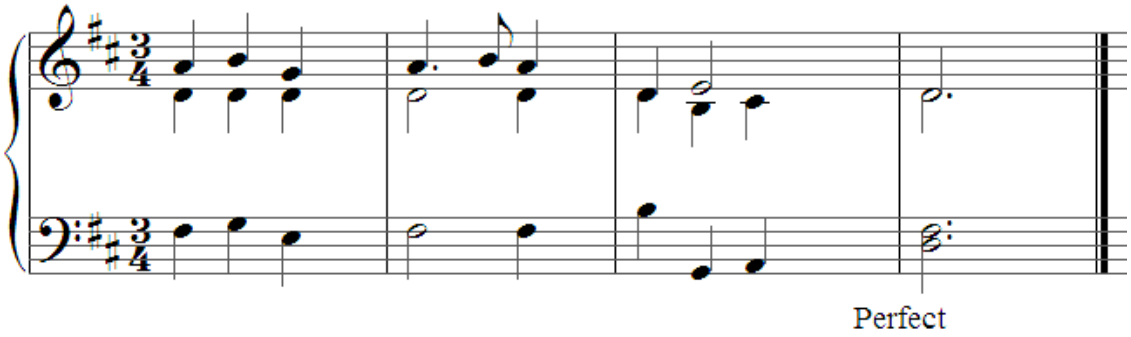


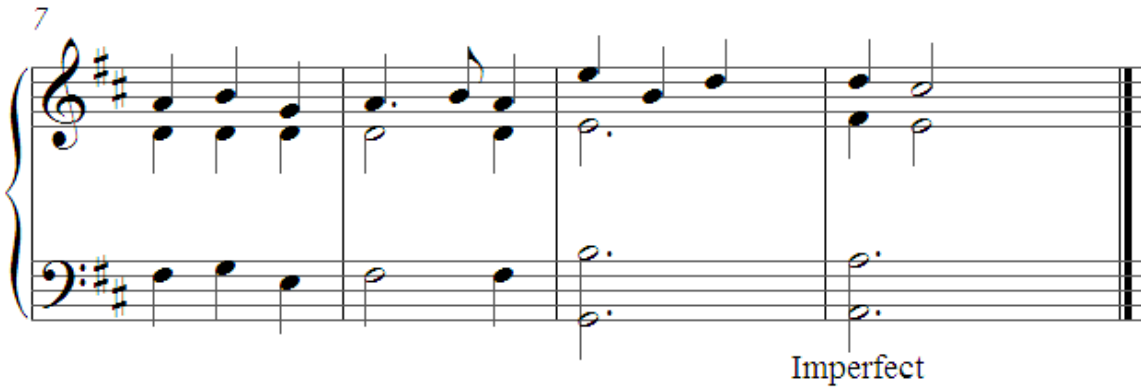
Aural Observation:

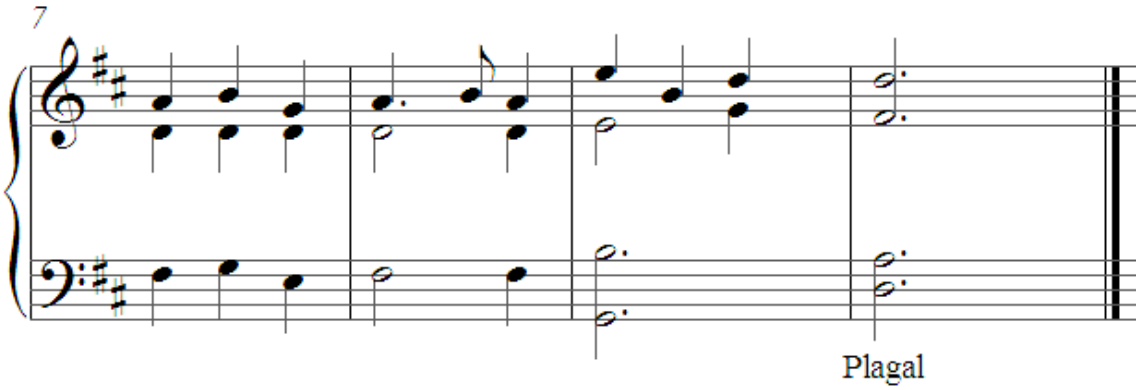
1. To sing the lower part of a two part phrase played twice by the examiner.

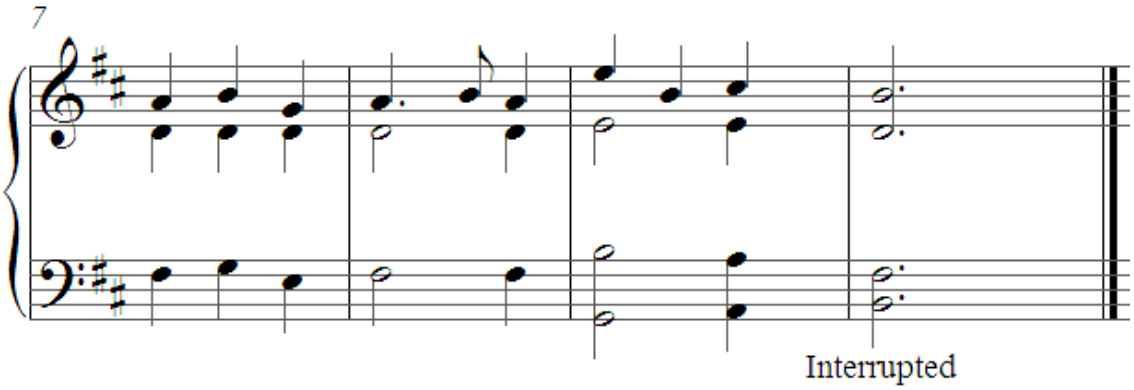


2. To recognize the final cadence of piece as either, perfect, imperfect, plagal or interrupted.

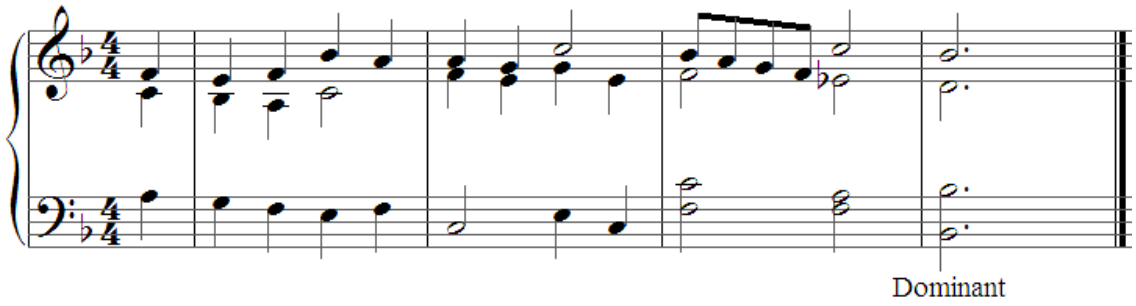


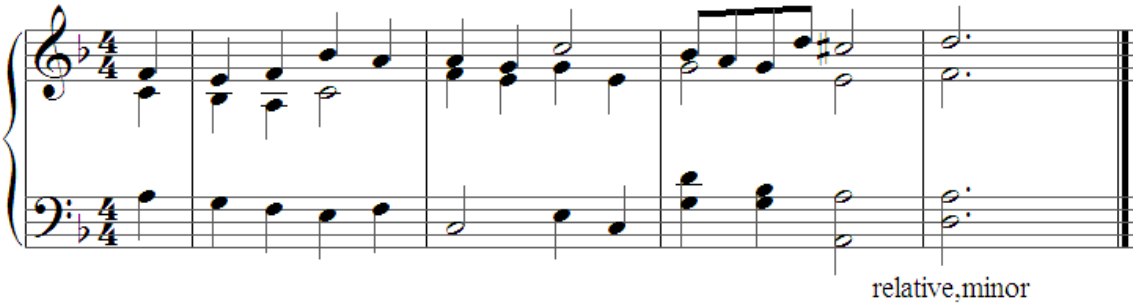

7
Imperfect

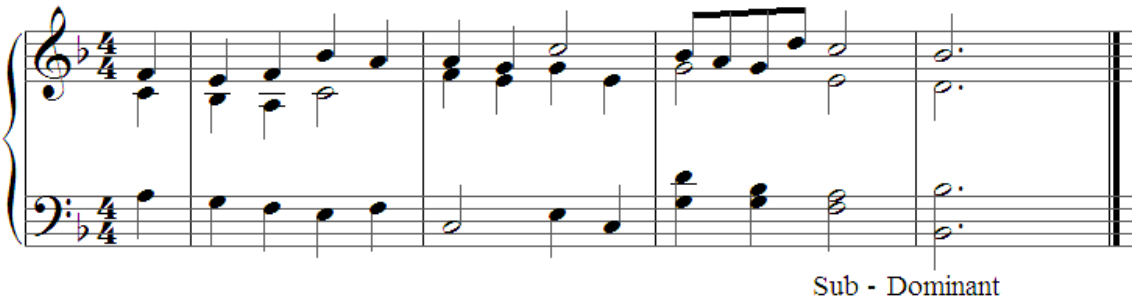

7
Plagal


7
Interrupted

3. To recognize a modulation from a major key to its Dominant, Sub Dominant or relative minor.

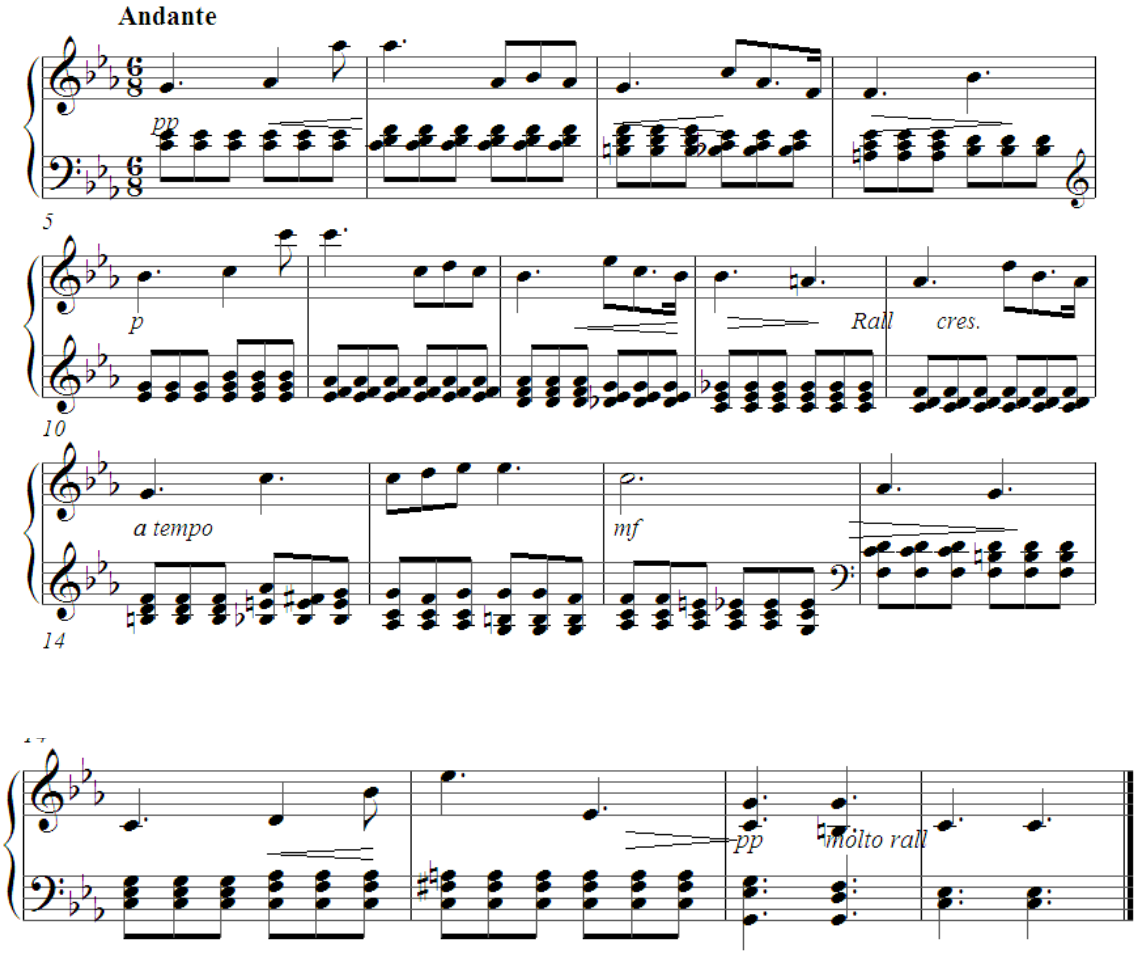






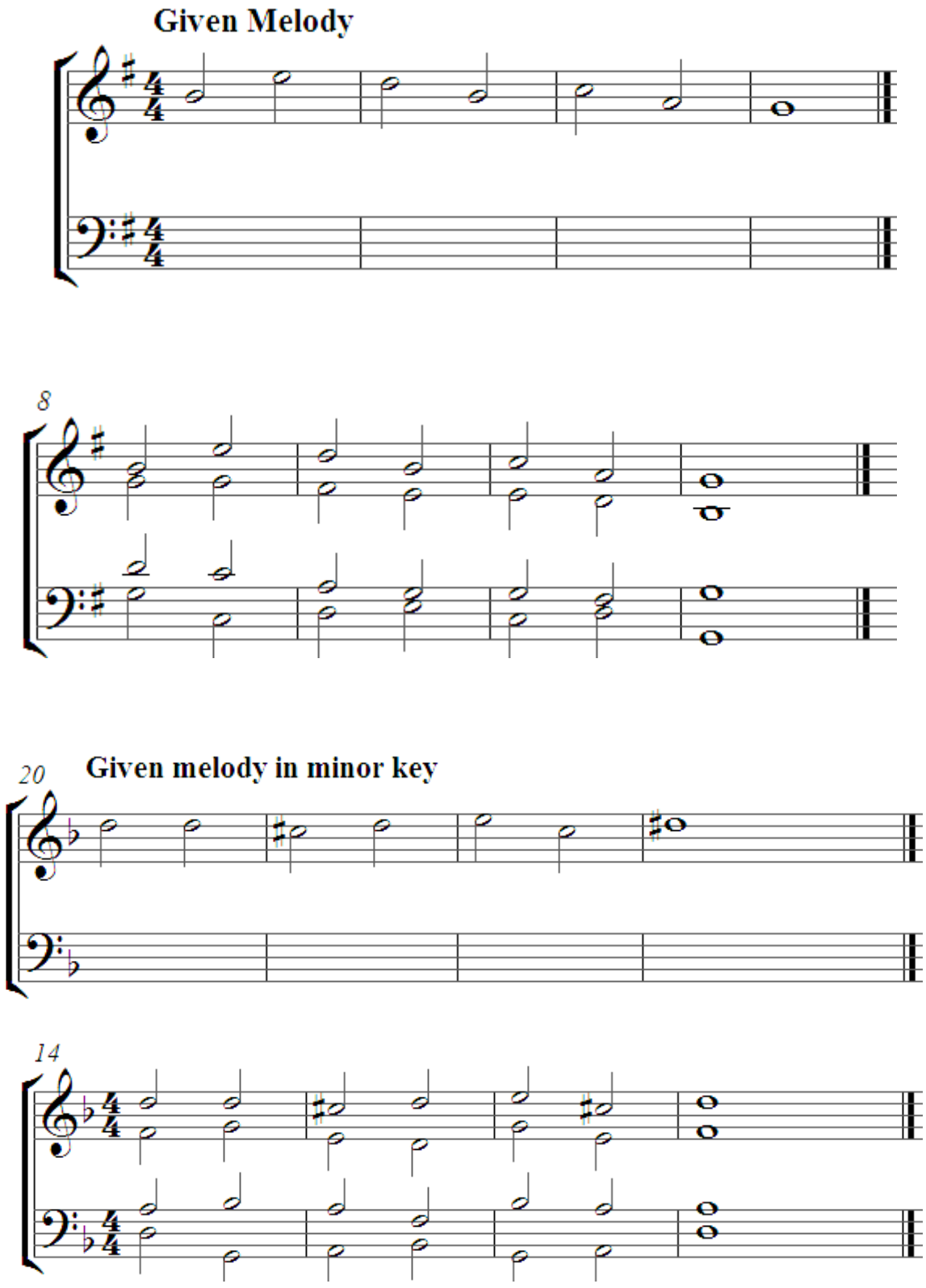
4. Candidates will be given a copy of a short piece that will be played by the examiner. After a further playing the candidate will be asked to point out where certain features occur i. e, crescendos, diminuendos, tempo changes and usual marks of expression that should be understood by the candidate.

Candidate's copy

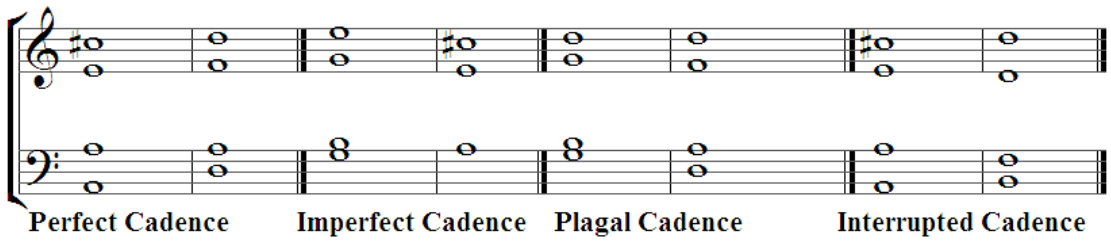

Andante
pp
5
p
Rall
cres.
10
a tempo
mf
14
pp
molto rall

Candidates may select the following as an alternative to the above tests:

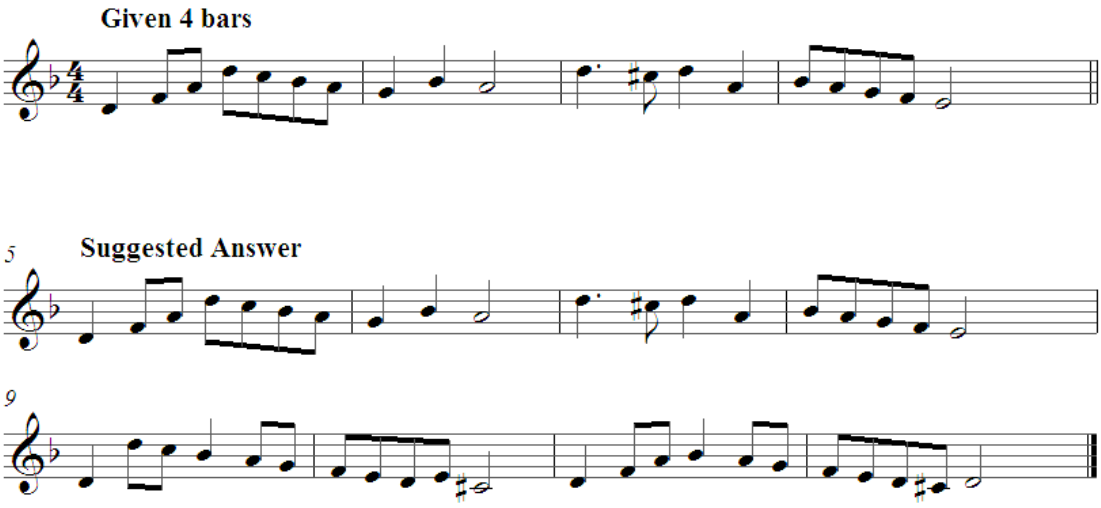
- To harmonize a four bar melody at the keyboard in the keys of C, G, D or F major, A or D Minor



- To harmonize a perfect, imperfect, plagal or interrupted cadence in the key of C, G,D or F major, A or D minor



- To compose an answering phrase at the keyboard, to a given four bar melody in the key of C or G major, A or D minor, of a higher standard than the previous Grade.



Choice piece

Students may choose ONE piece as an alternative to ONE piece on the recommended list for their grade. Please read the following guidelines carefully.

Rationale for the choice piece:

- Teachers are best placed to select the most appropriate repertoire to motivate their students.
- Students learn best when given a choice[2]
- Students can present repertoire learnt for other performance situations, such as concerts, competitions, or Junior and Leaving cert practical's.
- It is recognised that there is no hierarchy of musical genres. Students may present music that is of personal interest to their own ethnic or popular culture.
- Popular music is ubiquitous, and part of today's society. Consequently young students relate to it and should have an option of presenting it for assessment.
- Musical taste is personal. Consequently, a choice of repertoire will cater for individual learner interests and needs.

Selecting the choice piece:-

- Pieces presented must be of an appropriate standard, technically and musically, for the grade
- Most teachers can judge the appropriate level, but if in doubt, there are many graded repertoire books from which to choose (see a list of suggested books below – although the repertoire is not confined to these)
- Students may present a piece from any genre (classical, jazz, popular or traditional)
- A copy of the music must be presented to the examiner on the day of the exams. Students must have original copies, but a photocopy may be presented to the examiner for the exam.
- Sheet music from legal web sites may be used but must be licensed to the student or teacher.
- Students will be penalised for presenting repertoire which is not deemed appropriate for the grade level.
- Students may not present the same choice piece for two different exams.
- Own compositions will not be accepted.

List of suggested books for grades 1-5

Up Grade! Light relief between grades – Pam Wedgwood - Faber Music

After hours for solo piano – Pam Wedgwood – Faber Music

[2] Eric Jensen: *Teaching with the brain in mind (2002)*

Making the grades series – Chester Music

Micro jazz series 1 – 3 – Christopher Norton – Boosey and Hawkes

Essential Film Themes – Wise Music

Hours with the Masters series – Ed. Dorothy Bradley – Bosworth

Bastien Piano series – Neil A Kjos Music Company

Classics to modern's series – Consolidated Music Sales

30 Children's pieces – Kabalevsky – Boosey and Hawkes

Teaching Notes

Learning a musical instrument should be an enjoyable experience for the student. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the student should look forward to their weekly lesson at all times.

Care should be taken to cover all aspects of music on a regular basis. While it is difficult to incorporate each element into a weekly lesson it is not good practice to leave sight reading, aural training etc. until a few weeks before an exam. They should be all covered on a regular basis to ensure proper development. Above all, bear in mind that the exam is only one element of the student's musical development and should be used as part of a broader, rounded curriculum.

Posture:

Correct sitting at the piano is of vital importance from the very beginning. Demonstrating correct hand position over five finger exercises at introductory level, and being taught legato playing, form the very basic elements of good practice for future performance.

Rhythm:

Rhythm is an essential element in all music. The inclusion of French Time names in our new syllabus as an aid to developing rhythm, is an excellent stepping stone to rhythmic accuracy in the performance of a a student's set works.

Scales and Technique:

Scales and Technique are imperative to the student's musical development. The practice of scales, technical studies and musical sentences should be an integral part of every lesson and of each daily practice session. Scale work develops good general coordination and finger technique which will benefit the student at all stages of their studies.

Aural Training:

An astute ear should be fostered with the systematic development of aural training. From the early stages aural training should be developed and incorporated at the weekly lesson. It is important that the student learns to listen and progress from the earliest stages in the development of pitch and rhythm. Listening to music away from their studies helps develop the ear. Clapping through rhythms and excerpts of music, singing back parts of tunes, joining a choir, band or orchestra are painless ways to get in some aural practice between lessons.

Sight Reading:

Sight reading should be encouraged from a student's early development. Where students develop good sight reading habits they become adept at working on their own initiative and exploring repertoire themselves. If a student suggests a piece they would like to study, try as far as possible to encourage them if you think it is a wise choice for their stage of development.

Performance:

In the study of pieces care should be taken to have fingering and rhythm correct from the start. If technique and scales etc have been fostered at the early stages, students should have little trouble getting fingering right from the beginning. Always try to incorporate some interpretation into pieces from the earliest grades. Phrasing, melodic line, dynamics and observance of tempo should be part of the study of all pieces.

Children from an early stage should be encouraged to play from memory. This develops confidence in performance and enables the student to give their full attention to the details of dynamics, phrasing and general interpretation overall.

Exams

A teacher should remember that the first music exam is likely to be the student's first exam experience. Therefore, every effort should be made to have them prepared as well as possible for the event. All aspects should be covered well in advance of the exam date.

The exam serves as a motivation and inspiration for the student, working from a carefully structured syllabus towards a definite goal. It is an assessment by an independent musician who has a very objective viewpoint of the work.

- It is important for the teacher to check all the requirements in the current syllabus as details can change from time to time
- Choosing suitable pieces for the candidate is very important, as each teacher is aware of the capabilities and individuality of their pupils.
- Encouraging pupils to perform their pieces to a friendly audience (family, friends and other students) and perhaps having little concerts a few weeks before the exam helps to dispel exam "nerves" on the day
- Reminding a pupil how long there is before the exam and planning out their work accordingly helps to have a young child less stressed about practice on the run up to the exam.
- Most candidates are nervous on the day and a cheerful no fuss attitude from accompanying adults goes a long way to relaxing the candidate.

From the Examiner's Side of the Desk

In judging the candidate the examiner takes a number of things into consideration. Firstly, posture at the instrument is of utmost importance together with finger position at the piano. Accuracy of notes is expected and additional marks are gained by paying attention to the finer aspects of the music, namely, dynamics, melodic line, gradation of tone, tempo etc.

Most candidates are a little nervous on the day. Parents and teachers should not keep reminding the candidates of this as to do so will only make the matter worse. Making a sense of occasion out of the day helps dispel nerves etc.

To an examiner every mark has its own significance. They hope that the comments will encourage and reflect the mark.

It is worth remembering that the examiner can only comment on what they hear in the exam room, and their assessment of the candidate is based on their achievement and not their potential.

All examiners want the candidates to do their best and although they are making assessments in a formal situation, it is important to remember that examiners are human being and always feel for the less confident performer and share the pleasure and satisfaction when all goes well.

Examiners are always aware that the achievement for the less talented candidate is sometimes more than that of those for whom music comes naturally.

Overall, the music exam should be an enjoyable experience and the result a just reward for the work done.

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