AURAL TESTS: included in the Practical exams for all subjects

Listening lies at the heart of all good music-making. Developing aural awareness is fundamental to musical training because having a 'musical ear' impacts on all aspects of musicianship. Singing, both silently in the head and out loud, is one of the best ways to develop the 'musical ear'. It connects the internal imagining of sound, the 'inner ear', with the external creation of it, without the necessity of mechanically having to 'find the note' on an instrument (important though that connection is). By integrating aural activities in imaginative ways in the lesson, preparation for the aural tests within an exam will be a natural extension of what is already an essential part of the learning experience.

In the exam
Aural tests are an integral part of all Practical graded exams.

The tests are administered by the examiner from the piano. For any test that requires a sung response, pitch rather than vocal quality is the object. The examiner will be happy to adapt to the vocal range of the candidate, whose responses may be sung to any vowel (or consonant followed by a vowel), hummed or whistled (and at a different octave, if appropriate).

Assessment
A number of tests allow for a second attempt or for an additional playing by the examiner, if necessary. Also, where there is hesitation on the part of the candidate, the examiner will be ready to prompt, if necessary. In any such cases, this will affect the assessment.

Further information on how the aural tests are assessed can be found in the guide for candidates, teachers and parents, *These Music Exams*, available to download from www.abrsm.org/exams.

Specimen tests
Examples of the tests are given in *Specimen Aural Tests* and *Aural Training in Practice*, available for purchase from music retailers and from www.abrsm.org/publications. See also 'Minor modifications (from 2011)' below.

Deaf or hearing-impaired candidates
Deaf or hearing-impaired candidates may opt to respond to alternative tests in place of the standard tests, if requested at the time of entry. The syllabus for these tests is available free on request from ABRSM (E accesscoordinator@abrsm.ac.uk). Examples of the alternative tests are available for purchase from Allegro Music (T +44 (0)1885 490375; E sales@allegro.co.uk). The minor modifications (from 2011) do not affect the alternative aural tests.

Minor modifications (from 2011)
Minor modifications to some aural tests take effect worldwide from 1 January 2011. Full details are available at www.abrsm.org/aural. Revised editions of *Specimen Aural Tests* and *Aural Training in Practice*, reflecting the modified parameters and containing new practice material, are available for purchase from music retailers and from www.abrsm.org/

publications. (*Specimen Aural Tests* available July 2010; *Aural Training in Practice* available January 2011.) Descriptions of the aural tests, including modifications, are given on the following pages. Please note that rewording for greater clarity has been made to many of the descriptions, even where the tests are unchanged.

Aural Tests GRADE 1

A **To clap the pulse of a piece played by the examiner, and to identify whether it is in two time or three time.** The examiner will start playing the passage, and the candidate should join in as soon as possible, clapping in time and giving a louder clap on the strong beats. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time or three time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

B **To sing as 'echoes' three phrases played by the examiner.** The phrases will be two bars long, in a major key, and within the range of tonic–mediant. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note (the tonic) and then count in two bars. After the examiner has played each phrase, the candidate should sing back the echo without a pause, keeping in time.

C **To identify where a change in pitch occurs during a phrase played by the examiner.** The phrase will be two bars long, in a major key, and the change will affect only one of the notes. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the tonic and then count in two bars. The examiner will play the phrase twice, making the change in the second playing, after which the candidate should state whether the change was near the beginning or near the end. If necessary, the examiner will play both versions of the phrase again (although this will affect the assessment).

D **To 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 will be: dynamics (loud/quiet, or sudden/gradual changes); the second will be articulation (smooth/detached).

Aural Tests GRADE 2

A **To clap the pulse of a piece played by the examiner, and to identify whether it is in two time or three time.** The examiner will start playing the passage, and the candidate should join in as soon as possible, clapping in time and giving a louder clap on the strong beats. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time or three time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

B **To sing as 'echoes' three phrases played by the examiner.** The phrases will be two bars long, in a major key, and within the range of tonic–dominant. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note (the tonic) and then count in two bars. After the examiner has played each phrase, the candidate should sing back the echo without a pause, keeping in time.

C **To identify a change in either pitch or rhythm during a phrase played by the examiner.** The phrase will be two bars long, in a major key. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the tonic and then count in two bars. The examiner will play the phrase twice, making the change in the second playing, after which the candidate should identify the change by describing it, or singing/clapping. If necessary, the examiner will play both versions of the phrase again (although this will affect the assessment).

D **To 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 will be *one* of the following: dynamics (loud/quiet, or sudden/gradual changes), articulation (smooth/detached); the second will be tempo (becoming slower/faster, or staying the same).

Aural Tests GRADE 3

A **To clap the pulse of a piece played by the examiner, and to identify whether it is in two time, three time or four time.** The examiner will start playing the passage, and the candidate should join in as soon as possible, clapping in time and giving a louder clap on the strong beats. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time, three time or four time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

B **To sing as 'echoes' three phrases played by the examiner.** The phrases will be two bars long, in a major or minor key, and within the range of an octave. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. After the examiner has played each phrase, the candidate should sing back the echo without a pause, keeping in time.

C **To identify a change in either pitch or rhythm during a phrase played by the examiner.** The phrase will be up to four bars long, in a major or minor key. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the tonic and then count in two bars. The examiner will play the phrase twice, making the change in the second playing, after which the candidate should identify the change by describing it, or singing/clapping. If necessary, the examiner will play both versions of the phrase again (although this will affect the assessment).

D **To 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 will be *one* of the following: dynamics (loud/quiet, or sudden/gradual changes), articulation (smooth/detached), tempo (becoming slower/faster, or staying the same); the second will be tonality (major/minor key).

Aural Tests GRADE 4

A **To sing or play from memory a melody played twice by the examiner.** The melody will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. (If the candidate chooses to play, the examiner will also name the key-chord and the starting note, as appropriate for the instrument.) If necessary, the examiner will play the melody again and allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

B **To sing five notes from score in free time.** The candidate may choose to sing from treble or bass clef. The notes will be within the range of a third above and below the tonic in the key of C, F or G major. The test will begin and end on the tonic and will not contain intervals greater than a third. First the examiner will name and play the key-chord and the starting note. If necessary, the examiner will help the candidate by playing and identifying the correct note if any note is sung at the wrong pitch.

C(i) **To 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 will be *one* of the following: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality; the second will be character.

(ii) **To clap the rhythm of the notes in an extract from the same piece, and to identify whether it is in two time, three time or four time.** The examiner will play the extract twice (unharmonized), after which the candidate should clap back the rhythm. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time, three time or four time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

Aural Tests GRADE 5

A **To sing or play from memory a melody played twice by the examiner.** The melody will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. (If the candidate chooses to play, the examiner will also name the key-chord and the starting note, as appropriate for the instrument.) If necessary, the examiner will play the melody again and allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

B **To sing six notes from score in free time.** The candidate may choose to sing from treble or bass clef. The notes will be within the range of a fifth above and a fourth below the tonic, in a major key with up to two sharps or flats. The test will begin and end on the tonic and will not contain intervals greater than a third, except for the rising fourth from dominant to tonic. First the examiner will name and play the key-chord and the starting note. If necessary, the examiner will help the candidate by playing and identifying the correct note if any note is sung at the wrong pitch.

C(i) **To 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 will be *one* of the following: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality, character; the second will be style and period.

(ii) **To clap the rhythm of the notes in an extract from the same piece, and to identify whether it is in two time, three time or four time.** The examiner will play the extract twice (unharmonized), after which the candidate should clap back the rhythm. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time, three time or four time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

Aural Tests GRADE 6

A **To sing or play from memory the *upper* part of a two-part phrase played twice by the examiner.** The upper part will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. (If the candidate chooses to play, the examiner will also name the key-chord and the starting note, as appropriate for the instrument.) If necessary, the examiner will play the phrase again and allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

B **To sing a melody from score, with an accompaniment played by the examiner.** The candidate may choose to sing from treble or bass clef. The melody will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will name and play the key-chord and the starting note and then give the pulse. A brief period of preparation will follow during which the candidate may sing out loud. The examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note again and then count in two bars. If necessary, the examiner will allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

C **To identify the cadence at the end of a phrase as perfect or imperfect.** The phrase will be in a major or minor key and will be played twice by the examiner. The chords forming the cadence will be in root position. Before the first playing, the examiner will play the key-chord.

D(i) **To 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 will be: texture or structure; the second will be *one* of the following: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality, character, style and period, texture/structure.

(ii) **To clap the rhythm of the notes in an extract from the same piece, and to identify whether it is in two time, three time or four time.** The examiner will play the extract twice (unharmonized), after which the candidate should clap back the rhythm. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time, three time or four time. The candidate is *not* required to state the time signature.

Aural Tests GRADE 7

A **To sing or play from memory the *lower* part of a two-part phrase played twice by the examiner.** The lower part will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. (If the candidate chooses to play, the examiner will also name the key-chord and the starting note, as appropriate for the instrument.) If necessary, the examiner will play the phrase again and allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

B **To sing the *upper* part of a two-part phrase from score, with the lower part played by the examiner.** The candidate may choose to sing from treble or bass clef. The upper part will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to four sharps or flats. First the examiner will name and play the key-chord and the starting note and then give the pulse. A brief period of preparation will follow during which the candidate may sing out loud. The examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note again and then count in two bars. If necessary, the examiner will allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

C(i) **To identify the cadence at the end of a phrase as perfect, imperfect or interrupted.** The phrase will be in a major or minor key and will be played twice by the examiner. The chords forming the cadence will be in root position. Before the first playing, the examiner will play the key-chord.

(ii) **To identify the two chords forming the above cadence.** The chords will be limited to the tonic, subdominant, dominant, dominant seventh or submediant (all in root position). First the examiner will name and play the key-chord, then play the two chords as a pair. The candidate may answer using technical names (tonic, dominant, etc.), chord numbers (I, V, etc.) or letter names (C major, G major, etc.).

(iii) **To identify whether the modulation at the end of a different passage is to the dominant, subdominant or relative minor.** The passage, played once by the examiner, will begin in a major key. First the examiner will name and play the starting key-chord. The candidate may answer using technical names (dominant, subdominant, relative minor) or the letter name of the new key.

D(i) **To answer questions about two features of a piece played by the examiner.** Before playing, the examiner will tell the candidate which two of the following features the questions will be about: dynamics, articulation, tempo, tonality, character, style and period, texture, structure.

(ii) **To clap the rhythm of the notes in an extract from the same piece, and to identify whether it is in two time, three time, four time or 6/8 time.** The examiner will play the extract twice (unharmonized), after which the candidate should clap back the rhythm. The examiner will then ask whether the music is in two time, three time, four time or 6/8 time.

Aural Tests GRADE 8

A(i) **To sing or play from memory the *lowest* part of a three-part phrase played twice by the examiner.** The lowest part will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to three sharps or flats. First the examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note and then count in two bars. (If the candidate chooses to play, the examiner will also name the key-chord and the starting note, as appropriate for the instrument.) If necessary, the examiner will play the phrase again and allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

(ii) **To identify the cadence at the end of a continuing phrase as perfect, imperfect, interrupted or plagal.** The phrase will be in a major or minor key and will be played twice by the examiner. The chords forming the cadence will be limited to the tonic (root position, first or second inversions), supertonic (root position or first inversion), subdominant (root position), dominant (root position, first or second inversions), dominant seventh (root position) or submediant (root position). Before the first playing, the examiner will play the key-chord.

(iii) **To identify the three chords (including their positions) forming the above cadential progression.** The chords will be limited to the tonic (root position, first or second inversions), supertonic (root position or first inversion), subdominant (root position), dominant (root position, first or second inversions), dominant seventh (root position) or submediant (root position). First the examiner will name and play the key-chord, then play the three chords in sequence, finally playing each chord individually, pausing for the candidate to identify it. The candidate may answer using technical names (tonic, first inversion, etc.), chord numbers (Ib, etc.) or letter names (C major in first inversion, etc.).

B **To sing the *lower* part of a two-part phrase from score, with the upper part played by the examiner.** The candidate may choose to sing from treble or bass clef. The lower part will be within the range of an octave, in a major or minor key with up to four sharps or flats. First the examiner will name and play the key-chord and the starting note and then give the pulse. A brief period of preparation will follow during which the candidate may sing out loud. The examiner will play the key-chord and the starting note again and then count in two bars. If necessary, the examiner will allow a second attempt (although this will affect the assessment).

C **To identify whether the modulations at the end of two different passages are to the dominant, subdominant or relative minor/major.** The first passage will begin in a major key and the second will begin in a minor key; each passage will be played once by the examiner. Before playing each passage, the examiner will name and play the starting key-chord. The candidate may answer using technical names (dominant*, subdominant, relative minor/major) or the letter name of the new key. (* Minor-key passages may modulate to the dominant major or minor but the candidate is only required to specify 'dominant' in such cases.)

D **To describe the characteristic features of a piece played by the examiner.** After hearing the piece, the candidate should describe any notable features (such as texture, structure, character, style and period, etc.). The examiner will prompt the candidate with questions only if this becomes necessary.