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WELCOME TO THE RSL CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE SAMPLE BOOKLET FOR PIANO

This interactive booklet is designed to give a flavour of the pieces of music contained within the graded music exam syllabus and information on the musical skills and understanding that have been benchmarked at each grade. This sits alongside the Syllabus Guide which provides full details of the graded examinations run by RSL Awards for Classical Piano.

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Purchase your digital copies of the full RSL Classical syllabus books including access to Replay, the interactive sheet music tool, on the RSL Awards shop [here...](#)



If you are using Adobe Acrobat to view this document, you will be able to hear the sample audio alongside the sample repertoire pages. Alternatively, please visit the RSL shop pages linked at each Grade by clicking the "Buy Now" button to hear the audio previews.

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THE RSL CLASSICAL PIANO BOOKS ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE KEY SECTIONS:

PERFORMANCE PIECES

Each graded exam book contains all the material you need to learn at each grade and has been benchmarked according to a set of criteria which are contained in this booklet.

The songs are also supported by a Fact File and Performance Notes. These Fact Files cover the background information on each piece of music, the composer and the compositional style. The Preparation and Performance Notes look at the song from the performers' perspective, focusing on the technical issues the learner will encounter as they navigate each track.

The books also contain Exemplar Audio Recordings to provide the learner with the ideal level of performance they need to aim for with their performance pieces.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

There are either three or four groups of technical exercise at each grade:

- Group A:** Scales
- Group B:** Broken Chords / Arpeggios
- Group C:** Technical Study

RSL Classical's Technical Exercises are designed to introduce a gradual increase of expressive techniques and ideas, that collectively enable each player to attain a true sense of musicality. Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy.

SUPPORTING TESTS

There are three types of unprepared supporting test in the exam:

1. Sight Reading or Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation. The candidate chooses which they'd like to take in their exam.

Sight Reading: Developing the ability to read and perform previously unseen material.

Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation: Performing improvised passages of melody or chordal accompaniment to a backing track. These tests are in contemporary music styles, and offer an alternative route for students interested in contemporary music.

2. Ear Tests: Melodic recall.
3. General Musicianship Questions (GMQs): Five questions asked by the examiner at the end of the exam.

Note: The grade book contains examples of the supporting tests – equivalent 'unseen' examples will be provided for the examination.

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REPERTOIRE:

The pieces of music in the graded exam book have been carefully selected to cater for a wide range of musical tastes. The syllabus includes ten pieces at each grade, selected to give students a fun, engaging and rewarding learning experience. Please refer to the syllabus guide and our website for **more details**.

Across the graded syllabus, students will find repertoire from male and female composers from both the past and present day, whose work is representative of the music of its time; music which sought to break boundaries; music which reflects the composer's own cultural heritage; work written for Film, TV, Games and Jazz; and music simply written to challenge the technical player.

Learners also have the opportunity to use Free Choice Pieces alongside this specified repertoire and the benchmarking criteria in this booklet should be used to identify whether the piece they want to use meets the required standard for the grade chosen. These pieces can be taken from our Rockschool Piano and Keys graded books and from other UK-recognised exam boards.

This is also available on our **website**.

AUDIO:

Audio is provided in the form of exemplar audio recording of the pieces, technical studies and supporting tests (where applicable). Audio files are supplied in MP3 format to enable playback on a wide range of compatible devices. Digital versions of the book include audio files in the download. Physical versions of the book include a code to download the audio at **rslawards.com/downloads**.

Students and teachers can instantly access their favourite graded music materials from their desktop, tablet or smartphone and, with Replay, have access to an interactive sheet music player with a range of playback and practice functions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The books also contain information on exam procedures, including online examination entry, marking schemes, information on Free Choice Pieces and any performance and technical guidance for each grade.



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EXAMS:

When they are ready, candidates can enter for the following types of exam:

Graded Music Exam

Candidates perform Three Pieces; a selection of Technical Exercises; and a series of Unseen Tests.

Performance Certificate

Candidates perform Five Pieces only.

Exams can be booked as a face-to-face exam or recorded video exam and are also available in some centres as a live-streamed video exam.

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Learners can take their exam at one of our Public Exam Venues or, should your venue meet certain criteria, we can convene a private exam day at your venue for your students. Find out more [here...](#)

ASSESSMENT:

Candidates are assessed against specific Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria which are detailed in full in the Syllabus Guide and on our [website](#).

We have also included a summary of the Assessment Criteria in this booklet.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

There are three learning outcomes in RSL Awards graded music exams:

1. Be able to perform music in a range of musical styles.
2. Be able to demonstrate technical ability on an instrument/voice through responding to set technical demands.
3. Be able to demonstrate musical understanding through a range of set tests.

WHAT ARE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA?

Assessment Criteria are how we assess the learning outcomes.

- Assessment Criteria are how we assess the learning outcomes.
- They are applied to evidence musical outcomes at progressing grades.
- Each criterion is equally weighted.
- Each is considered / marked separately.
- The combination gives the total mark for each piece/ supporting test.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

1. Command of Instrument

The quality of the sound produced from the instrument, including the consistency of sound/tone, control of sound/tone commensurate with grade.

2. Sync or Pulse

Alignment of the performance to backing track, metronome or applied to a solo performance, observing notation markings. For unaccompanied pieces candidates should maintain a secure internal pulse and adjust the pulse where instructed within the music.

3. Accuracy and Understanding

Representing the written notation accurately, except by instruction through performance notes, or interpreting the written part with equivalent skills demonstrated. Secure understanding of musical structure evidenced through transitions of phrases, bars and sections.

4. Style and Expression

An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO DEBUT MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	40 secs–1 min 20 secs
Key	C major / A minor
Tempo	60-130 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4
Rhythmic Values	Quavers and rests, occasional dotted crotchets
Dynamics	Very simple/sparse
Articulation & Phrasing	Very simple/sparse
Melodic Features	Mainly stepwise movement or small intervallic transitions
Harmonic Features	Occasional two-note chords in one hand (three-note chords will be between both hands)
Rhythmic Features	Non-complex rhythmic groupings

'La Valse D'Amélie'



Composer: Yann Tiersen (b.1970)
Nationality: French (Belgian & Norwegian heritage)
Source/Date: *Amélie* Soundtrack (2001)

'La Valse D'Amélie' is taken from Yann Tiersen's award winning soundtrack for the French romantic comedy, *Amélie*. Tiersen's beautiful composition features on the soundtrack twice, both as an orchestral piece and a piano piece. The composer also included the orchestral version in his fourth studio album, *L'Absenté*, shortly after the release of the soundtrack in 2001.

Yann Tiersen was born in Brittany, France in 1970. He delved into music at the very young age of four, initially with piano lessons but soon expanding into violin and becoming a multi-instrumentalist at just six years old. At the age of 13 he added electric guitar to his bow and began playing in rock bands. Although many think of him as a composer, Tiersen is also a hugely successful touring musician and collaborator.

Preparation



When first learning this piece, you may find it useful to count out loud, particularly in the first and third sections. Bars 6, 14, 38 and 46 all contain quaver (eighth note) passages that start with a tied note from the previous bar. If you find timing this pattern a challenge, try rehearsing without the ties in place until the quaver rhythms are secure.

Be sure to look at the suggested fingering pattern in bars 14, repeated in bar 46. Playing the quaver on beat 3 with your fifth finger will allow you to get your hand in a position ready to play the lower E in the following bar. Shifting hand position mid phrase may benefit from being practised in isolation to ensure a smooth and undetectable transition.

At bar 17, the right-hand part plays a more accompanimental role to the simple dotted minim (dotted half-note) melody in the left-hand part. Take care to place these dyads (two notes played together) precisely in time, both notes always sounding evenly balanced. As the roles between the two hands switch over at bar 33, the balance between the hands should also reflect this change. The right-hand part should be played slightly quieter and more lightly than in the first section to allow the left-hand part to take the leading role throughout this middle section.

Performance



The $\frac{3}{4}$ tempo of this piece helps provide a lilting dance-like character for this pretty waltz. Maintaining a steady pulse throughout is key to establishing a secure performance. Allow the melody to sing out over the accompaniment, particularly when the melody moves into the left-hand part for the middle section. '*Dolce*' at the start of the piece means 'sweetly', so aim for a light touch with *legato* phrases.





'La Valse D'Amélie'



Yann Tiersen

Moderato ♩ = c.110

mp dolce

lightly

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- All scales and broken chords need to be played hands separately, *legato*, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- There is no memory requirement, and you may use your book for all technical sections at this grade.
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 52 bpm.

1. C major scale | *hands separately*

The image shows the C major scale for both hands. The treble clef part starts on middle C (C4) and goes up to C5. The bass clef part starts on C3 and goes up to C4. Fingerings are indicated above and below notes.

2. A natural minor scale | *hands separately*

The image shows the A natural minor scale for both hands. The treble clef part starts on A4 and goes up to A5. The bass clef part starts on A3 and goes up to A4. Fingerings are indicated above and below notes.

Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a 4-6 bar melody in the key of C major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

- All sight reading tests at Debut should be played at a minimum tempo of $\text{♩} = 60$ bpm.
- At Debut, you are tested on your ability to perform previously unseen pitches and rhythms. No dynamics are shown, however, you should maintain an even tone quality throughout.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1

Musical notation for Sight Reading Example 1, 4/4 time signature. The piece consists of four measures. The first two measures feature a bass line with quarter notes G2, A2, B2, and C3, while the treble clef has whole rests. The last two measures feature a treble clef with quarter notes C4, D4, E4, and F4, while the bass clef has whole rests.

Sight Reading | Example 2

Musical notation for Sight Reading Example 2, 4/4 time signature. The piece consists of four measures. The first two measures feature a treble clef with quarter notes C4, D4, E4, and F4, while the bass clef has whole rests. The last two measures feature a bass line with quarter notes G2, A2, B2, and C3, while the treble clef has whole rests.

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 1 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	50 secs – 1 min 30 secs
Key	One sharp or one flat, or no sharps or flats but accidentals may occur within the piece
Tempo	60-140 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 6/8
Rhythmic values	Quavers and rests, dotted quavers and syncopations, occasional semiquavers, occasional non-complex triplet groupings
Dynamics	Simple dynamics
Articulation & Phrasing	Simple changes in articulation and phrasing, occasional slurs and simple occasional use of staccato and accented articulation may occur.
Melodic features	Mainly stepwise movement or small intervallic transitions
Harmonic features	Two-note chords in one hand, occasional three-note chords, four-note chords will generally be spread across both hands
Rhythmic features	Rhythms will be simple; simultaneously differing patterns will be limited

'Jupiter'



Composer: Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Nationality: British

Source/Date: *The Planets* (1914–1916)

'Jupiter' is taken from Gustav Holst's widely acclaimed orchestral suite, *The Planets*. The suite contains seven movements, each named after a planet, and features Jupiter in the centre. Although composition began in 1914 it wasn't until 1918 that the suite was performed in its entirety, at Queen's Hall in London during a private concert hosted by Adrian Boult. It is believed that Holst held Boult partly responsible for the success that *The Planets* went on to receive and was forever grateful for his inclusion of the suite.

The Planets brought Gustav Holst, born in Cheltenham 1874, worldwide fame is known across the globe as one of the most significant orchestral suites of the 20th century. Modern composers such as Hans Zimmer and John Williams cite *The Planets* as greatly influential to their award-winning film scores.

Preparation



Take time to study the suggested fingering to ensure you have a pattern that is both comfortable to play and allows you to use *legato* phrasing throughout. Many students will find it helpful to rehearse both parts individually to secure the finger patterns and rhythm before putting them together. Notice the dotted rhythms in bar 1, 5, 17 and 21. These should be kept rhythmically precise, giving a nice contrast to the straight quavers in the first part of the phrase, yet remain *legato* throughout.

Take time to study the melodic shape and structure of the piece to understand how to phrase and express the music in terms of the shape of each individual phrase and as a piece overall. Notice how the pitch range increases and rises with each phrase, all leading to the top A on beat 1 of bar 23. Aim to keep this feeling of a slow but continuous build up to help give your performance direction and a feeling of constant forward movement.

Getting the balance right between both hands is important as the melody should sing out above the accompaniment, yet the bassline should carry a feeling of weight and substance, supporting the melody.

Performance



It is not surprising that this wonderful melodic theme from Holst's 'Jupiter' was later reworked by the composer to set Cecil Spring Rice's patriotic poem to music. 'I vow to thee, my country', is now commonly associated with Remembrance Day. 'Andante Maestoso' instructs the performer to use a tempo set at a steady walking pace, and with a majestic feel. Although Holst liked his seven planet pieces to be performed as a complete Suite, and in his chosen order, many conductors prefer to end with Jupiter as this powerful and stirring hymn-like theme provides a wonderful finale. Make sure to listen to an orchestral recording of Jupiter to help you capture the stately mood of the piece.





'Jupiter'

Gustav Holst

Moderately

1 3 2 4 5 3

mf

The first system of music consists of two staves. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Above the notes are fingerings: 1, 3, 2, 4, 5, 3. A slur covers the first six notes. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes G3, F3, E3, D3. A slur covers the first two notes. A fingering '1 5' is written below the first two notes.

2 4

3 4 3 1 2 3 4 3

The second system of music consists of two staves. The treble clef staff continues the melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Above the notes are fingerings: 2, 4. A slur covers the first six notes. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes G3, F3, E3, D3. A slur covers the first two notes. Fingerings '3 4 3 1 2 3 4 3' are written below the notes.

3 5 1 3 4 2

6 5 5 4 3 3

The third system of music consists of two staves. The treble clef staff continues the melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Above the notes are fingerings: 3, 5, 1, 3, 4, 2. A slur covers the first six notes. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes G3, F3, E3, D3. A slur covers the first two notes. Fingerings '6 5 5 4 3 3' are written below the notes.

1 3 5 4 1 4 2 2 4

9 5

The fourth system of music consists of two staves. The treble clef staff continues the melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Above the notes are fingerings: 1, 3, 5, 4, 1, 4, 2, 2, 4. A slur covers the first six notes. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes G3, F3, E3, D3. A slur covers the first two notes. Fingerings '9 5' are written below the notes.

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales and broken chords need to be played **hands separately**, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are **right hand only**.
- Groups A (scales) and Group B (broken chords) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 60 bpm.

1. F major scale | hands separately

Musical notation for F major scale, hands separately. The exercise is written on two staves: Treble Clef (top) and Bass Clef (bottom). The key signature has one flat (Bb). The Treble staff starts on F4 and ends on F5. The Bass staff starts on F2 and ends on F3. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes.

2. G major scale | hands separately

Musical notation for G major scale, hands separately. The exercise is written on two staves: Treble Clef (top) and Bass Clef (bottom). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The Treble staff starts on G4 and ends on G5. The Bass staff starts on G2 and ends on G3. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give you a 4–6 bar chord progression in the key of either G major or F major. You will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for you to practise and the second time is for you to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 70 bpm.

- At Grade 1, you have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1

♩ = 70

F B^b C B^b

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 2

♩ = 70

G C D C

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 2 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Recommended Maximum Duration	1 min 10 secs–1 min 45 secs
Key	Two sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece)
Tempo	60-140 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers and rests, dotted quavers and syncopations, occasional semiquaver syncopation, non-complex triplet groupings. Simpler rhythms may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work)
Dynamics	Simple dynamics [<i>P, F, MP, MF</i>], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Frequent changes in articulation and phrasing, slurs and simple use of staccato/accented articulation may occur.
Melodic features	Greater intervallic transitions and more frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic features	Two-note chords in one hand, occasional three-note chords, four-note chords will generally be spread across both hands
Rhythmic features	Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands

'Tarantella in G minor'



Composer: Glenda Austin
Nationality: American
Date: 2014–2016

'Tarantella in G minor' is a piano solo written by American composer, teacher and musician, Glenda Austin. One of her many compositions to be published, this piece functions as an exciting teaching aid with a surprising and exciting end.

Glenda Austin graduated with a bachelor's degree in Music Education and a master's degree in Piano Performance. She has worked as both a secondary school and primary school teacher and is also a member of faculty at Missouri Southern State University. As a composer and arranger, her work has been published internationally and she has been commissioned to produce work for major publications such as Clavier Magazine. Her piano solos are often highly recommended, with 'Tarantella in G minor' having been selected as one of the set pieces for the National Federation of Music Clubs in the USA.

Preparation



Make sure you have warmed up before playing this piece. If you find your hand is getting tired, stop and let the whole arm fall to your side as a dead weight until you have released the tension and are ready to start again. The muscles in the fourth and fifth fingers are often not as strong as the other fingers and the thumb. Rehearsing scales and technical exercises that build up finger strength and control can help to combat rushing.

Take time to secure the notes and hand position changes at a slower tempo, ensuring that the quaver (eighth-note) patterns are kept clean and precise. If you find you do start to rush, try rehearsing along with a metronome and slow the tempo down to a manageable speed. Temporarily changing the articulation patterns can help, for example, try playing the first eight bars as *staccato*, maintaining a relaxed wrist position.

In the first section, one of the biggest challenges for the left-hand part is in making fast and accurate hand position changes in bars 9 to 16. Students may find it helpful to apply the sustain pedal in these bars, and again in bars 44 to 49, remembering to lift at the end of each bar. This will help create a more *legato* feel, allowing the left hand to get in position for the following dyad without cutting each dotted minim (dotted half-note) too short.

Enjoy the dynamic variations within the piece, giving plenty of contrast and colour to the different sections. Ensure that the *forte* in bar 44 reserves a little volume to give room for an effective *crescendo* and *fortissimo* in the final two bars.

Performance



A lively dance in $\frac{3}{8}$ time, this dramatic piece fits comfortably under the fingers, while providing plenty of technical challenges for the performer. As well as the obvious similarities to the name of a rather well-known spider, a 'tarantella' is the name given to a group of various Italian folk dances that are characterised by an energetic tempo and dramatic ending.

The secret behind an effective performance of this piece is to start with a fast but sustainable tempo that will drive the music forward while allowing the music and dynamics to bring the music to a dramatic climax. The performance should sound exhilarating but stay very much in control with a fast and steady pulse.





'Tarantella in G minor'

Glenda Austin

Briskly

5/3

f

5

p

2

9

f grandly

14

mp

4

19

4

3

1 2

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 66 bpm.

1. B^b major scale

Musical notation for the B^b major scale, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The scale is written in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 3 1 2 3 (up), 1 2 3 4 (up), 1 2 3 1 (down), 2 3 4 (down). The bass clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 3 2 1 4 (up), 3 2 1 3 (up), 2 1 4 3 (down), 2 1 3 (down).

2. D major scale

Musical notation for the D major scale, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The scale is written in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 1 2 3 1 (up), 2 3 4 1 (up), 2 3 1 2 (down), 3 4 5 (down). The bass clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 5 4 3 2 (up), 1 3 2 1 (up), 4 3 2 1 (down), 3 2 1 (down).

3. G natural minor scale

Musical notation for the G natural minor scale, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The scale is written in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 1 2 3 1 (up), 2 3 4 1 (up), 2 3 1 2 (down), 3 4 5 (down). The bass clef staff shows the ascending and descending scales with fingerings: 5 4 3 2 (up), 1 3 2 1 (up), 4 3 2 1 (down), 3 2 1 (down).

Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a 4–6 bar piece in D major or B \flat major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

- All sight reading tests at Grade 2 should be played at a minimum tempo of $\text{♩} = 80$ bpm.
- At Grade 2, you are tested on your ability to perform previously unseen pitches, rhythms and basic dynamics.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1



Musical notation for Sight Reading Example 1. The piece is in D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of 4 bars. The first bar has a whole rest in the treble clef and a quarter note D in the bass clef. The second bar has a whole rest in the treble clef and a quarter note F# in the bass clef. The third bar has a quarter note G in the treble clef and a quarter note A in the bass clef. The fourth bar has a quarter note B in the treble clef and a quarter note D in the bass clef. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the first bar.

Please note: The test shown is an example. The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

Sight Reading | Example 2



Musical notation for Sight Reading Example 2. The piece is in B \flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. It consists of 4 bars. The first bar has a quarter note B \flat in the treble clef and a whole note B \flat in the bass clef. The second bar has a quarter note D in the treble clef and a whole note D in the bass clef. The third bar has a quarter note E in the treble clef and a whole note E in the bass clef. The fourth bar has a quarter note G in the treble clef and a whole note G in the bass clef. The dynamic marking *mp* is placed below the first bar.

Please note: The test shown is an example. The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 3 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	1 min 30 secs –2 mins
Key	Three sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece)
Tempo	60-150 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers and rests, syncopation, triplet groupings. Simpler rhythms may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work)
Dynamics	[<i>P, F, MP, MF</i>], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points
Melodic Features	Greater intervallic transitions may appear spanning over an octave, and more frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Three note chords may appear in either hand, occasional four note chords in either hand may be present
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands or occur simultaneously
Other Features	Melody and accompaniment voicings may appear in one hand; musical passages may spread between both hands

'Bluebird'



Composer: Alexis Ffrench (b.1970)

Nationality: British

Date: 2017

'Bluebird' was a 2017 single release for British composer Alexis Ffrench. The song features a beautiful piano solo, performed by Ffrench himself, and includes an impressive accompaniment from the highly regarded BRNO Philharmonic Orchestra.

Alexis Ffrench began improvising with the piano at just four years old. Deemed a virtuoso, Ffrench received scholarships for several highly regarded institutes including The Royal Academy of Music, The Purcell School for Young Musicians and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. The composer prides himself on combining his classical music training with his love for roots and R'n'B Music. He is a strong believer in diversifying classical music and feels it is important to ensure that the genre continues to move forward while engaging musicians of all ethnicities. Ffrench's discography includes two studio albums and four single releases.

Preparation



Take time to prepare the left-hand accompaniment part separately. While the pedal will assist in creating a *legato* feel, be careful to lift and place accurately to avoid a muddy sounding texture. Notice how the left-hand part has a held dotted minim (dotted half-note) with two crotchet (quarter-note) dyads on beats 2 and 3. Take care to hold the dotted minim for the full length of each bar, rehearsing quick hand position changes as the harmony progresses through the chord changes. Make sure that the crotchet dyads are placed in time, cleanly, but without being too heavy as to interrupt the melodic line above.

As the right-hand part moves into the continuous flowing quaver (eighth-note) pattern at bar 41, and again on the repeat at bar 81, it is important to avoid inadvertently changing the tempo or volume. Notice how a simple melody line is highlighted with the use of *tenuto* articulations. To hear this internal pattern, try playing the left-hand accompaniment along with the right-hand part only playing the notes marked with a *tenuto* placed above the noteheads. While this pattern helps to give shape to this section of music, take care to avoid exaggerating the balance between the *tenuto* and non-*tenuto* notes, allowing the music to flow effortlessly and lightly as a sparkling melody from a music box.

Once you have secured the notes and your finger patterns, your focus should be on developing an expressive and balanced performance. Much of the charm of the piece lies within the natural ebb and flow of the lyrical melodic lines. Take time to consider the shape of each phrase, treating them like musical sentences. By identifying the form and peak of each phrase, you can then use subtle dynamic variations and emphasis to bring your music alive, just as we do with speech patterns.

Performance



Although the lilting gentle waltz-like accompaniment and simplicity of the melody line evokes a nostalgic and dreamlike mood, make sure the tempo keeps the music pressing forward, never slowing down or with excessive *rubato*. A polished performance will have beautifully phrased melody lines with a well controlled and balanced accompaniment. Ffrench described this particular composition as born out of improvisation, and filled with influences including Debussy and Satie. It is recommended that the performer takes time to listen to some piano pieces by these two composers, as well as listening to recordings of this original piece, to help understand Ffrench's intentions for the style and mood of the piece.





'Bluebird'

Alexis Ffrench

Tenderly

mp

Con pedale

7

13

19

25

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 80 bpm.

1. E^b major scale

Musical notation for the E^b major scale, showing ascending and descending lines for both the right and left hands. The right hand starts on middle C (C4) and the left hand starts on G². Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below the notes.

2. A major scale

Musical notation for the A major scale, showing ascending and descending lines for both the right and left hands. The right hand starts on A⁴ and the left hand starts on A². Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below the notes.

3. C natural minor scale

Musical notation for the C natural minor scale, showing ascending and descending lines for both the right and left hands. The right hand starts on C⁴ and the left hand starts on C². Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below the notes.

Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you an 4–6 bar piece in A major or E^b major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1

Andante (♩=90)

mp

Sight Reading | Example 2

Andante (♩=90)

mf

[4]

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 4 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	1 min 45 secs–2 min 15 secs
Key	Four sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be very occasional, simple key changes
Tempo	60-150 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be very infrequent, simple time signature changes
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers and rests in more complex groupings, occasional demisemiquavers, syncopation. Simpler rhythms appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work)
Dynamics	[<i>P, F, MP, MF</i>], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points
Melodic Features	Intervallic transitions may span over an octave and frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ more frequently between hands or occur simultaneously
Other Features	Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections

Allegro in F Major



Composer: Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Nationality: Austrian

Date: Unknown

'Allegro in F Major' is an instrumental solo by Austrian Composer Joseph Haydn. The date and original intent of the composition is difficult to pin point, but it can now be found in a collection of Haydn's work intended for beginner to intermediate pianists: *12 Easy Pieces* (2014). It is now regularly used as a teaching and learning aide.

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in a small village of Austria, near the borders of Hungary. From a young age, Haydn showed great musical potential but unfortunately the village in which he lived offered little opportunity. For this reason, the young musician was sent away to study under his relative and went on to become a skilled violin and harpsichord player. Haydn composed an incredible number of works and was thought to be instrumental in the development of chamber music.

Preparation



There are so many technical details within this piece that it is worth taking time to step back and look at the piece as a whole, listening and following along with the music. Notice that this piece is written in ternary form with a short coda at the end. Listen out for how the opening eight-notes of the melody is re-used in different ways throughout the piece, particularly the first two-note quaver (eighth-note) pattern falling across the bar line. Take note of how Haydn uses dynamics and different articulations to create a constantly changing soundscape.

The first eight bars form the opening A section. Take time to learn the parts separately to both secure your finger patterns and accurate articulations. Notice the suggested finger pattern in bar 3. Changing the finger on a repeated note will ensure you lift between notes, helping you to deliver a relaxed but crisp sounding *staccato* effect. It will also avoid fatigue in what is often our weakest finger.

The B section starts after the repeat with a harmonised re-iteration of the original melody. Make sure to bring out the top melody through this section. Rehearse this passage a much slower tempo to ensure you can hear all the notes clearly with good dynamic contrast between the *legato* and *staccato* notes. As the two-note motif is playfully extended and re-used throughout the second half of the B section, right up until the end of bar 26, be careful to keep a steady pulse going through this passage or risk inadvertently slowing down or speeding up!

Leading into bar 27, the music returns to the original melody from the opening section, dropping down in bar 30 to allow for a dramatic *crescendo*. The short coda section leading into bar 35 requires quick hand position changes and a good independence of articulation between both hands in bars 28 to 41, before the final chordal flourish.

Performance



This lively piece is a wonderful exercise in taking a simple melodic idea and then recycling and reshaping different elements to create an entire piece full of charm and contrast. A good performance will be technically accurate and set at a fast but controlled tempo that allows the music to sound full of life and energy. Of equal importance will be the well-observed dynamics and articulations that bring definition and sparkle to the performance.





Allegro in F Major

from 12 Easy Pieces

By Franz Joseph Haydn

Allegro

5 3 2 1 3 5 3 1 1

mf

5 1 2 1 3 5 2 5 4

4. 3 2 5 4 2 5 4 2 5 2 4

f *p* *f* *p* *f*

7 5 3 4 3 2 1 4 2

5 1 2 2 3 4 5 2 5 2 1 2 1

p *f* *p* *cresc.*

14 1 4 4 5 3 3 1 3

2 4 4 3 5 4 3 5 1 5 3 2 1

22 *f* *dim.*

5 2 5 1 2 5 2

3 1 1 1 2 1 1

cresc. *p*

30 1 2 1 4 3 2 2 4

3 1 5 3 5 5 4 5 4

f *p* *f*

37 1 4 4 4 4 4 7

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Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you an 8 bar piece in E major or A^b major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1

Adagio (♩=66)

[5]

Sight Reading | Example 2

Adagio (♩=66)

[5]

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 5 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins–2 mins 45 secs
Key	Five sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be occasional key centre changes
Tempo	60-160 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be occasional time signature changes, or odd time signatures depending on the complexity of the music
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers and rests in more complex groupings, occasional demisemiquavers, semiquaver syncopation. Simpler rhythms appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work)
Dynamics	[<i>P, F, MP, MF</i>], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points. More subtlety of control between legato and staccato will likely be required
Melodic Features	Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced or more frequent
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values may be more repetitive/continuous
Other Features	Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections

'Staccato Beans'



Composer: Tan Dun (b.1957)
Nationality: Chinese
Source/Date: *Eight Memories in Watercolour* (1978/2002)

'Staccato Beans' is a piano solo by Chinese composer Tan Dun. The piece features in both Tan Dun's 1978 suite, *Eight Memories in Watercolour*, and in its 2002 revised release. This collection of piano solos is said to blend traditional Chinese folk music with sounds of the Western World. Dun's original release is said to recall the period of his life in which the violence of the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end and Western music was no longer banned, hence its important inclusion in his composition.

Tan Dun is a Chinese composer, multi-instrumentalist and conductor. He is widely known for his work in music for film, including scores for *Hero* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, as well as his compositions for the 2008 Beijing Olympics medal ceremonies.

Preparation



As with all pieces that are intended to be performed at a fast pace, taking time to secure the basics first is a crucial step in the preparation process. The note patterns and finger position changes are relatively easily mastered. Be careful not to raise the tempo too quickly until you have truly mastered the articulations and dynamic changes.

Good hand positions and relaxed wrists are required to allow the various *staccato* and accented notes to be effective. Be sure to practise the left-hand opening bar in isolation, aiming for a clear contrast between the *legato* and *staccato* notes. Keep an even volume across the bar, taking care not to overly accent the first note of each bar so that when accents are required, they will have more of an impact.

When ready to assemble both parts together, rehearse at a slower speed to take the time needed to understand how best to balance the parts. Unlike some pieces where one hand takes on an accompanimental role throughout, this piece switches roles between both hands, as well as points where both hands should be well balanced to allow both contrapuntal lines to sing out, such as in bars 19 to 24.

The piece is an exercise in dynamic variation and control, sometimes moving from one extreme to another within the space of a couple of beats. It can be challenging to control dynamics effectively and without affecting your articulation or tempo. If this is proving challenging, you may find rehearsing along to a metronome click will help to maintain an even pulse throughout.

Performance



'*Allegro scherzando*' translates as fast and playful. With a wide range of articulations and an equally varied range of dynamics, this extrovert piece is full of energy and character. The faster tempo on repeat helps to drive the performance forward to an even more exhilarating second half and final flourish. While the energy and drive needs to be constantly present, particularly in the quieter passages, be careful not to let this piece turn into a runaway train.





'Staccato Beans'

Tan Dun

Allegro Scherzando [$\text{♩} = \text{c.144}$]

mp

(the second time faster)

8^{va}

p

(8)

f

ff

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

Candidates can choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor scales

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, in legato feel, ascending and descending, across three octaves (except contrary motion scales and pentatonics, which must be played over two octaves).
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 126 bpm.

1. B major (three octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for B major scale, two octave example. The notation shows the treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The treble clef part starts on G4 and the bass clef part starts on G2. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

2. B major | contrary motion

Musical notation for B major scale, contrary motion, two octave example. The notation shows the treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The treble clef part starts on G4 and the bass clef part starts on G2. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

3. D^b major (three octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for D major scale, two octave example. The notation shows the treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The treble clef part starts on D4 and the bass clef part starts on D2. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

Group C: Technical Studies

In this section candidates must perform their choice of one of the following technical studies.

Technical Study 1

The musical score for Technical Study 1 is written in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system is marked **Allegro** and **p** (piano). The right hand plays a series of eighth-note patterns with fingerings 1 2 4, 5 2 4 1, and 1 2 4. The left hand plays chords with fingerings 1 3 and 8. The second system features a **f** (forte) dynamic in the right hand with fingerings 1 2 3, 5 2 3 1, and 5 4 3 2. The left hand has chords with fingerings 2 4, 1 3, and 1 2 4. The third system continues with **f** dynamics and complex fingerings in both hands, including 5 4 3 2 1, 4 5, 5 4 2 1 2 4 5 4, 5 3 2 1 2 3 5 3, 4 2 1 2, 4 5 4 2 1, and 1 2 3 5 in the right hand, and 1 3 5, 2 5, 1 4, and 2 in the left hand. The piece concludes with a final flourish in the right hand.

This study has been adapted from No. 73, *125 Exercises in Passage Playing*, Op. 261 (Czerny)

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RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 6 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 min 15 secs–3 mins
Key	Six sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be key centre changes
Tempo	50-200 bpm
Time Signatures	4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8. There may be more regular time signature changes, or occasional irregular time signatures
Rhythmic values	Semiquavers and rests in more complex groupings, semiquaver triplets, demisemiquavers and frequent syncopation may occur. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work)
Dynamics	[<i>PP, F, MP, MF, FF</i>], crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points.
Melodic Features	Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values may be more repetitive/continuous
Other Features	Variety in voicings and accompaniment styles within sections

'Silk Hat & Walking Cane'



Composer: Florence Price (1887–1953)
Nationality: American
Source/Date: *Dances in the Canebrakes* (1953)

'Silk Hat & Walking Cane' features as the third movement in Florence Price's piano suite, *Dances in the Canebrakes*. Originally composed for piano solo, the suite was also for orchestra.

Florence Price was an African-American composer born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1887. She was initially taught music by her mother, a respected music teacher and went on to study piano and organ at the New England Conservatory, Boston. She began as a teacher and performer, but later in life went on to establish herself as a leading composer of orchestral pieces, radio adverts and silent films. Her Symphony in Em was first performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933 to great acclaim and, like her piano works, brings together stylistic features from both European and African-American traditions, reflecting her own cultural influences and passions.

Preparation



While much of the melodic material fits neatly under the fingers, there are several points in the music where the right hand plays two simultaneous lines requiring careful balance and phrasing, for example, in bars 14 to 23. Bars 21 and 22 involve holding the upper note while phrasing pairs of dyads underneath. This pattern can be easily adapted to create an effective warm-up exercise by 'staircasing' the motif in bar 21 as an ascending sequence. Try experimenting with different articulations to develop your ability to phrase multiple independent lines within the same hand.

The observance of rests, articulations and dynamics will help bring this piece alive. You may find that subtle *rubato* and additional dynamic shaping may be useful in bringing out the character and charm of the music. The move into the second main section at bar 55 benefits from a clear drop in dynamics for the two-bar introduction, before the melody enters in the following bar. Enjoy the constantly changing textures and articulations in this middle section, keeping the *staccatos* and accents precise so that the *legato* melody line can soar above.

The final section reprises the opening sequential melody with an increasing sense of scale and drama. Bars 94 to 98 will benefit from rehearsing slowly and in isolation to secure the fingering patterns and clean phrasing before applying the *accelerando*. Once secure, also take time to rehearse those bars leading in and out of this passage to secure the transition between phrases. Make sure you practise the final chord, starting to move the left hand over the top of your right hand as soon as it has finished playing the three lower notes to allow for a fast and confident spread chord effect.

Performance



The title of this third movement of Florence Price's 'Dances in the Canebrakes' evokes an image of a glittering ballroom full of theatrical drama and elegance. The flowing, syncopated melodic line, complete with straight eighth-note pattern accompaniment of the opening sequence, sets the mood for the poised and graceful cakewalk style. Set in three parts, a successful performance will be full of charm, light and shade, and sound effortless.





'Silk Hat & Walking Cane'

Florence Price

Moderato (♩ = 70)

mf legato

5 5 3 5 1 4 5 1 2 4 5 5 1 2 4 5 1 2 4 5 1 2

10

cresc. *ff* *dim.*

15

5 5 5 1 2 3 2 1 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 1 3

20

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.
- Contrary motion scales and pentatonic scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for *legato* or *staccato*.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩=152 bpm.

1. F# major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for F# major scale, two octave example shown. The notation is in treble and bass clefs, showing the scale ascending and descending with fingerings. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is 152 bpm.

2. F# major | contrary motion

Musical notation for F# major scale, contrary motion, two octave example shown. The notation is in treble and bass clefs, showing the scale ascending in the right hand and descending in the left hand with fingerings. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is 152 bpm.

3. Gb major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for Gb major scale, two octave example shown. The notation is in treble and bass clefs, showing the scale ascending and descending with fingerings. The key signature has six flats (F, C, G, D, A, E). The tempo is 152 bpm.

Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a 12-16 bar piece, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

Sight Reading | Example 1

Allegretto

mf

[4]

[7] *f*

[10] rit.-----

Please note: The test shown is an example. The examiner will give you a different version in the exam

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PIANO SAMPLE PACK



RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 7 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins 30 secs–3 mins 30 secs
Key	Seven sharps or flats (or fewer, but accidentals may occur within the piece) There may be more frequent key centre changes
Tempo	50-200 bpm
Time Signatures	Any, with changes
Rhythmic values	Any, up to demisemiquavers. Complex combinations beyond semiquaver triplets will not be frequent, but variations may occur regularly. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work, faster tempos or more complex time signatures)
Dynamics	Any, with changes, and including strong contrasts
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points. Subtlety of control between legato and staccato will be required
Melodic Features	Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal cluster voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values will be more repetitive/continuous and combine in both hands
Other Features	Voicings and accompaniment styles within sections will show depth and variety of technique Cadenzas may feature

'Deep Sleep Playing'



Composer: Michael Nyman (1944)
Nationality: British
Source/Date: *The Piano* (1993)

'Deep Sleep Playing' was written by Michael Nyman and featured in the 1993 film release, *The Piano*. Although the piece doesn't feature on the official soundtrack, it does make an appearance in the film and is also included in the official sheet music. Nyman received two esteemed nominations for *The Piano*, the Golden Globe Award and the BAFTA for Best Original Score, and the album achieved Gold status in both the UK and the States.

Michael Nyman is a British pianist and minimalist composer. He is best known for his work in film scores, but has also written a number of operas and has released several studio albums. Nyman has received many accolades throughout his career and is highly regarded among both musicians and the public, perhaps most notably he was appointed CBE in 2008.

Preparation



This piece falls into five contrasting sections, each with its own technical challenges. While the opening thematic material is reworked in sections 3 and 5, these are not straight repeats and have their own tempos and subtly different characters.

The opening performance direction '*cantabile semplice*' means 'play simply' and 'in a singing style'. Once the notes are secure, rehearse placing each chord precisely and quietly, gently leaning into the first note of each two-bar phrase with a light accent on the first beat of the second bar of the phrase. As the music quickly accelerates through bars 6 and 7, the dramatic effect is heightened by the rapid *crescendo*. A metronome will be helpful in monitoring your tempo until the transition becomes instinctive.

The second section should retain energy and drive until the final bar (bar 15). A good hand position and relaxed wrist are required to deliver the repeated triplet chords, emphasising each half bar. Ensure that you lift the pedal as instructed to avoid a muddy texture and bring out the melody in the bass line.

Although the third section re-visits the melodic material from the opening section, take note of the performance direction '*tempo primo ma piu mosso*', i.e. at the original tempo but with more movement. Practise bars 20–21 in isolation to secure finger patterns and ensure that each note can be heard clearly, phrased in pairs.

The fourth section has an ABA structure with a contrasting middle section in $\frac{4}{4}$ time. Study each part separately and at a slower tempo to secure the notes, articulations, and phrasing before putting both together. At bar 30, add extra arm weight to help emphasise the octave minims (half notes) marked '*pesante*', meaning heavy, as the bass line revisits the phrase first heard in the second section. Keep up the volume and intensity right through the final eight bars to allow for plenty of contrast with the final six bars of the piece. The final section should once again sound out simply with a final *ritardando* in the penultimate bar.

Performance



A good performance will be technically accurate and deliver expressive and contrasting sections with excellent control over dynamics, tempo and meter. As with all minimalist compositions based around repetition and change, it is important to find nuance and musical expression in both each individual motifs and across the whole composition to deliver a varied and cohesive performance.





'Deep Sleep Playing'

Michael Nyman

$\text{♩} = 56$

p cantabile semplice

Red.

accel. molto

$\text{♩} = \text{c.}72$

ff marc.

9

12

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Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.
- Contrary motion scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- Major scales in thirds need to be played hands separately, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for *legato* or *staccato*.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩=160 bpm (except C major scale in 3rds: ♩=100 bpm)

1. C# major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for C# major scale exercise. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes. The first two octaves are shown as an example.

2. C# major | contrary motion

Musical notation for C# major contrary motion exercise. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales in contrary motion. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes. The first two octaves are shown as an example.

3. Cb major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for Cb major scale exercise. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has seven flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. The first two octaves are shown as an example.

Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.
- Contrary motion scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- Major scales in thirds need to be played hands separately, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for *legato* or *staccato*.
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩=160 bpm (except C major scale in 3rds: ♩=100 bpm)

1. C# major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

2. C# major | contrary motion

3. Cb major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

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PIANO SAMPLE PACK



RSL CLASSICAL PIANO GRADE 8 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins 30 secs – 3 mins 45 secs
Key	Any, with changes
Tempo	50-200 bpm
Time Signatures	Any, with changes
Rhythmic values	Any. Complex combinations beyond semiquaver triplets may be frequent and variations may occur regularly. Simpler rhythms will appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. more detailed harmonic work, faster tempos or more complex time signatures)
Dynamics	Any, with changes, and including strong contrasts
Articulation & Phrasing	Articulation and phrasing will have wide variety and may differ between hands at simultaneous points throughout. Subtlety of control between legato and staccato will be required
Melodic Features	Intervallic transitions over an octave may be regular, and frequent accidentals may occur
Harmonic Features	Five note chords may appear in either hand, and partial chords may be combined with melodic elements. Chordal voicings may be more advanced, denser and/or more frequent, and differ regularly
Rhythmic Features	Rhythmic groupings may differ frequently between hands and occur simultaneously; faster note values will be more repetitive/continuous and combine in both hands
Other Features	Voicings and accompaniment styles within sections will show advanced depth and variety of technique Cadenzas may feature

Welcome to RSL Classical Piano Grade 8

Welcome to the RSL Classical Piano Syllabus 2020. This syllabus is designed to support pianists in their progression from Debut to Grade 8 through an engaging and rigorous pathway. The grade books contain a diverse repertoire selection supported by techniques and musical skills required for success as a classical pianist. For students engaging with contemporary styles such as jazz, rock and pop, we have included improvisation tests from RSL's contemporary piano syllabus, which are an optional alternative to sight reading tests all the way through the grades.

Piano Exams

At each grade you have the option of taking one of two different types of examination:

■ Grade Exam

A Grade Exam is a mixture of music performances, technical work and tests. You are required to prepare three pieces (two of which may be Free Choice Pieces) and the contents of the Technical Exercise section. This accounts for 75% of the exam marks. The other 25% consists of: either a Sight Reading or a contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation test (10%), one Ear Test (10%), and five General Musicianship Questions (5%). The pass mark is 60%.

■ Performance Certificate

A Performance Certificate is equivalent to a Grade Exam, but in a Performance Certificate you are required to perform five pieces. A maximum of three of these can be Free Choice Pieces. Each song is marked out of 20 and the pass mark is 60%.

All elements required to participate in an RSL exam can be found in the grade book. These are as follows:

■ Exam Pieces

The 2020 syllabus includes ten pieces at each grade, selected to give students a fun, engaging and rewarding learning experience. Students may also submit alternative pieces from extended lists, or alternative selections as Free Choice Pieces. Please see the website for more information.

■ Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at each grade:

Group A: Scales

Group B: Broken Chords / Arpeggios

Group C: Technical Study

■ Supporting Tests

There are three types of unprepared supporting test in the exam:

1. The first type of test can be one of two options (this is the candidate's choice):

Either:

Sight Reading: developing the musician's ability to read and perform previously unseen material;

or:

Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation: developing the musician's ability to develop previously unseen material by performing improvised passages of melody or chordal accompaniment to a backing track. These tests are in contemporary music styles, and offer an alternative route for students interested in contemporary music.

2. **Ear Tests:** Candidates are tested on their ability to recall melodic content.

3. **General Musicianship Questions (GMQs):** Five questions asked by the examiner at the end of the exam.

Note: The grade book contains examples the supporting tests – equivalent 'unseen' examples will be provided for the examination.

Prelude And Fugue In C Minor, BWV 847



Composer: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Nationality: German
Source/Date: *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I* (1722)

Prelude & Fugue in C Minor, BWV 847 was composed by Bach for his first prelude and fugue collection, *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*, which featured compositions in all major and minor keys. Bach later began composition on a second collection in 1739.

Johan Sebastian Bach was born in 1685 to an exceptionally musical family. Having been orphaned at just ten years old, Bach was raised by his eldest brother (who was also a musician) before going on to begin his career as a working organist at just 15 years old. His compositions for organ, piano and strings have become some of the most famous in the world and he continues to be viewed as one of the most influential composers of the 19th century.

Preparation



The underlying harmonic progression within the prelude will help you to make an informed decision regarding your phrasing. A simple way to hear this harmonic framework is to take the notes from each half bar, ignoring the passing notes, and playing each as block chords. Once you can strip back the music to hear the harmonic progression, you will be able to consider shaping each phrase with dynamics, tone and expression.

Once the notes are secure, the opening 24 bars of the prelude can create a useful technical warm-up exercise, experimenting with varying the rhythmic pattern and combinations of *legato* and *staccatos*. As the opening section builds into the dramatic *presto* section, the following *adagio* interlude provides welcome contrast, sounding free and improvisatory in style. Be careful not to rush through the final *allegro*, particularly in placing the C on beat 3 of bar 37, before the final flourish leads us to the picardy third ending.

The fugue introduces the melody, known as the 'subject' in the middle line before the two counter-subjects enter one at a time. As with all contrapuntal compositions, the challenge lies in delivering three independent lines that work together in balance, allowing each line to sing out. The intricate construction of canons and sequences that help to drive the music forward will benefit from rehearsing at a slow tempo and parts in isolation to secure finger patterns ahead of assembly. A useful study technique is to record one part, then play the other along to your recording, allowing you to focus on one part at a time, while shaping and responding to the recorded track.

Performance



A good performance will be technically accurate, well balanced, and with intelligent phrasing. The contrapuntal lines should be phrased as independent voices while also working together with a sense of symmetry and balance. You will notice the lack of phrasing and dynamic guidance within the score, in keeping with the style of music. It is advisable to take time to listen to different performances of the piece and similar works from the same era to help make your own artistic judgements regarding phrasing and expression.



Prelude and Fugue in C minor, BWV 847

Johann Sebastian Bach

Praeludium



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Technical Exercises

In this section, you will be asked to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality.

- Scales and arpeggios (including those from previous grades) need to be played:
 - hands together
 - ascending and descending
 - either legato or staccato articulation (as directed by the examiner)
 - across four octaves (except half-whole and whole tone scales, which must be played over two octaves)
- Candidates must prepare natural minor, melodic minor and harmonic minor scales
- The examiner may also ask for *legato* or *staccato*.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩=176 bpm.

1. C half-whole diminished scale

Musical notation for the C half-whole diminished scale. The exercise is written for piano with two staves (treble and bass clef). The scale is played in both directions (ascending and descending) over two octaves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below the notes. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

2. C whole tone scale

Musical notation for the C whole tone scale. The exercise is written for piano with two staves (treble and bass clef). The scale is played in both directions (ascending and descending) over two octaves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below the notes. The key signature has no sharps or flats.

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