

Specimen Improvisation Tests

Stylistic Stimulus

for Trinity College London exams from 2017

Initial-Grade 8

C Instruments – Bass Clef

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Stylistic stimulus

The stylistic stimulus requires candidates to improvise over a notated piano part played by the examiner. Candidates are given a stimulus which includes the notated piano part and chord symbols. The stimulus begins with a two-bar introduction played by the examiner alone, followed by a further section over which candidates must improvise for a specified number of repeats. In the exam, the examiner plays the stimulus twice for candidates' reference, without repeats. Candidates are then given 30 seconds' preparation time, during which they may prepare for their improvisation aloud if they wish. The test then follows. The examiner then plays the stimulus again, and candidates join after the introduction, improvising for the specified number of repeats. Candidates should aim to improvise in a way that complements the musical idiom of the stimulus.

Initial

Example 1

March ♩ = 92

C G G C

f

Example 2

Lullaby ♩ = 72

C G G C

p

Grade 1

Example 1

Fanfare ♩ = 112

C G G C

mf

to be played through twice

Example 2

Moderato ♩ = 100

G D D G

to be played through twice

Grade 2

Example 1

Tango ♩ = 120

F B \flat C F

to be played through twice

Example 2

Andante ♩ = 82

Am Dm E Am

to be played through twice

Grade 3

Example 1

Waltz ♩ = 104

Dm Gm A Dm

to be played through twice

Example 2

Allegretto ♩ = 112

B♭ Cm F B♭

to be played through twice

Grade 4

Example 1

Quick Waltz ♩ = 124

Gm Cm D Gm

to be played through three times

Example 2

Adagio ♩ = 60

D Em G D

to be played through three times

mf

Grade 5

Example 1

Vivace ♩ = 90

A D Bm E A

to be played through three times

mp

Example 2

Grazioso ♩ = 104

E♭ A♭ Cm B♭ E♭

to be played through three times

mp

Grade 6

Example 1

Agitato ♩ = 132

The musical score is written for a C instrument in bass clef with a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Agitato' with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The score is divided into two systems, each with a bass line and a piano accompaniment. The first system consists of three measures, with the first measure being a whole rest. The second system consists of five measures. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The first system's piano accompaniment starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score includes a repeat sign in the first measure of the first system and a double bar line with repeat dots at the end of the second system. The text 'to be played through twice' is written below the first system. Chord symbols are placed above the bass line: Cm, G7, Cm in the first system, and Fm, Cm, Ab, G7, Cm in the second system.

to be played through twice

Fm Cm Ab G7 Cm

Example 2

Nocturne ♩. = 63

System 1: 12/8 time signature, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first ending is marked *to be played through twice*. The piano part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The first ending chord is F#m.

System 2: Chord progression: C# (quarter), C#7 (quarter), D (quarter), Bm (quarter), C# (quarter), C#7 (quarter). The piano part continues with the same melodic and harmonic structure.

System 3: Chord progression: Bm (quarter), F#m (quarter), C# (quarter), C#7 (quarter), F#m (quarter). The piano part concludes with the same melodic and harmonic structure.

Grade 7

Example 1

Grave ♩. = 42

E B C#m

to be played through twice

p

G#m Amaj7 B B7 E

Example 2

Gigue ♩. = 92

mp

to be played through twice

Chords: A^b Eb A^b Eb⁷ A^b

Chords: C C⁷ Fm C⁷ Fm Eb A^b Eb⁷ A^b

Grade 8

Example 1

Lively Dance ♩ = 138

Fm C D \flat A \flat D \flat A \flat

to be played through twice

mf

B \flat m7 C Fm C D \flat A \flat D \flat Fm C⁷ Fm

Detailed description of the musical score: The piece is in 5/4 time with a tempo of 138 beats per minute. It is written for C instruments in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score is divided into two systems. The first system begins with a treble clef staff containing a whole rest, indicating that the melody is to be played through twice. Below this, the piano part features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system continues the piano part with various chords indicated above the treble clef staff: Bbm7, C, Fm, C, D \flat , A \flat , D \flat , Fm, C⁷, and Fm. The piano part concludes with a double bar line.

Example 2

Impressionistic:
Slow and smooth ♩. = 63

C#m⁹ F#m C#m⁹ F#m Emaj⁷ A

to be played through twice

Emaj⁷ A F#m⁷ G#⁷ F#m⁷ G#⁷ C#m⁹ F#m C#m⁹