

LISTENING EXERCISE 1

Find a recording of the 'Air' from the Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major by Bach – it is the second movement of the piece.

There are five angles of approach; for each you angle you should listen to the music once or twice. You may like to use the questions as the basis for a discussion with a fellow student.

There is a good performance at: <http://bit.ly/BachAir>

First angle of approach – general impression

a. What was the tempo of the music?

Very slow Quite slow Quite fast Very fast

b. Did the tempo change?

Frequently Occasionally Only at the end Never

c. What was the mood of the music?

Tragic Angry Peaceful Excited

d. What instruments were playing?

Just bowed strings Bowed strings and harpsichord

Bowed strings and organ Bowed strings and piano

e. What is the structure of the piece?

AABB (binary) ABA (ternary)

AABA (32-bar song form) ABACA (rondo)

Second angle of approach – melody

Answer TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements about the melody of the 'Air':

a. The melody is always played at the top of the texture by the first violins

b. The second note of the melody is just a step higher than the first note

c. The second phrase is a falling sequence

d. The A section ends on a lower note than it begins

e. The B section starts with the same phrase as the A section but at a lower pitch

f. There is a rising sequence in the B section

g. The melody ends on the same note on which it begins

Third angle of approach – bass line

Underline any of the following features that you hear in the bass line

Rising octave leaps Falling octave leaps

Descending scale Rising scale

Passing note Auxiliary note Suspension

Even rhythm Dotted rhythm Syncopation
 Chromatic notes Rests Pedal note
 Pizzicato Arco Crescendo Diminuendo

Fourth angle of approach - inner parts

On this listening, follow the 2nd violin and viola lines on the score below. Ring any places where you can hear either part being especially important in the texture.

The image shows a musical score for Violin 2 and Viola, measures 1 through 15. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The Violin 2 part is in the upper staff, and the Viola part is in the lower staff. The score is divided into five systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 12, 15). The key signature is G major, and the time signature is common time. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A trill (tr) is marked above the final note of the Violin 2 part in measure 15.

Final angle of approach - a more in-depth experience

You have now considered much of the detail of Bach's piece: the structure and instrumentation, features of the melody and bass lines, and places where the inner parts provide significant extra features. This time listen with eyes shut and discover whether your different focused 'listening' allow you to have a richer experience when you 'hear' the complete piece one more time.

LISTENING EXERCISE 2

For this exercise you need to have access to the original version of the 1967 song 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' by Procul Harum.

It can be found online here: <http://bit.ly/ProculHarum>, or search for alternatives.

The structure of the song is as follows:

Instrumental	Verse 1	Chorus	Instrumental	Verse 2	Chorus	Instrumental	Chorus
Melody played by Hammond organ	A1 A2	B1 B2	as before	A1 A2	B1 B2	as before	B2 fades out

The 'B' phrases of the chorus are easy to spot: they begin with the highest note used in the vocal line throughout the song.

Here is a set of questions on each of the three main sections that comprise the song: answers can be found at the back of the book.

The instrumental sections

- a. The solo melody on the organ begins with a long note. How many beats does this note last for?
- $3\frac{1}{2}$ beats 4 beats $4\frac{1}{2}$ beats 5 beats
- b. On which beat is the organ's second long note heard?
- bar 2⁴ bar 3¹ bar 3² bar 3³
- c. This second long note is heard after a rising leap. What is the **interval** used for this leap?
- major 6th minor 7th major 7th octave
- d. How much higher is the second long note compared to the opening long note?
- minor 3rd major 3rd perfect 4th perfect 5th
- e. The bass line descends in **conjunct** motion at the start of the instrumental section. Which of the following represents the pattern of the bass line?





f. How far down the scale does the pattern move before changing direction?

Six steps down to the mediant Seven steps down to the supertonic

Eight steps down to the lower tonic Ten steps down to the submediant

g. At the end of which bars does the drummer give additional percussive detail rather than just playing the repeating pattern?

Bars 2 and 8 Bars 2, 4 and 8

Bars 2, 6 and 8 Bars 2, 4, 6 and 8

h. In the following table tick boxes to match bars where the listed features occur:

	bar 1	bar 2	bar 3	bar 4	bar 5	bar 6	bar 7	bar 8
A major chord on the downbeat								
A minor chord on the downbeat								
The melody note is a compound 3rd above the bass note on the downbeat								
The second beat of the bar is a first inversion								
The bar uses three different chords leading to a faster harmonic rhythm								

The vocal sections

a. How many bars long is the A1 section?

b. How many bars long is the A2 section?

c. How many bars long is the B1 section?

d. How many bars long is the B2 section?

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- e. The word setting is almost entirely syllabic, but at the ends of some phrases the final syllable sometimes receives a 2- or 3-note embellishment. Fill in the following chart to show where this occurs in both verses. Either put a cross for 'no embellishment' or '2' or '3' for the number of notes used for the final syllable:

verse or chorus?	section	phrase	verse 1	verse 2
verse	A1 section	first phrase		
		second phrase		
		third phrase		
	A2 section	first phrase		
		second phrase		
		third phrase		
chorus	B1 section	first phrase		
		second phrase		
	B2 section	first phrase		
		second phrase		
		third phrase		
		fourth phrase		

- f. What feature occurs in the organ part to link into the B2 section and becomes very prominent going into the final B2 phrase (the fading outro)?

- g. What cadence is heard at the end of the B2 phrase?

Plagal Perfect Imperfect Interrupted

Overall impression

- a. In what ways are there similarities between 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' and the 'Air' from Bach's third Orchestral Suite?
- b. What are the significant ways in which Bach's 'Air' is different from 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale'?

LISTENING EXERCISE 3

For this you will need a recording of the first movement from Beethoven's 5th Symphony in C minor.

First approach - motif spotting

Before you listen to the music, read the following information about the music:

Beethoven grew up with the music of Viennese Classicism – composers such as Mozart and Haydn; indeed, he had some lessons with Haydn. His early music, including his 1st and 2nd Symphonies, reflects this strongly; however, from his 3rd Symphony of 1803/04, his music belongs more to the new Romantic style of the 19th century.

The famous 5th Symphony follows in this new style. One aspect is the way Beethoven derives much of his musical material from a single 4-note motif: the famous 'pa-pa-pa-PA' with which the first movement begins. This is never far away in the first movement and is used with a variety of registers, dynamics, instrumentation, alterations of the falling interval, and other techniques.

It is remarkable just how much of the movement is built from this simple 4-note shape. As you listen to the music, listen out for the following versions of the motif; some are obvious (for instance, loud and at the top of the texture) others are more subtle (maybe *p* and in the bass). See how many you can spot over the course of the movement! There are many others too.



The image displays seven musical staves of notation. The first staff is a grand staff with a treble clef on the left and a bass clef on the right, marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second and third staves are treble clefs, also marked with *ff*. The fourth staff is a treble clef marked with piano (*p*) and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The fifth staff is a treble clef marked with *p*. The sixth and seventh staves are treble clefs marked with *ff*. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Now listen to the whole of the first movement, concentrating hard on finding all the **motivic** patterns.

Second approach - feeling the emotional temperature

Now read this alternative introduction to the same music:

Beethoven was born in Bonn, then a small town, and as a young man arrived in Vienna, the musical capital of Europe, intent on pursuing a career as a pianist. In his early 30s he became aware that he was losing his hearing; it drove him to despair. His ambition to be a renowned performer was over. In the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802 - a letter to his brothers - Beethoven wrote of considering suicide, but that he had chosen to continue as a composer.

The 5th Symphony is sometimes given the nickname 'Fate'. There is an immediate sense of doom with the dark minor key and dramatic falling shape. Much of the opening movement has a tempestuous and stormy character, with some warmer, sunlit passages in passing that seem like a memory of less troubled times as a carefree youth. The intensity of Beethoven's frustration becomes overpowering in the final part of the movement. As the whole orchestra hammers out the repeating quavers, one can imagine Beethoven at his fortepiano, thrashing the keys belligerently, desperately trying to hear the notes he was playing.

Now listen to the first movement again.

Comparing the two approaches

When you have completed the listening exercises, reflect on the two listenings; you may like to share your thoughts with a fellow student:

- How influential was the information you read before each listening?
- How different was the experience of listening to the music?
- Which listening experience was the most interesting?
- Which listening experience was the most emotionally charged?

Final thoughts

Good music repays repeated listening. The more we listen to the detail of a piece, the more we become familiar with it, and the more we can savour and enjoy it on subsequent encounters.

We can approach listening to music from a variety of angles, some technical, others emotional. As we become familiar with the music, we can gain intellectual understanding of it, informed admiration for the skill with which it was composed and is being performed, and emotional enrichment. If we listen well, we can soon find an unfamiliar piece becoming a new favourite in our listening repertoire. We can also gain greater understanding of how musical language works, which can enhance our performing and composing skills.

Traditionally, teachers tell AS and A Level students that they need to be 'reading around the subject'. This is also true for music, but more important is to be *listening* around the subject.

Among your targets should be:

- Different performances/versions of the music you are studying
- Other pieces by the artists/composers whose music you are studying and/or performing
- Music by other artists/composers working in the same style/context as the ones you are studying and/or performing

In short, aim to make your *listening to* (not *hearing of*) music a habit. Make it frequent, focused and fun - *fff* in fact - and it will have a big impact on your progress.