

rockschool[®]

VOCALS

SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

2016 Edition



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Preface

Introduction

Welcome to the Rockscool syllabus specification for vocals, 2016 edition. This syllabus specification is designed to give teachers, learners and candidates practical information on the graded examinations run by Rockscool.

The Rockscool website, www.rslawards.com has in-depth information on all aspects of our examinations including examination regulations, detailed marking schemes, assessment criteria and free choice piece criteria as well as notated and audio examples to help you prepare for the examination.

This Syllabus Specification covers the following vocal Examinations:

- Graded Examinations Grades 1–8
- Performance Certificates Grades 1–8

Please note that there is no debut exam in this series.

EXAMINATIONS

GRADE EXAMINATIONS

Grade Examinations are available at Grades 1–8 and consist of the following elements:

- **Three Performance Pieces:** Grades 1–8
- **Technical Exercises:** Grades 1–8
- **Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation:** Grades 1–5
- **Quick Study Piece:** Grades 6–8
- **Ear Tests:** Grades 1–8
- **General Musicianship Questions:** Grades 1–8

These elements fall into two categories:

- **Prepared work:** This consists of three Performance Pieces and Technical Exercises
- **Unprepared work:** This consists of Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation (Grades 1–5), Quick Study Piece (Grades 6–8), Ear Tests (Grades 1–8) and General Musicianship Questions (Grades 1–8)

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

Performance Certificates are available at Grades 1–8 and consist of the following elements:

- **Five Performance Pieces**

REPERTOIRE

Rockscool publishes more than 90 established hits associated with top international vocalists for use in the vocal exams. Individual books are available at each grade (1–8) and these are split into male and female with six songs in each. Candidates may mix and match the pieces as they wish and a backing track is provided on the download card. Candidates are also permitted to change the key of any song according to their range. In this situation a backing track must be presented to the examiner at the beginning of the exam.

EXAMINATION STRUCTURE

The examination structure for the Grade Examination is shown below:

Grades 1-5

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

Grade 6-8

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Quick Study Piece
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

*These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request

EXAMINATION TIMINGS

Examination Timings for Grade Exams:

- Grade 1: 25 minutes
- Grade 2: 25 minutes
- Grade 3: 30 minutes
- Grade 4: 30 minutes
- Grade 5: 30 minutes
- Grade 6: 36 minutes
- Grade 7: 36 minutes
- Grade 8: 36 minutes

Examination Timings for Performance Certificates:

- Grade 1: 25 minutes
- Grade 2: 25 minutes
- Grade 3: 25 minutes
- Grade 4: 25 minutes
- Grade 5: 25 minutes
- Grade 6: 30 minutes
- Grade 7: 30 minutes
- Grade 8: 30 minutes

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Candidates are able to perform a number of Free Choice Pieces in the examination:

- Grade Examinations: **Two** Free Choice Pieces (at least one piece must be from the grade book)
- Performance Certificates: **Three** Free Choice Pieces (at least two pieces must be from the grade book)

In vocal exams Free Choice Pieces can be selected from our list of Wider Repertoire - a full list of suggested pieces which can be found on our website, www.rslawards.com.

Alternatively, Candidates can choose or compose any song in any genre outside of the grade book and wider repertoire. These songs should demonstrate a comparable level of technical and musical demand to the pieces given in the set selections in the grade books which can be referred to as an indication of appropriate level. Candidates should refer to the Free Choice Piece Criteria available on our website when accessing the level of a potential piece, www.rslawards.com/music/graded-music-exams/free-choice-pieces.

All pieces must be performed to a backing track. Free Choice Pieces must be available in fully notated sheet music and Candidates need to bring a copy of the sheet music for the examiner to refer to during the examination.

If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of the chosen piece, please contact freechoicepieces@rslawards.com.

MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

Musical Interpretation is allowed at all grades in both the Grade Exam and Performance Certificate. Rockschooll encourages individual musicality, articulation, expression and use of dynamics when performing. This applies anywhere in the exam other than the technical exercises where articulation when specified must be observed. Candidates are reminded that all musical interpretation should be stylistically appropriate.

USE OF MICROPHONES

- At Grades 1-5 the use of a microphone is optional, although candidates may perform with a microphone if they feel it will enhance their performance
- At Grades 6-8 all sections of the exam are to be performed with a microphone
- Candidates can provide their own microphone for the examination should they prefer to use their own equipment, otherwise a microphone and lead will be provided by the centre

MARKING SCHEMES AND ATTAINMENT BANDS

MARKING SCHEME

All Rockschooll exams are marked out of **100**

GRADE EXAMS

Grade 1-5 (marks)

- Performance Piece [20]
- Performance Piece [20]
- Performance Piece [20]
- Technical Exercises [15]
- Sight Reading/Improvisation & Interpretation [10]
- Ear Tests [10]
- General Musicianship [5]

Grade 6-8 (marks)

- Performance Piece [20]
- Performance Piece [20]
- Performance Piece [20]
- Technical Exercises [15]
- Quick Study Piece [10]
- Ear Tests [10]
- General Musicianship [5]

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

- Performance Piece 1 [20]
- Performance Piece 2 [20]
- Performance Piece 3 [20]
- Performance Piece 4 [20]
- Performance Piece 5 [20]

ATTAINMENT BANDS

The attainment bands for **Grade Examinations** are as follows:

Pass: 60%–73%

Merit: 74%–89%

Distinction: 90% and above

The attainment bands for **Performance Certificates** are as follows:

Pass: 60%–74%

Merit: 75%–89%

Distinction: 90% and above

Grading Criteria & Definitions

GRADED EXAMINATIONS

PERFORMANCE PIECES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	18–20	15–17	12–14	6–11	0–5
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Style & Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music.	Mostly convincing projection of the music.	Some convincing projection of the music.	Music not projected convincingly	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

TECHNICAL EXERCISES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	13–15	11–12	9–10	4–8	0–3
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION / QUICK STUDY PIECE					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	9–10	7–8	6	3–5	0–2
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

EAR TESTS					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	9–10	7–8	6	3–5	0–2
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS (GMQS)					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	5 correct responses	4 correct responses	3 correct responses	2 correct responses	0–1 correct responses

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

PERFORMANCE PIECES					
BANDS OF ATTAINMENT / MARK RANGE					
Attainment Band	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Below Pass 1	Below Pass 2
Mark Range	18–20	15–17	12–14	6–11	0–5
Command of Instrument	Consistently clear production of sound and even tone quality throughout	Mostly clear production of sound and even tone quality overall	Some clear production of sound and generally even tone quality	Sound produced is unclear with uneven quality of tone produced	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Sync or Pulse	Performance consistently synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance mostly synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance sometimes synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse maintained	Performance not synchronised to the music, or an internal pulse not maintained	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Accuracy & Understanding	All of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated throughout. Understanding of musical structure shown all of the time.	Most of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills demonstrated overall. Understanding of musical structure shown most of the time.	Some of the written music accurately performed or equivalent skills generally demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure shown some of the time.	Written music not accurately performed or equivalent skills not demonstrated. Understanding of musical structure not evidenced.	No attempt and/or incomplete performance
Style & Expression	Consistently convincing projection of the music.	Mostly convincing projection of the music.	Some convincing projection of the music.	Music not projected convincingly	No attempt and/or incomplete performance

DEFINITIONS

DEFINITIONS	
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.
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.
Accuracy & 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.
Style & Expression	An expressive and commanding performance of the notated material dictated by the demands of the performance piece.

Unit Specifications

Grade 1

The Grade 1 vocals exam is for candidates who have mastered the key basic skills in vocal performance. There are two types of exam: Grade Exams and Performance Certificates. Please see the 'Examinations' section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is not mandatory at Grade 1, but candidates may use one if they feel it will enhance their performance.

Grade 1

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

A Sight Reading test OR an Improvisation & Interpretation test must be completed at the candidate's choice. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Rhythmic Recall (Test 2). The Rhythmic Recall will also require identification of the correct rhythm from two choices given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Four** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece) and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 1 exam lasts **25 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 1 there are **four** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 70bpm

4/4 time signature

The major scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note between A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or to hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 70bpm

4/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Two different patterns of a major arpeggio need to be prepared and the examiner will select one of these to be performed in the exam. This test *must* be performed to a metronome click and any starting note between A–E may be selected by the candidate. The chosen starting note will be played before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm

4/4 time signature

In this group the following intervals must be prepared:

- Major 2nd interval
- Major 3rd interval

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these intervals in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range of A–C (female) and D–F (male). The candidate will then be required to sing the root note followed by the major 2nd or major 3rd at the examiner's choice. The candidate may choose to sing along to a metronome click throughout or to hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Tempo: 85–120bpm

4/4 time signature

In this group the following studies must be prepared:

- Rhythmic: Rhythmic accuracy
- Melodic: Dynamic change

The examiner will ask the candidate to perform one of the above studies in the exam. The examiner will decide which, so both must be prepared before the exam. The Rhythmic Study starts with a four-beat count-in and consists of a four-bar rhythm spoken with lyrics. The Melodic Study starts with the root note followed by a four-beat count-in. The exercise consists of a four-bar melody to be sung with lyrics and a dynamic change. Both tests need to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 1 a choice between Sight Reading OR Improvisation and Interpretation will be offered. A previously unseen test will be used in the exam and an example of this can be found in the Grade 1 book.

SIGHT READING

Key:

- Female: C major
- Male: C major

Tempo: 70bpm

Range: Up to a Major 3rd

At Grade 1 the Sight Reading test consists of whole notes (semi-breves), half notes (minims) and quarter notes (crotchets) in 4/4. The test is four bars long and starts with the root note. The examiner will allow **90** seconds preparation time and will offer the option of practising with a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in at the start of the practice time. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note and the same choice is available when performing the test.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key:

- Female: C major
- Male: C major

Tempo: 70-80bpm

At Grade 1 the examiner will give the candidate a chord sequence in the key of C major. The candidate must improvise a melody over the backing track. The test is four-bars long and will be heard three times. The first and second time is for rehearsal and the third time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam.

Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a four-beat count-in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished the root note and count-in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

EAR TESTS

MELODIC RECALL

Tempo: 85bpm

The examiner will play three consecutive notes. The candidate will need to identify whether the last two notes are higher or lower in sequence. This means the candidate will need to tell the examiner whether the second note is higher or lower than the first, and whether the third note is higher or lower than the second. The test will be heard twice, each time with a four-beat vocal count-in.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Tempo: 90bpm**Part 1: Rhythmic Recall**

The examiner will play a two-bar rhythm played on a single note to a drum backing. The test will be heard twice and each time the test is played it is preceded by the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap for to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the rhythm must be sung back. For this exercise 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds must be used.

It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

The test is made up of quarter notes (crotchets), eighth notes (quavers) and equivalent rests.

Part 2: Identification

The candidate will then be asked to identify the rhythm heard in part 1 from two printed examples shown by the examiner.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be about the voice.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **four** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to *identify*:

- The treble clef
- The time signature
- Whole (semi-breve), half (minim), quarter (crotchet) and eighth (quaver) note values
- A rest in the piece

VOICE

Part 2: Your Voice

The examiner will also ask **one** question about the voice. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- Where is your diaphragm?
- Where is your larynx?
- What is the difference between head voice and chest voice?
- Why is it important to warm up before singing?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 1 exam lasts **25 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 2

The Grade 2 vocals exam is for candidates who have mastered the solid basic skills in vocal performance. There are two types of exam: Grade Exams and Performance Certificates. Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is not mandatory at Grade 2 but candidates may use one if they feel it will enhance their performance.

Grade 2

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

A Sight Reading test OR an Improvisation & Interpretation test must be completed at the candidate's choice. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Rhythmic Recall (Test 2). The Rhythmic Recall will also require identification of the correct rhythm from two choices given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Four** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece) and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 2 exam lasts **25 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 2 there are **four** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 80bpm
4/4 time signature

A natural minor scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note between A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or to hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 80bpm
4/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Two different patterns of a minor arpeggio need to be prepared and the examiner will select one of these to be performed in the exam. This test **must** be performed to a metronome click and any starting note between A–E may be selected by the candidate. The chosen starting note will be played before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following intervals must be prepared:

- **Major 3rd interval**
- **Minor 3rd interval**

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these intervals in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range of A–C (female) and D–F (male). The candidate will then be required to sing the root note followed by the major 3rd or minor 3rd at the examiner's choice. The candidate may choose to sing along to a metronome click throughout or to hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Tempo: 85–120bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following studies must be prepared:

- **Rhythmic: Rhythmic accuracy**
- **Melodic: Dynamic change**

The examiner will ask the candidate to perform one of the above studies in the exam. The examiner will decide which, so **both** must be prepared before the exam. The Rhythmic Study starts with a four-beat count-in and consists of a four-bar rhythm spoken with lyrics. The Melodic Study starts with the root note followed by a four-beat count-in. The exercise consists of a four-bar melody to be sung with lyrics and dynamic changes.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 2 a choice between Sight Reading OR Improvisation and Interpretation will be offered. A previously unseen test will be used in the exam and an example of this can be found in the Grade 2 book.

SIGHT READING

Key:

- Female: F major or A minor
- Male: C major or A minor

Tempo: 70bpm

Range: Up to a Major 3rd

At Grade 2 the Sight Reading test consists of whole notes (semi-breves), half notes (minims), quarter notes (crotchets) and quarter note rests in 4/4. The test is four bars long, starts with the root note and is in one of the above keys. The examiner will allow **90** seconds preparation time and will offer the option of practising with a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in at the start of the practice time. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note and the same choice is available when performing the test.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key:

- Female: A minor
- Male: A minor

Tempo: 80-90bpm

At Grade 2 the examiner will give the candidate a chord sequence in the key of A minor. The candidate must improvise a melody over the backing track. The test is four-bars long and will be heard three times. The first and second time is for rehearsal and the third time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam.

Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a four-beat count-in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Rhythmic Recall (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: C Major
- Male: C Major

Tempo: 85bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody with a drum backing. The melody will use the first three notes of the C major scale and the first note will be the root note. The test will be heard twice, each time with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short break to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising. This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Tempo: 90bpm

Part 1: Rhythmic Recall

The examiner will play a two-bar rhythm played on a single note to a drum backing. The test will be heard twice, each time with a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the rhythm must be sung back. For this exercise 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds must be used.

It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

The test is made up of quarter notes (crotchets), eighth notes (quavers) and quarter note rests.

Part 2: Identification

The candidate will then be asked to identify the rhythm heard in part 1 from two printed examples shown by the examiner.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Four** of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be about the voice.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **four** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify:

- Any pitch name (it is not required to state flat, sharp or natural)
- Whole (semi-breve), half (minim), quarter (crotchet), eighth (quaver) and 16th (semi-quaver) note values
- Any rest value

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- The meaning of the 4/4 time signature marking
- The meaning of repeat marks, first and second time bars
- The meaning of staccato marks
- The meaning of slurs

Part 2: Your Voice

The examiner will also ask **one** question about the voice. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- What is the meaning of 'diction'?
- What is the meaning of 'tone'?
- During a song, when would be a better time to take a breath?
- Why is posture important when singing?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 2 exam lasts **25 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 3

The Grade 3 vocals exam is for candidates who have established the basic skills, preliminary techniques and the beginnings of stylistic awareness with some individuality.

There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate.

Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is not mandatory at Grade 3 but candidates may use one if they feel it will enhance their performance.

Grade 3

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

A Sight Reading test OR an Improvisation & Interpretation test must be completed at the candidate's choice. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Rhythmic Recall (Test 2). The Rhythmic Recall will also require identification of the correct rhythm from two choices given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Four** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece) and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 3 exam lasts **30 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 3 there are **four** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

A major and natural minor scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 90bpm
3/4 time signature

A major and minor arpeggio must be prepared and the examiner will select one of these to be performed in the exam. This test *must* be performed to a metronome click and any starting note between A–E may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (three click) count-in.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following intervals must be prepared:

- **Perfect 4th interval**
- **Perfect 5th interval**

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these intervals in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range A–C (female) and D–F (male). The candidate will then be required to sing the root note followed by the perfect 4th or perfect 5th at the examiner's choice. The candidate may choose to sing along to a metronome click throughout or to hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: TECHNICAL STUDIES

Tempo: 95–100bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following studies must be prepared:

- **Rhythmic: Rhythmic accuracy**
- **Melodic: Quick dynamic changes and bends**

The examiner will ask the candidate to perform one of the above studies in the exam. The examiner will decide which, so *both* must be prepared before the exam. The Rhythmic Study starts with a four-beat count-in and consists of a four-bar rhythm spoken with lyrics. The Melodic study starts with the root note followed by a four-beat count-in and will make use of quick dynamic changes and bends.

Both tests need to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 3 a choice between Sight Reading OR Improvisation and Interpretation will be offered. A previously unseen test will be used in the exam and an example of this can be found in the Grade 3 book.

SIGHT READING

Key:

- Female: C major or D minor
- Male: F major or E minor

Tempo: 75–85bpm

Range: Up to a Perfect 5th

At Grade 3 the Sight Reading test consists of whole notes (semi-breves), half notes (minims), quarter notes (crotchets), eighth notes (quavers) and quarter note rests in 4/4. The test is four-bars long, starts with the root note and is in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which). The examiner will allow 90 seconds preparation time and will offer the option of practising with a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in at the start of the practice time. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note and the same choice is available when performing the test. The candidate will then perform the test for the examination.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key:

- Female: G major or E minor
- Male: G major or E minor

Tempo: 80-90bpm

At Grade 3 the examiner will give the candidate a chord sequence in the key of G major or E minor (the examiner will decide which). The candidate must improvise a melody over the backing track and the chord sequence will be heard three times. The first and second time is for rehearsal and the third time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam.

Each playthrough will begin with the root note and a four-beat count-in. The backing track is continuous throughout, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second and third playthroughs will start immediately.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Rhythmic Recall (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: C major or A natural minor scale
- Male: F major or A natural minor scale

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use a range of up to the first five notes of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root note. The test will be heard twice, each time with a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

RHYTHMIC RECALL

Tempo: 90bpm

Part 1: Rhythmic Recall

The examiner will play a two-bar rhythm played on a single note to a drum backing. The test will be heard twice and each time the test is played it is preceded by the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the rhythm must be sung back. For this exercise 'da' or 'ba' vocal sounds must be used.

It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track so the count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

The test is made up of quarter notes (crotchets), eighth notes (quavers) and equivalent rests.

Part 2: Identification

The candidate will then be asked to identify the rhythm heard in part 1 from two printed examples shown by the examiner.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Four** of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be about the voice.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **four** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify:

- Any pitch name (flat, sharp or natural must also be stated)
- Whole (semi-breve), half (minim), quarter (crochet), eighth (quaver), triplet eighth (triplet quaver) and 16th (semi-quaver) note values
- Any rest value
- Recognition of any interval up to a fifth between two adjacent notes (it is not required to state major, minor or perfect)

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- The meaning of the 4/4 time signature marking
- The meaning of repeat marks, first and second time bars
- The meaning of staccato marks
- The meaning of slurs
- The meaning of *crescendo/diminuendo*
- The meaning of *D.C.*, *D.S.*, *al Coda* and *al Fine* markings
- The meaning of *ad lib*

Part 2: Your Voice

The examiner will also ask **one** question about the voice. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- What is the meaning of the 'break'?
- What is the meaning of 'transition'?
- How do you support a long sustained note?
- Give an example of each of the following:
 - a) A type of food that would be good to eat before a performance?
 - b) A type of food that would not be good to eat before a performance?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 3 exam lasts **30 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 4

The Grade 4 vocals exam is for candidates who have mastered the basic skills, preliminary techniques and acquired the beginnings of stylistic awareness with some individuality.

There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate.

Please see the Examinations section on page 3 for further details.

The use of a microphone is not mandatory at Grade 4 but candidates may use one if they feel it will enhance their performance.

Grade 4

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

A Sight Reading test OR an Improvisation & Interpretation test must be completed at the candidate's choice. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Harmony Vocals (Test 2). The Harmony Vocals test needs to include the use of lyrics which will be given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Four** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece) and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice or microphone. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 4 exam lasts **30 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 4 there are **five** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 80bpm
4/4 time signature

A major pentatonic scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 80bpm
3/4 time signature

A major and major (ascending) with dominant 7 (descending) arpeggio must be prepared and the examiner will select one of these to be performed in the exam. This test **must** be performed to a metronome click and any starting note between A–E may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (four-click) count-in.

The test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following intervals must be prepared:

- Major 6th interval
- Major 7th interval

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these intervals in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range of A–C (female) and D–F (male). The candidate will then be required to sing the root note followed by the major 6th or major 7th at the examiner's choice. The candidate can choose to sing to a metronome click throughout or to hear a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: MELODIC STUDY

Tempo: 115bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the melodic study for slides and trilldowns must be prepared. This exercise is an eight-bar melody that must be sung to lyrics after the root note and four-beat count-in is heard. Candidates are required to perform the study with the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

GROUP E: BACKING VOCALS

Tempo: 115bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group, **both** backing vocal parts need to be prepared. This is a two-part harmony test and the candidate will be asked to perform one part in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The chosen part must be sung alongside the other part on the recording. The test needs to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 4 a choice between Sight Reading OR Improvisation and Interpretation will be offered. A previously unseen test will be used in the exam and an example of this can be found in the Grade 4 book.

SIGHT READING

Key:

- Female: D major, Bb major, B minor or D minor
- Male: D major, Bb major, E minor or D minor

Tempo: 80–90bpm

Range: Up to an octave

At Grade 4 the Sight Reading test will feature lyrics and cover a range of up to an octave. The test will be in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and will start with the root note. At this grade there is an element of improvisation in order to prepare candidates for the Quick Study Piece at Level 3 (Grade 6 upwards). Bars 5 and 6 are a repeat of bars 1 and 2 and a melody will need to be improvised in the final two bars. The examiner will allow **90** seconds preparation time, after which the test must be performed.

During the practice time candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. The same choice will be given when performing the test.

The improvised bars in this test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key:

- Female: D major, Bb major, E minor or D minor
- Male: D major, Bb major, D minor or A minor

Tempo: 95bpm

At Grade 4 the examiner will give the candidate a chord sequence in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and the candidate must improvise a melody over the backing track. At this grade there is also an element of sight reading to prepare candidates for the Quick Study Piece at Level 3. This consists of a two-bar section featuring lyrics at the beginning of the test. The examiner will allow 30 seconds to practise, after which the backing track will be played twice. The first time is for rehearsal and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. The backing track will begin with a root note and a four-beat count-in on both playthroughs and is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

The examiner will offer the option of practising with a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in at the start of the practice time. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note.

The improvised bars in this test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Harmony Vocals (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: D major or B natural minor scale
- Male: G major or E natural minor scale

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use a range of up to the first five notes of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root note. The test will be heard twice, each time with a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

HARMONY VOCALS

Key:

- Female: C major or A major
- Male: D major or F major

Tempo: 90–100bpm

The examiner will play a three-bar melody in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and this will be based on the I–IV chords. The recorded vocal part will sing the root note of each chord and candidates need to harmonise a major 3rd above this part using the same rhythm. The examiner will give the candidate the lyrics.

The test will be heard twice, starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in each time it is played. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the harmony line must be performed. It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Four** of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be about the voice or the microphone.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **four** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify:

- Any pitch name (an appropriate flat, sharp or natural must also be stated)
- Whole (semi-breve), half (minim), quarter (crotchet), eighth (quaver), triplet eighth (triplet quaver), 16th (semi-quaver) note values and adjacent note value combinations
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth and 16th note rests and adjacent rest combinations
- Recognition of any interval up to a 7th between two adjacent notes (it is not required to state major, minor or perfect)

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- The meaning of any time signature
- The meaning of '*ad lib*'
- The meaning of any dynamic marking
- The meaning of the tempo marking

Part 2: Your Voice and the Microphone

The examiner will also ask **one** question about the voice or the microphone. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- How do you ensure consistent vocal tone?
- How do you create breathy (aspirate) tone?
- When would you use vibrato?
- How does a microphone amplify sound?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 4 exam lasts **30 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 5

The Grade 5 vocals exam is for candidates who have acquired intermediate skills and techniques and have developed an increasing sense of stylistic conviction and individuality. There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate. Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is not mandatory at Grade 5 but candidates may use one if they feel it will enhance their performance.

Grade 5

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

A Sight Reading test OR an Improvisation & Interpretation test must be completed at the candidate's choice. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Harmony Vocals (Test 2). The Harmony Vocals test needs to include the use of lyrics which will be given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Four** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece) and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice or microphone. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 5 exam lasts **30 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Sight Reading OR Improvisation & Interpretation
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 5 there are **five** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 80bpm
4/4 time signature

A minor pentatonic scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 80bpm
3/4 time signature

A major (ascending) and dominant 7 (descending) arpeggio must be prepared. This test must be performed to a metronome click track and any starting note between A–E may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (three click) count-in.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following intervals must be prepared:

- **Minor 6th interval**
- **Minor 7th interval**

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these intervals in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range A–C (female) and D–F (male). Candidates will then be required to sing the root note and then the minor 6th or minor 7th at the examiner's choice. The candidate can choose to sing to a metronome click throughout or to hear a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts.

This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: MELODIC STUDY

Tempo: 125bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the melodic study for melismas and scoops must be prepared. This exercise is an eight-bar melody sung to lyrics and starts with the root note followed by a four-beat count. Candidates are required to perform the study with the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

GROUP E: BACKING VOCALS

Tempo: 120bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group, **both** backing vocal parts need to be prepared. This is a two-part harmony test and the candidate will be asked to perform one part in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The chosen part must be sung alongside the other part on the recording. The test needs to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

SIGHT READING / IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

At Grade 5 a choice between Sight Reading OR Improvisation and Interpretation will be offered. A previously unseen test will be used in the exam and an example of this can be found in the Grade 5 book.

SIGHT READING

Key:

- Female: D major, Bb major, B minor or D minor
- Male: D major, Bb major, E minor or D minor

Tempo: 85–95bpm

Range: Up to an octave

At Grade 5 the Sight Reading test will feature lyrics and cover a range of up to an octave. The test will be in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and will start with the root note. At this grade there is an element of improvisation in order to prepare candidates for the Quick Study Piece at Level 3 (Grade 6 upwards). Bars 5 and 6 are a repeat of bars 1 and 2 and a melody will need to be improvised in the final two bars. The examiner will allow **90** seconds preparation time, after which the test must be performed.

During the practice time candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note. The same choice will be given when performing the test.

The improvised bars in this test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

IMPROVISATION & INTERPRETATION

Key:

- Female: D major, Bb major, E minor or D minor
- Male: D major, Bb major, D minor or A minor

Tempo: 100bpm

At Grade 5 the examiner will give the candidate a chord sequence in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and the candidate must improvise a melody over the backing track. At this grade there is also an element of sight reading to prepare candidates for the Quick Study Piece at Level 3. This consists of a two-bar section featuring lyrics at the beginning of the test. The examiner will allow 30 seconds to practise, after which the backing track will be played twice. The first time is for rehearsal and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. The backing track will begin with a root note and a four-beat count-in on both playthroughs and is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

The examiner will offer the option of practising with a metronome click throughout or a four-beat count-in at the start of the practice time. Whichever option is chosen, the practice time will start with the examiner playing the root note.

The improvised bars in this test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Harmony Vocals (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: Bb major or A natural minor scale
- Male: D major or C natural minor scale

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use one of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root note. The test will be heard twice, each time starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

HARMONY VOCALS

Key:

- Female: A major or F major
- Male: C major or A major

Tempo: 90–110bpm

The examiner will play a four-bar melody in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which) and this will be based on the I–IV–V chords. The recorded vocal part will sing the root note or 3rd of each chord and candidates need to harmonise a diatonic 3rd above this part using the same rhythm. The examiner will give the candidate the lyrics.

The test will be heard twice, starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in each time it is played. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the harmony line must be performed. It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Four** of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question will be about the voice or the microphone.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **four** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify:

- Any pitch name (an appropriate flat, sharp or natural must also be stated)
- Whole (semi-breve), half (minim), quarter (crotchet), eighth (quaver), triplet eighth (triplet quaver), 16th (semi-quaver) note values and adjacent note value combinations
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth and 16th note rests and adjacent rest combinations
- Recognition of any interval up to an octave between two adjacent notes (it is not required to state major, minor or perfect)

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- The meaning of any time signature
- The meaning of '*ad lib*'
- The meaning of any dynamic marking
- The meaning of the tempo marking
- The meaning of the key signature (stating either major or relative minor)
- The meaning of the swung rhythm marking

Part 2: Your Voice and the Microphone

The examiner will also ask **one** question about the voice or the microphone. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- Using your articulators (mouth/lips/tongue/teeth/jaw), how can you modify a bright 'ee' sound to produce a less bright tone?
- How would you prevent straining during prolonged use of louder dynamics?
- Suggest two exercises that can help develop control over dynamics across your range
- Explain how you would use microphone technique to be able to sing at different volumes

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 5 exam lasts **30 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 6

The Grade 6 vocals exam is for candidates who have begun to develop advanced technical control and a competent grasp of stylistic techniques and personalisation. There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate.

Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is mandatory in all sections of the exam at Grade 6.

Grade 6

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Harmony Vocals (Test 2). The Harmony Vocals test needs to include the use of lyrics which will be given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Three** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece), **one** question will be asked on the use of improvisation in the piece, and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice or microphone. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 6 exam lasts **40 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Quick Study Piece
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 6 there are **five** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 100bpm
4/4 time signature

A blues scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 100bpm
4/4 time signature

A major and diminished arpeggio must be prepared. This test must be performed to a metronome click track and any starting note between C–G may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (four-click) count-in. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following interval sequences must be prepared:

- **Major 7th and major 6th sequence**
- **Minor 7th and minor 6th sequence**

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these sequences in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range A–C (female) and D–F (male). Candidates will then be required to sing the 1st–major 7th, 1st–major 6th–1st in sequence or the 1st–minor 7th, 1st–minor 6th–1st in sequence. This will be at the examiner’s choice.

The candidate can choose to sing to a metronome click throughout or to hear a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: BACKING VOCALS

Tempo: 120bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group **all three** backing vocal parts need to be prepared. This is a three-part harmony test and the candidate will be asked to perform one part in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The chosen part must be sung alongside the other two parts on the recording. The test needs to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDY

Tempo: 80–125bpm
4/4 time signature

Candidates will need to choose and perform **one** Stylistic Study from the group of styles listed below. This choice will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece. For example, if the Jazz and Blues stylistic study is chosen the examiner will give the candidate a QSP from the Jazz and Blues group.

- **Pop and Musical Theatre**
- **Soul and R’n’B**
- **Jazz and Blues**
- **Rock and Indie**

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Tempo: 70-160bpm

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. Bars 1–4 of the test will be a notated melody and the candidate must sing all the written detail, including the lyrics. In bars 5–8 candidates will need to improvise a variation of bars 1–4, developing both the lyrics and melody as they feel appropriate. In bars 9–12 candidates are required to improvise freely, with no reference to bars 1–4 needed. These bars can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

The examiner will give the candidate the sheet music and then a full mix version of the track will be heard, including the notated parts. This first playthrough will be preceded by the root note and a one-bar count-in. After the full mix candidates will have three minutes to practise. The root note will be played at the start of this practice time and then again after 90 seconds. During the practice time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one-bar count-in at the beginning.

At the end of the three minutes, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for rehearsal and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. Again, the root note will be heard and then a one-bar count-in before each playthrough. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

The QSP style will be from one of the following four groups. These match the groups of the Stylistics Studies in the Technical Exercises section.

- **Pop and Musical Theatre**
- **Soul and R'n'B**
- **Jazz and Blues**
- **Rock and Indie**

The style of the QSP given to the candidate will be from the same group as the candidate's choice of Stylistic Study. The examiner will decide the specific style from the group chosen.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Harmony Vocals (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: A major and C natural minor scale
- Male: E major or D natural minor scale

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use one of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root note or the 5th. The test will be heard twice, each time starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

HARMONY VOCALS

Key:

- Female: C major or A major
- Male: G major or A major

Tempo: 90–120bpm

The examiner will play a four-bar melody in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which), based on the I–IV–V–VI chords. The recorded vocal part will sing the root, 3rd or 5th of each chord and candidates need to harmonise a diatonic 3rd or 4th above this part using the same rhythm. The examiner will give the candidate the lyrics.

The test will be heard twice, starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in each time it is played. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the harmony line must be performed. It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Three** of these questions will be on general music knowledge of the piece, **one** will be on improvisation and **one** will be on the candidate's understanding of the voice or microphone.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **three** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Recognition of any interval up to an octave between two adjacent notes (candidates will need to state major, minor or perfect)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the chosen song. This should be done with reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part.

Part 3: Your Voice and the Microphone

The examiner will also ask you one question about the voice or the microphone. They will decide which. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- Name three effective resonators for singing
- Explain the difference between 'aspirate onset' and 'glottal onset'
- Which exercises might be safe to perform when your voice is tired or you have a sore throat?
- How can you balance your sound on microphone when switching between chest voice (low register) and head/falsetto voice (high register)?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 6 exam lasts **40 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 7

The Grade 7 vocals exam is for candidates who have a developed advanced technical control and a thorough grasp of extended stylistic techniques and personalisation. There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate.

Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is mandatory in all sections of the exam at Grade 7.

Grade 7

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Harmony Vocals (Test 2). The Harmony Vocals test needs to include the use of lyrics which will be given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Three** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece), **one** question will be asked on the use of improvisation in the piece, and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice or microphone. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 7 exam lasts **40 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Quick Study Piece
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 7 there are **five** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 100bpm
4/4 time signature

A harmonic minor scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 100bpm
3/4 time signature

An augmented arpeggio must be prepared. This test must be performed to a metronome click track and any starting note between C–G may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (four-click) count-in. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following interval sequences must be prepared:

- Major 3rd and major 2nd intervals
- Minor 3rd and minor 2nd intervals

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these sequences in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range A–C (female) and D–F (male). Candidates will then be required to sing the 1st–major 3rd, 1st–major 2nd–1st in sequence, or the 1st–minor 3rd, 1st–minor 2nd–1st in sequence. This will be at the examiner's choice. The candidate can choose to sing to a metronome click throughout or to hear a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: BACKING VOCALS

Tempo: 120bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group **all three** backing vocal parts need to be prepared. This is a three-part harmony test and the candidate will be asked to perform one part in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The chosen part must be sung alongside the other two parts on the recording. The test needs to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDY

Tempo: 80–125bpm
4/4 time signature

Candidates will need to choose and perform **one** Stylistic Study from the group of styles listed below. This choice will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece. For example, if the Jazz and Blues stylistic study is chosen the examiner will give the candidate a QSP from the Jazz and Blues group.

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and R'n'B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Tempo: 70-160bpm

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. Bars 1–4 of the test will be a notated melody and the candidate must sing all the written detail, including the lyrics. In bars 5–8 candidates will need to improvise a variation of bars 1–4, developing both the lyrics and melody as they feel appropriate. In bars 9–12 candidates are required to improvise freely, with no reference to bars 1–4 needed. These bars can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

The examiner will give the candidate the sheet music and then a full mix version of the track will be heard, including the notated parts. This first playthrough will be preceded by the root note and a one-bar count-in. After the full mix candidates will have three minutes to practise. The root note will be played at the start of this practice time and then again after 90 seconds. During the practice time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one-bar count-in at the beginning.

At the end of the three minutes, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for rehearsal and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. Again, the root note will be heard and then a one-bar count-in before each playthrough. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

The QSP style will be from one of the following four groups. These match the groups of the Stylistics Studies in the Technical Exercises section.

- **Pop and Musical Theatre**
- **Soul and R'n'B**
- **Jazz and Blues**
- **Rock and Indie**

The style of the QSP given to the candidate will be from the same group as the candidate's choice of Stylistic Study. The examiner will decide the specific style from the group chosen.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Harmony Vocals (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- **Female: B major and D natural minor scale**
- **Male: D major or E natural minor scale**

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use one of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root note or the 5th. The test will be heard twice, each time starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a **vocal** count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

HARMONY VOCALS

Key:

- **Female: A major or E minor**
- **Male: E major or B minor**

Tempo: 90–130bpm

The examiner will play a four-bar melody in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which), based on any diatonic chords. The recorded vocal part will sing the root, 3rd or 5th of each chord and candidates need to harmonise a diatonic 3rd or 4th above this part using the same rhythm. The examiner will give the candidate the lyrics.

The test will be heard twice, starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in each time it is played. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the harmony line must be performed. It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Three** of these questions will be on general music knowledge of the piece, **one** will be on improvisation and **one** will be on the candidate's understanding of the voice or microphone.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **three** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Recognition of any interval up to an octave between two adjacent notes (candidates will need to state major, minor or perfect)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the chosen song. This should be done with reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part.

Part 3: Your Voice and the Microphone

The examiner will also ask you one question about the voice or the microphone. They will decide which. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- What type of exercise might you use to practise 'flipping between registers', including the pitches you would use in the exercise for your voice?
- Give two examples of vocal effects you might employ while singing in the rock style
- Explain the difference between 'warm-ups' and 'technical practice', including one example of the type of exercise used for each
- What equalization settings might you use to correct a singer with a very 'nasal' sound?

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 7 exam lasts **40 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

Grade 8

The Grade 8 vocals exam is for candidates who have a developed advanced technical control and a thorough grasp of extended stylistic techniques and personalisation. There are two types of exam: the Grade Exam and the Performance Certificate.

Please see the Examinations section on **page 3** for further details.

The use of a microphone is mandatory in all sections of the exam at Grade 8.

Grade 8

GRADE EXAMS

PREPARED WORK

Candidates will need to perform three Performance Pieces and the Technical Exercises for the Grade Exam. These are to be performed at the beginning of the exam and can be in either order, at the candidate's choice. The examiner will only ask for a selection of the Technical Exercises in the exam.

UNPREPARED WORK

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. This is followed by two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) then Harmony Vocals (Test 2). The Harmony Vocals test needs to include the use of lyrics which will be given by the examiner.

For the final part of the exam, **five** General Musicianship Questions will be asked. **Three** questions will be asked on one of the pieces performed, (the candidate will be asked to choose which piece), **one** question will be asked on the use of improvisation in the piece, and **one** question will be asked on understanding of the voice or microphone. All questions will be at the examiner's choice.

EXAM STRUCTURE

The Grade 8 exam lasts **40 minutes** and will be taken in the following order:

- Performance Pieces*
- Technical Exercises *
- Quick Study Piece
- Ear Tests
- General Musicianship Questions

**These elements can be taken first or second at the candidate's request*

Setting the level of the backing track

At the start of the exam the examiner will conduct a sound check to ensure that the level of the backing track is satisfactory for the candidate. Candidates will be asked to sing along to the backing track for the first few bars of the first Performance Piece. The sound check is not marked and once the correct level has been agreed the examiner will start the exam with either the Performance Pieces or Technical Exercises at the candidate's choice. Note that the sound check is only conducted for the first piece.

TECHNICAL EXERCISES

At Grade 8 there are **five** groups of Technical Exercises. The examiner will ask for a selection from each group.

GROUP A: SCALES

Tempo: 100bpm
4/4 time signature

A chromatic scale must be prepared. The candidate may select any starting note from A–E and may choose to sing along to a metronome click or hear four clicks before the test starts. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP B: ARPEGGIOS

Tempo: 100bpm
4/4 time signature

A diminished 7 arpeggio must be prepared. This test **must** be performed to a metronome click track and any starting note between C–G may be selected by the candidate. The root note will be heard, followed by a one-bar (four-click) count-in. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP C: INTERVALS

Tempo: 90bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group the following interval sequences must be prepared:

- Major 7th, minor 7th and octave intervals
- Major 3rd and minor 3rd intervals

The candidate will be asked to perform one of these sequences in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The examiner will choose a starting note within the range A–C (female) and D–F (male). Candidates will then be required to sing the 1st–major 7th, 1st–minor 7th, 1st–octave–1st in sequence or the 1st–major 3rd, 1st–minor 3rd–1st in sequence. This will be at the examiner’s choice. The candidate can choose to sing to a metronome click throughout or to hear a four-beat count-in. Whichever option is chosen, the starting note will be heard before the count starts. This test can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

GROUP D: BACKING VOCALS

Tempo: 130bpm
4/4 time signature

In this group **all three** backing vocal parts need to be prepared. This is a three-part harmony test and the candidate will be asked to perform one part in the exam, as chosen by the examiner. The chosen part must be sung alongside the other two parts on the recording. The test needs to be performed to the appropriate backing track which can be found on the download card.

GROUP E: STYLISTIC STUDY

Tempo: 80–125bpm
4/4 time signature

Candidates will need to choose and perform **one** Stylistic Study from the group of styles listed below. This choice will determine the style of the Quick Study Piece. For example, if the Jazz and Blues stylistic study is chosen the examiner will give the candidate a QSP from the Jazz and Blues group.

- Pop and Musical Theatre
- Soul and R’n’B
- Jazz and Blues
- Rock and Indie

QUICK STUDY PIECE

Tempo: 70-160bpm

At this grade candidates will be asked to prepare and perform a short Quick Study Piece (QSP). This will consist of four-bars of melody and eight-bars of improvisation. Bars 1–4 of the test will be a notated melody and the candidate must sing all the written detail, including the lyrics. In bars 5–8 candidates will need to improvise a variation of bars 1–4, developing both the lyrics and melody as they feel appropriate. In bars 9–12 candidates are required to improvise freely, with no reference to bars 1–4 needed. These bars can be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. Improvised lyrics and vocal ad-libbing are permitted.

The examiner will give the candidate the sheet music and then a full mix version of the track will be heard, including the notated parts. This first playthrough will be preceded by the root note and a one-bar count-in. After the full mix, candidates will have three minutes to practise. The root note will be played at the start of this practice time and then again after 90 seconds. During the practice time, candidates will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one-bar count-in at the beginning.

At the end of the three minutes, the backing track will be played twice more with the notated parts now absent. The first time is for rehearsal and the second time is for the candidate to perform the final version for the exam. Again, the root note will be heard and then a one-bar count-in before each playthrough. The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the root note and count-in of the second playthrough will start immediately.

The QSP style will be from one of the following four groups. These match the groups of the Stylistics Studies in the Technical Exercises section.

- **Pop and Musical Theatre**
- **Soul and R'n'B**
- **Jazz and Blues**
- **Rock and Indie**

The style of the QSP given to the candidate will be from the same group as the candidate's choice of Stylistic Study. The examiner will decide the specific style from the group chosen.

EAR TESTS

There are two Ear Tests: Melodic Recall (Test 1) and Harmony Vocals (Test 2).

MELODIC RECALL

Key:

- Female: B major and D natural minor scale
- Male: D major or E natural minor scale

Tempo: 90bpm

The examiner will play a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use one of the above scales (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root, 3rd or the 5th. The test will be heard twice, each time starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the melody must be sung to the drum backing.

Candidates are permitted to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

This test may be performed using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.

HARMONY VOCALS

Key:

- Female: A major or B minor
- Male: D major or E minor

Tempo: 90–130bpm

The examiner will play a four-bar melody in one of the above keys (the examiner will decide which), based on any diatonic chords. The recorded vocal part will sing the root, 3rd or 5th of each chord and candidates need to harmonise a diatonic 3rd or 4th above this part using the same rhythm. The examiner will give the candidate the lyrics.

The test will be heard twice, starting with the root note and a four-beat count-in each time it is played. There will be a short gap to practise after each playthrough. Next a vocal count-in will be heard, after which the harmony line must be performed. It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while the candidate is still practising.

GENERAL MUSICIANSHIP QUESTIONS

In this part of the exam **five** questions will be asked. **Three** of these questions will be on general music knowledge of the piece, **one** will be on improvisation and **one** will be on the candidate's understanding of the voice or microphone.

MUSIC KNOWLEDGE

Part 1: General Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask **three** music knowledge questions. The questions will be based on one of the pieces (including Free Choice Pieces) performed by the candidate in the exam. The candidate can choose which one.

If there are handwritten notes on the piece chosen, the examiner may ask the candidate to choose an alternative.

The candidate will be asked to identify and explain:

- Any notation used in the chosen piece
- Recognition of any interval up to an octave between two adjacent notes (candidates will need to state major, minor or perfect)

Part 2: Improvisation

Candidates will be asked to briefly describe and demonstrate their approach to how they would improvise any part of the chosen song. This should be done with reference to melody, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and expression. Candidates can choose the part.

Part 3: Your Voice and the Microphone

The examiner will also ask you one question about the voice or the microphone. They will decide which. Brief demonstrations to assist answers are acceptable.

Candidates will be asked one of the following questions:

- What is 'melisma' and what exercises can help you develop it?
- Describe techniques you might employ to build emotional intensity in a soul/R&B style ballad
- Give two examples of exercises designed to develop intensity/power in a singer's 'mix' voice
- Explain the difference between a dynamic and a condenser microphone, including one example each of their uses

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

The Grade 8 exam lasts **40 minutes** and the candidate chooses to sing **five** pieces only.

FREE CHOICE PIECES

Free Choice Pieces may be performed in the examination:

- Grade exam: **Two** Free Choice Pieces
- *Performance certificate*: **Three** Free Choice Pieces

To view our list of Wider Repertoire, please visit the website: www.rslawards.com.

REVISION HISTORY

Revised: 27 Apr 2020

The grading criteria tables for each unit have been removed, and replaced with one unified table within the preface section. The replacement tables include streamlined criteria each of which comprises clarified wording in a unified format, along with definitions of terms used. This is to facilitate digital mark sheet assessment whilst maintaining the recognition of knowledge skills and understanding attained at each grade level.

Revised: 5 May 2020

Grading criteria tables updated to include clarification of descriptors at 'Below Pass 1' band of attainment.