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Ear Tests

The examiner will play two minims one after the other. Candidates are to state whether the second note is higher or lower in pitch than the first note. The test will be played twice, each time preceded by four clicks. For this exercise, candidates are to use the words 'higher' or 'lower'. The tempo is 𝅗𝅥=95.

The downloadable audio is representative of what candidates will hear in an exam.

Melodic Recall | Example test

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

SAMPLE

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FEATURING
Béla Bartók
Black Violin
Emile Waldteufel
Rihanna feat. Calvin Harris
Assassin's Creed III
Ignatius Sancho
Franz Lehár
Neil Mackay
Thomas Gregory
Kathy Blackwell and David Blackwell
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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 1 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	50 secs – 1 min 30 secs
Key	C major, G major, D major, A major, relative minors
Tempo	60–140 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$
Dynamics	*f p mf mp ff pp*, crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Simple use of articulations; may include staccato, tenuto, slurs, accents.
Rhythmic Features	Basic repetitive patterns, may contain simple syncopation.
Technical Elements	First position only, some string crossing, basic legato bowing, pizzicato limited to open strings or on a repeated single pitch.

We Found Love

Album: *Talk That Talk*
Released: 2011
Label: Def Jam/SRP

Genre: Pop/Electro-house
Written by: Calvin Harris
Produced by: Calvin Harris

'We Found Love' is a song performed by singer and actor Rihanna, and written and produced by British DJ and producer Calvin Harris. The song featured on Rihanna's sixth studio album *Talk That Talk* which peaked at number one on the UK Albums chart.

Rihanna started releasing music in 2003 after she was discovered in her home country of Barbados. She then auditioned and was signed to Jay-Z's record label Def Jam in 2005. Rihanna has released eight studio albums, four of which have gone on to top the UK Album Chart.

Producer Calvin Harris has famously worked with some of the industry's most successful artists, including Sam Smith, Ariana Grande and Rihanna. In 2013 he won his first Grammy Award with 'We Found Love'.

Performance Notes

Try to familiarise yourself with the rhythm of the piano accompaniment (or synth on the backing track if using it), as you need to feel where your melody fits into the groove of the song. Throughout the piece, the piano (or synth) only plays on the downbeat of beats 1 and 4 – the rest is syncopated. Therefore, you need to be very secure with the underlying pulse of the piece.

Start with your bow on the string and make sure there is a really strong contact. Use the middle of the bow, but avoid applying too much (even on longer notes such as in bar 4). Try to avoid arriving early on the dotted crotchets on beats '3 &' (*e.g.* bars 2, 6 *etc.*) as doing so will make the groove of the piece seem unsettled. Instead, try to put a little extra 'bite' on these notes to give them energy. Use very small bows on separate quavers, particularly those appearing before a tied note (as in bars 9, 13 and 15). In contrast, enjoy projecting the descending crotchets at bars 11 and 12. From bar 17 with the marked articulation, use a very short and stopped bow on the first note and make the second note heavier but not too long.

Don't forget that this is a dance tune and needs dance floor energy and volume!

We Found Love

Words and Music by Calvin Harris

Rihanna feat. Calvin Harris

SAMPLE

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Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 1:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=50)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Must be played with separate bows, ***or*** slurred with two quavers to a bow *(**examiner** choice – the examiner will state which with each requested scale)*.
- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** 'long tonic' rhythms. Scales are shown with 'long tonic' for illustrative purposes only *(**candidate** choice – see page 6 for further information)*.

Major and minor scales

G major, two octaves

D major, one octave

A major, one octave

E natural minor, one octave

SAMPLE

Sight Reading

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

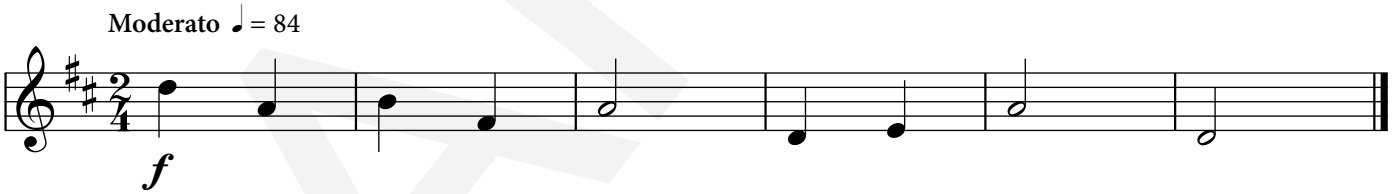
In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a four-bar example in the key of G major or D major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

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

Sight Reading | Example 1

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

Sight Reading | Example 2



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

SAMPLE

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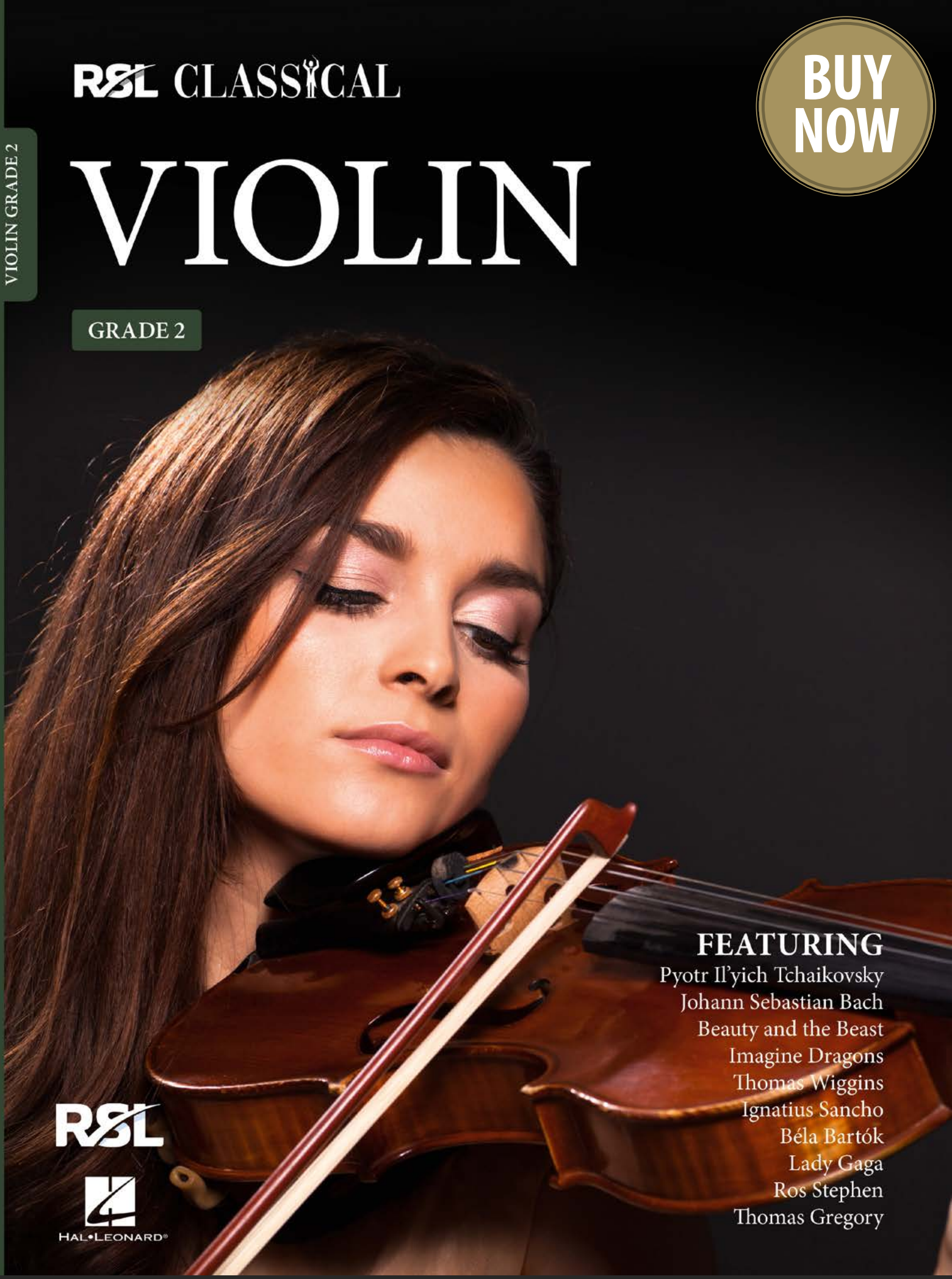
GRADE 2



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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 2 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	1 min 10 secs – 1 min 45 secs
Key	As previous grades, plus F major, B♭ major; relative minors
Tempo	60–140 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$
Dynamics	*f p mf mp ff pp*, crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Staccato, tenuto, slurs, accents, simple ornamentation (e.g. mordent).
Rhythmic Features	May include dotted rhythms, occasional syncopation and non-complex triplet groupings. Simpler rhythmic patterns may appear in conjunction with other features (e.g. string crossing, articulations, more complex bowing patterns).
Technical Elements	First position only, some mid-phrase legato string-crossing. Phrasing and articulations requiring increased bow control, coordination and more varied bow-speed for nuanced phrasing. Faster passages requiring quicker left-hand finger work.

Demons

Album: *Night Visions*
Released: 2012
Label: KidinaKorner/Interscope
Genre: Pop Rock
Written by: Daniel Reynolds, Benjamin McKee, Daniel Sermon, Alexander Grant and Josh Mosser
Produced by Alex da Kid

'Demons' is a song by American rock band Imagine Dragons and features on both their first major label EP, *Continued Silence*, and their 2012 debut studio album *Night Visions*. The song was then released as the album's third official single in 2013. It gave the band their second major chart success after 'Radioactive', peaking at number 13 in the UK.

Imagine Dragons originally formed in 2008. After releasing several EPs they gained greater commercial success with their debut studio album in 2012, which included several popular singles such as 'Radioactive', 'Demons' and 'On Top of the World'. Imagine Dragons have released four studio albums, all of which have made it to the top ten on the UK album chart. The band have won multiple awards, including ten Billboard Music Awards and a Grammy Award for Best Rock Performance in 2013 for 'Radioactive'. Imagine Dragons are still active and releasing current material, with their newest studio album due to be released in 2021.

Performance Notes

Although the piece begins at a *mezzo-piano* volume, make sure you prepare your up-bow on the string to enable a confident solo start to this piece. As this song is in the key of B♭ major, you will need to be mindful of your left-hand finger positions for the B♭ and E♭ notes. On the D, A and E string, it is essential to keep your first finger placed back throughout. This applies to second finger as well, so your overall hand position should stay low, without letting the third finger play too flat.

When you have a tie that starts before the beat, make sure you hold the note for its full length to keep the relaxed vibe of this song, avoiding being too metronomic with the quavers. The piano has constant quavers until bar 16, so lock into those to stay in time (or alternatively lock into the backing track if using it).

From bar 17, use a slightly more articulated bow stroke to bring out the offbeat rhythm while also playing louder (*mezzo-forte*). Try moving your bow closer to the bridge and give more grip to the bow with your right hand index finger. At bar 32 raise the volume further using more bow to help project the melody.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Demons

Words and Music by Daniel Reynolds, Benjamin McKee,
Daniel Sermon, Alexander Grant and Josh Mosser

Imagine Dragons

SAMPLE

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Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 2:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=60)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Must be played with separate bows, ***or*** slurred with two quavers to a bow *(**examiner** choice – the examiner will state which with each requested scale)*.
- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** 'long tonic' rhythms. Scales are shown with 'long tonic' for illustrative purposes only *(**candidate** choice – see page 6 for further information)*.

Major Scales

A major, two octaves

B♭ major, two octaves

C major, one octave

F major, one octave

SAMPLE

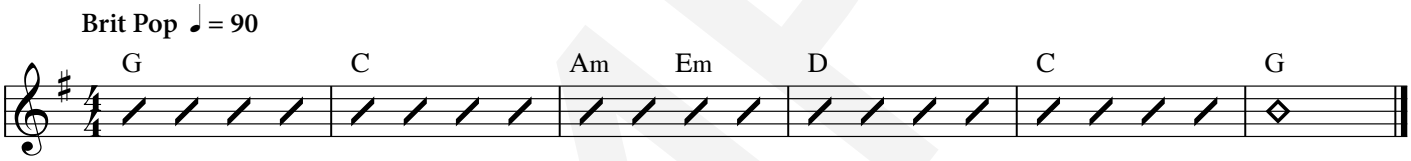
Improvisation & Interpretation

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

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

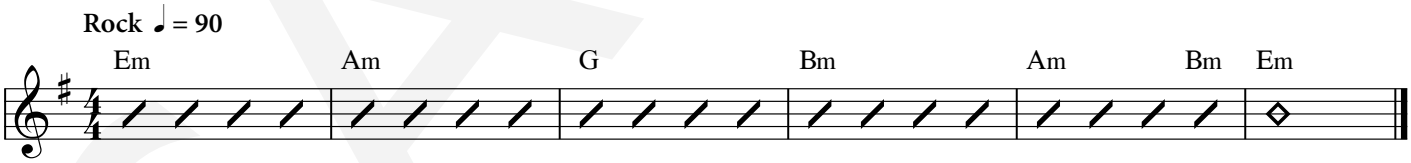
- At this grade, you will need to improvise a melodic line to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished,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

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1



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

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 2



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

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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 3 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	1 min 30 secs – 2 mins
Key	As previous grades, plus E major, E♭ major, A♭ major; relative minors
Tempo	60–150 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$ There may be very infrequent, simple time signature changes.
Dynamics	*f p mf mp ff pp*, crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	Staccato, tenuto, slurs, accents, may include some ornamentation (e.g. grace notes, mordents, turns).
Rhythmic Features	May include dotted rhythms, syncopation, triplet groupings. Simpler rhythms may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. string crossing, varying articulations, more complex bowing patterns).
Technical Elements	First, second and third position, perhaps some simple chromatic position slides, faster string crossing passages. More bow and tone control required, may include occasional natural harmonics, basic glissandos and pizzicato.

Flower Duet

Composer: Clément Philibert Léo Delibes
Nationality: French
Source/Date: *Lakmé* (1883)

The 'Flower Duet' is a vocal duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano written by French composer Léo Delibes. The piece is taken from his 1883 opera *Lakmé*, which continues to be one of his most successful works, and still a popular concert piece to this day. 'Flower Duet' has more recently become more widely recognised through its use in television adverts and films, including a 1980s commercial by British Airways.

As a composer, Delibes primarily wrote works for stage, and wrote several operas and ballets. While *Lakmé* remains a highly popular work, Delibes also gained great critical acclaim for his ballets, which are widely regarded as an influence on the composition of modern ballets, including works by Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky.

Performance Notes

It can be a challenge to maintain good intonation when playing in A major. Pay particular attention to the pitch of the sharpened notes on the D string, and be sure to bring the third finger back for the natural notes on the A and E strings.

This piece demands a variety of bowing approaches to achieve a convincing and expressive performance:

- Bars 1 and 2: Your bow strokes need to be very light and free-moving, allowing for less of an abrupt *staccato* and more of a 'lifted' effect on the last notes in each of these bars.
- Bars 3–5: Be sure to reserve your bow for the paired slurs, but by contrast you can use a whole bow for each beat in bar 4, with a focus on a gentle but swift re-take into bar 5.
- Bars 9–11: Make sure the bow is firmly in contact with the string before engaging with the up-bow entries, and make sure you mark the dynamic contrasts in these bars (***mf*** - ***mp*** - ***mf***)
- Bars 13 and 14: Use as much bow as you can to achieve a rich tone in these bars, ensuring a *forte* dynamic.

This piece is from the romantic era of classical music, and as such you should try to put as much expression into your performance as possible. Be sure to listen to recordings of performances of this famous work to inspire your own ideas.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Flower Duet

from *Lakmé*

By Léo Delibes

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Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 3:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=65)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

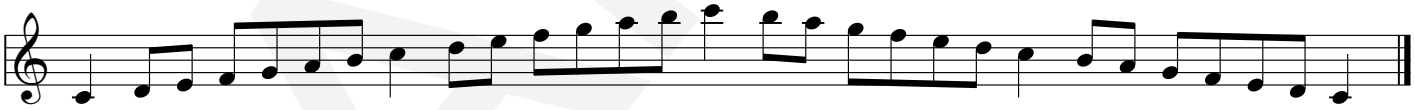
Major and minor scales:

- Must be played with separate bows, ***or*** slurred with two ***or*** four quavers to a bow *(**examiner** choice – the examiner will state which with each requested scale).*
- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** 'long tonic' rhythms. Scales are shown with 'long tonic' for illustrative purposes only *(**candidate** choice – see page 6 for further information)*.

Major Scales

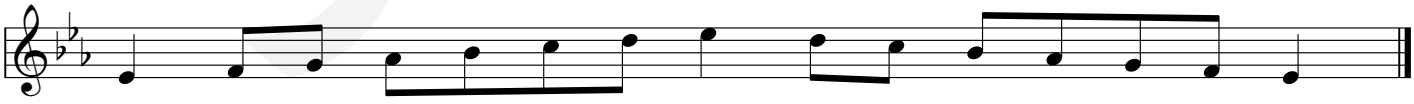
D major, two octaves

C major, two octaves



A♭ major, one octave

E♭ major, one octave



E major, one octave

SAMPLE

Sight Reading

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

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a four-bar example in the key of D major, B♭ major, C major or A minor, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

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

Sight Reading | Example 1

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

Sight Reading | Example 2

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

SAMPLE

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Edvard Grieg
Taylor Swift
The Weeknd
Rebecca Clarke
Florence Price
Stephen Montague
Amy Marcy Beach
Naoko Ikeda
Nikki Iles
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VIOLIN SAMPLE PACK

RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 4 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	1 min 45 secs – 2 mins 15 secs
Key	As previous grades, plus B major; relative minors
Tempo	60–150 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$ There may be very infrequent, simple time signature changes.
Dynamics	*f p mf mp ff pp*, crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>)
Articulation & Phrasing	More complex combinations of nuanced articulation and ornamentation, e.g. alternating between staccato and accented staccato notes.
Rhythmic Features	Likely to include more complex rhythmic patterns and syncopation. Simpler rhythms appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. faster tempos, string crossing, varying articulations, more complex bowing patterns). Simpler rhythmic patterns may appear in conjunction with other features (e.g. string crossing, articulations, more complex bowing patterns).
Technical Elements	First–fourth position, likely to include chromaticism and accidentals requiring accurate finger placement, possible passages of double-stopping. Increasing complexity with bow speed, vibrato, dynamic variations and string crossing. May include natural harmonics, glissando, more complex use of pizzicato speed and techniques such as marcato, pizzicato, left-hand pizzicato and pizzicato chords.

The Deserted Garden

Composer: Florence Price (1887–1953)
Nationality: American
Date: 1933

'The Deserted Garden' was originally written for violin and piano by American composer and pianist Florence Price. The piece contains a variety of themes, combining western classical traditions with the blues music of the American South.

Florence Price was born in 1887 to a mixed-race family. She was initially taught music by her mother, giving her first piano performance at just four years old and having her first published composition when she was eleven. Price then went on to compose a variety of works, including orchestral pieces, solo and chamber works, and music for silent films and radio advertisements.

Performance Notes

The beautiful opening melody requires a *legato* bow stroke and a calm but rich *vibrato*. To avoid awkward string changes, plan your fingering pattern wisely to enable well-placed position shifts, for example, try shifting up to the final note of bar 3 to stay on the G string, avoiding crossing over to the D string mid-phrase. Once you have secured your finger patterns throughout, you can experiment with the speed and timing of your shifts. Try keeping the shift speed slower than normal to deliver expressive and nuanced phrasing.

As well as frequently changing dynamics, the tempo also varies across the sections. At bar 9, the *piu mosso* requires a change in energy. Try experimenting with a narrower and faster *vibrato*, along with a lighter bow hold, to give the feeling of a change in pace. Be careful not to rush the *poco rit.* in bars 16 and 24, instead aiming for a gradual easing of the tempo. The music comes to a dramatic conclusion with a final *crescendo*. Along with a slightly faster bow speed, move the bow closer to the bridge and apply a little extra arm weight for each of the accented notes.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

The Deserted Garden

By Florence Price

SAMPLE

Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 4:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=70)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Must be played with separate bows, ***or*** slurred with two ***or*** four quavers to a bow *(**examiner** choice – the examiner will state which with each requested scale)*.
- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** 'long tonic' rhythms. Scales are shown with 'long tonic' for illustrative purposes only *(**candidate** choice – see page 6 for further information)*.

Major Scales

A♭ major, two octaves

B major, two octaves

E major, two octaves

SAMPLE

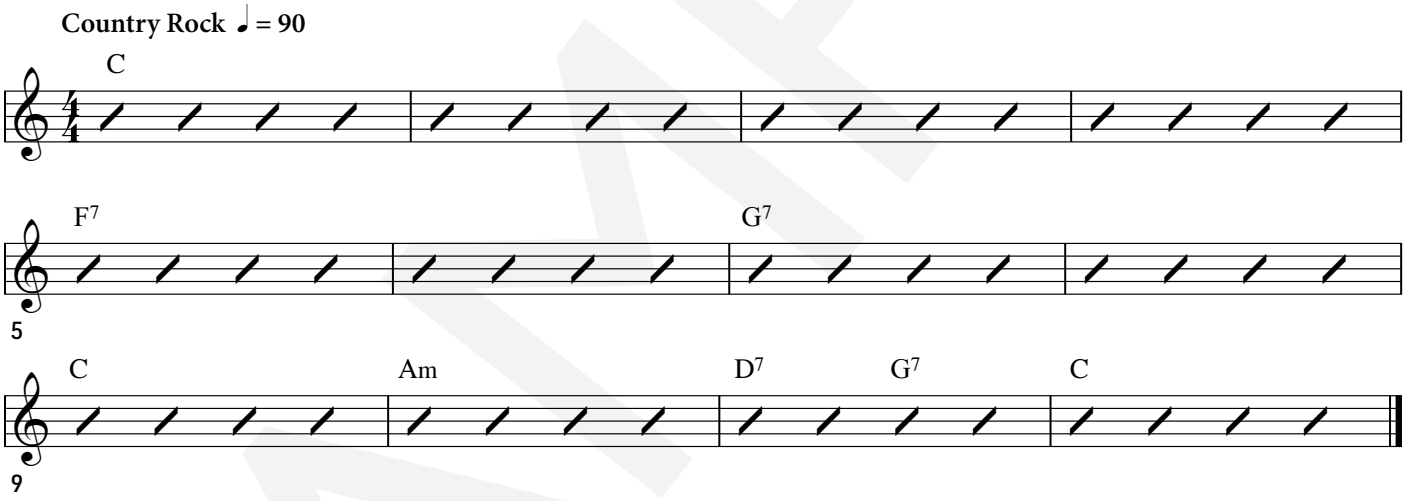
Improvisation & Interpretation

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

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give you a twelve-bar chord progression in the key of C major or A minor. Tests in C major may contain the following non-diatonic chords: C^7, F^7, D^7 and Fm. Tests in A minor may feature an E^7 chord. In both tests, slash chords and inversions may occasionally be shown. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for you to practise and the second time is for you to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩=90.

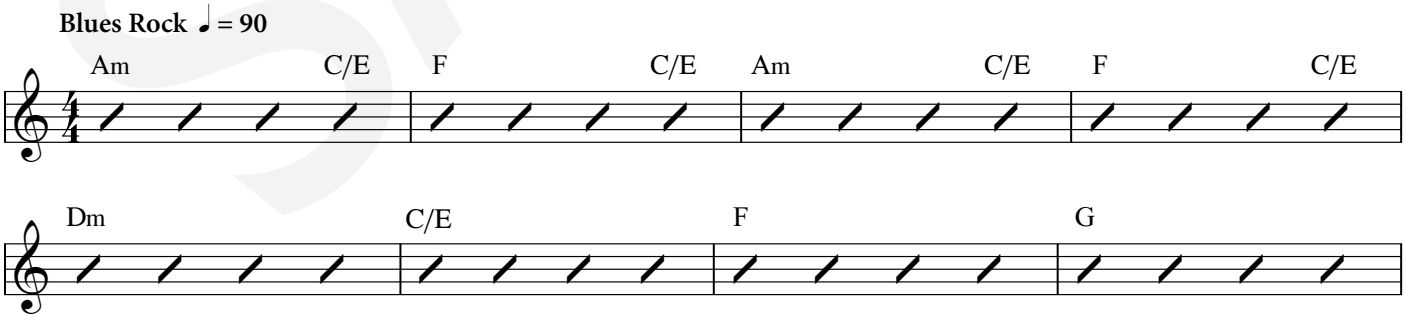
- You will need to improvise a melodic line to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in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

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1



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

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 2



SAMPLE

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Dua Lipa
Nikki Iles
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E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug

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VIOLIN SAMPLE PACK

RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 5 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins – 2 mins 45 secs
Key	As previous grades, plus D♭ major; relative minors
Tempo	60–160 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$ There may be occasional time signature changes, or odd time signatures depending on the complexity of the music.
Dynamics	*f p mf mp ff pp*, crescendo (═) and diminuendo (═)
Articulation & Phrasing	More complex combinations of nuanced articulation, ornamentation and phrasing, e.g. alternating between staccato and accented staccato notes, long pianissimo trills.
Rhythmic Features	Likely to include more complex rhythmic patterns and syncopation. Simpler rhythmic patterns may appear in conjunction with other elements (e.g. string crossing, more complex bowing patterns).
Technical Elements	First–fifth position, more complex/faster position changes including shifts across strings, chromaticism and/or range of accidentals requiring accurate finger placement. Greater expressive tonal range, vibrato, and bow control required, more challenging string crossing passages and likely use of double-stopping. Possible use of harmonics, glissando, more complex use of pizzicato speed and techniques such as marcato, pizzicato and pizzicato chords.

Danse Macabre

Composer: Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
Nationality: French
Source/Date: Op. 40 (1874)

'Danse Macabre' was written by French composer and conductor Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns. Originally an art song composed for voice and piano, Saint-Saëns later reworked the piece for orchestra, and replaced the vocal line with a solo violin. Thanks to the ghoulish theme and unusual use of discordant harmony, 'Danse Macabre' is reputed to have caused some controversy on its premiere. However, it quickly became a popular work and not long after the premiere, Liszt was inspired to write his own arrangement for piano. Today is has gained even greater popularity, and is still regularly performed today. 'Danse Macabre' is also recognised as the theme for BBC's mystery crime drama *Jonathan Creek*.

Saint-Saëns was an organist, pianist, conductor and composer of the Romantic period. A musical prodigy, he made his performance debut at ten years old, before going on to study at the Paris Conservatoire. He went on to become a church organist and later a freelance pianist and composer. Some of Saint-Saëns most popular works include *The Carnival of Animals* and the opera *Samson and Delilah*.

Performance Notes

Before rehearsing this piece, take time to listen to the original orchestral version and familiarise yourself with the story behind this famous tone poem. The opening eight bars should sound full of confidence and deliberately discordant, emulating a violinist tuning up before the dance begins. There are several finger position options for playing the opening double-stopped chord. One option you might like to try is to play the B♭ with a third finger on the D string, allowing the A string to ring out as an open string. Position your bow fairly close to the bridge and play at the heel with some bite.

Be careful not to allow the bow to bounce too high throughout all of the *staccato* passages. While the bow should naturally lift between notes, it is important to keep good control using the natural weight of your left arm and staying between the heel and middle of your bow. Take note of the accents and *tenuto* notes to help highlight the nuanced phrasing within these passages. Bars 77–93 are accompanimental so make sure you listen carefully to ensure your part supports the main melodic line.

The melody from bars 25–41 should be played with a rich, warm tone and a wide *vibrato*. If you decide to play this melody mainly on the G string, be careful with your hand position to avoid straining your wrist, listening carefully to your intonation. Using plenty of bow and a faster bow speed throughout this section will add an airy, breathy quality to the sound, in keeping with the ghoulish character of the piece.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Danse Macabre

By Camille Saint-Saëns

SAMPLE

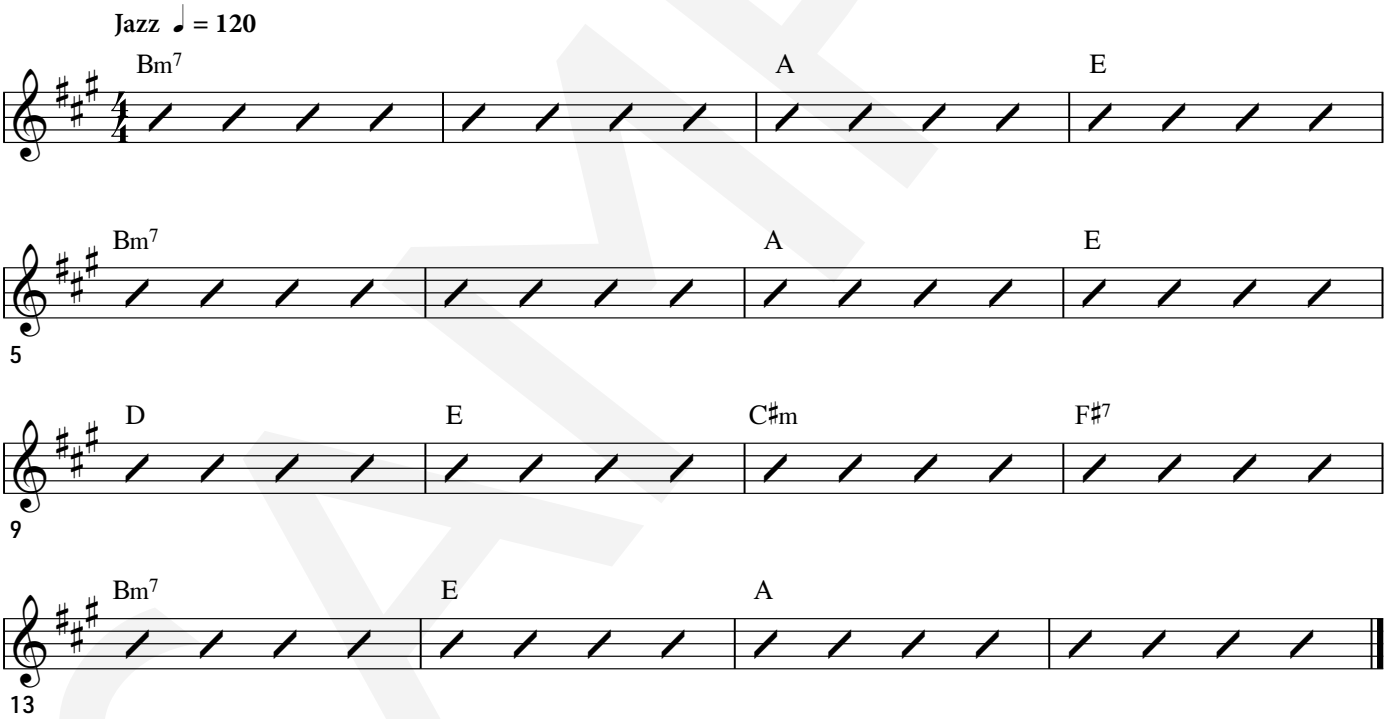
Improvisation & Interpretation

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

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give you a 16-bar chord progression in the key of A major or F♯ minor. The chord progression may contain occasional non-diatonic chords. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for you to practise and the second time is for you to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩=120.

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

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1



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

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GRADE 6

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Florence Price
Lili Boulanger
Max Richter
Aaron Minsky
Pirates of the Caribbean:
The Curse of the Black Pearl
Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges
Edward W. Hardy

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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 6 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins 15 secs – 3 mins
Key	As previous grades, plus F♯ major; relative minors
Tempo	50–200 bpm
Time Signatures	$\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$ There may be more regular time signature changes, or odd time signatures depending on the complexity of the music.
Dynamics	Any, with changes, including strong contrasts.
Articulation & Phrasing	More complex combinations of nuanced articulation, ornamentation and phrasing, e.g. alternating between staccato and accented staccato notes, long pianissimo trills.
Rhythmic Features	Likely to include more complex rhythmic patterns and syncopation. Faster and more rhythmically complex passages will require left-hand dexterity and greater bow control.
Other Features	More complex inter-relationship with the accompaniment part, requiring greater musical awareness and ensemble skills.
Technical Elements	More complex position changes including shifting across strings, chromaticism and/or range of accidentals requiring accurate finger placement. Greater tone range, expressive and nuanced vibrato and bow control required, more challenging, faster string crossing passages and likely use of double-stopping. Possible use of harmonics, glissando, more complex use of pizzicato, perhaps fast changes between arco/pizzicato.

Awaken

Performed by: Damien Escobar
Composers: Damien Escobar and Alexandre Varela Da Veiga
Nationality: American
Source/Date: *Boundless* (2017)

'Awaken' is a violin solo written by Damien Escobar and Alexandre Varela Da Veiga, and features on Damien Escobar's 2017 album *Boundless*. The track was originally released as a single in 2015, before being added to the violinist's second album. Escobar is an American violinist from New York. He started playing violin when he was eight years old, and at the age of ten, became the youngest student to be accepted into Julliard School of Music. After graduating, he went on to achieve notable success with duo Nuttin' But Stringz, before going on to perform solo from 2012. In 2015 he released his first solo single, which debuted at number 15 on the iTunes chart.

Performance Notes

Damien Escobar has a uniquely expressive sound and style, and it is important to study his original recording in order to capture this and adopt into your own personalised performance. Many of these stylistic elements are translated in the score; namely, Escobar's very expressive dynamic swells (*e.g.* bars 4–7), and short phrases (such as in verse 1) which mustn't be clipped; rather, the ends of the second notes should themselves have a feeling of 'lifting away'.

Similarly, in-keeping with Escobar's style are the various slides and articulations, all of which add character. Take time to study how Escobar delivers these, and experiment with your own technique to try and emulate the sound. Variation is brought into Verse 2, where a mix of *pizzicato* and *arco* techniques are used, before a dramatic *crescendo* through the end of the second Pre-Chorus. In this section, it is important not to be tempted to rush, particularly on the triplets in bar 48. You must also keep an eye on your timing through the more demanding passages within the second chorus, especially the final flourish. If performing to the backing track, try to 'lock in' to the underlying pulse. You can practise this by tapping your foot as you play, internalising the downbeats. This may be tricky at first, but you can develop this skill with a metronome at lower speeds before bringing up to performance tempo.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Awaken

By Damien Escobar and Alexandre Varela Da Veiga

Damien Escobar

SAMPLE

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Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 6:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=90)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** ' long tonic' rhythms (candidate choice).

If choosing 'even notes' (quavers):

- Three octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: three quavers to a bow
- Two octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: four quavers to a bow

If choosing 'long tonic' rhythms:

- Three octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: one octave (seven quavers) to a bow
- Two octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: four quavers to a bow

Major Scales

B♭ major, three octaves

C major, two octaves

SAMPLE

Ear Tests

The examiner will play a two-bar diatonic melody in the key of E♭ major, with a range up to an octave. There will be an E♭ root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be either the root or fifth. It is acceptable for candidates to play over the track as the test is being played and there will be 10 seconds to practise after the second playing. The tempo is ♩=95.

The downloadable audio is representative of what candidates will hear in an exam.

Melodic Recall | Example

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

SAMPLE

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GRADE 7

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Robert Schumann
Damien Escobar
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Jamiroquai
Stuff Smith
Aaron Minsky
Grażyna Bacewicz
Mihailo Trandafilovski
Daniel Bernard Roumain

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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 7 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins 30 secs – 3 mins 30 secs
Key	Any, with changes.
Tempo	50–200 bpm
Time Signatures	Any, with changes.
Dynamics	Any, with changes, including strong contrasts.
Articulation & Phrasing	Complex and subtle combinations of nuanced articulation, ornamentation and phrasing.
Rhythmic Features	Likely to include complex combinations, variations and changes in conjunction with other elements such as rubato, position shifts, articulations, double-stopping and chords. Possible cross-rhythms with accompaniment part.
Other Features	More complex inter-relationship with the accompaniment part, requiring greater musical awareness and ensemble skills. Cadenzas may feature.
Technical Elements	More complex position changes including shifting across strings, chromaticism and/or range of accidentals requiring accurate finger placement. Greater tone range, expressive and nuanced vibrato and bow control required, more challenging, faster string crossing passages and likely use of double-stopping. Possible use of harmonics, glissando, more complex use of pizzicato, perhaps fast changes between arco/pizzicato.

The Need to Be

Composers: Ryuichi Sakamoto and Daniel Roumain
Nationality: American
Source/Date: *etudes4violin&electronix* (2007)

'The Need to Be' from Daniel Roumain's debut album *etudes4violin&electronix*, features Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto on piano, who co-wrote the song. The composition showcases both musicians' unique styles, and the interaction between them.

Daniel Bernard Roumain has been an active composer, performer and educator for more than a decade. Working with artists such as Lady Gaga and Bill T. Jones. He is known for mixing different genres together, and has added hip hop, electronic and jazz music into his classical compositions. Ryuichi Sakamoto began his career in the 1970s as a performer and collaborator. He went on to become an avid composer and some of his best-known works have been used in film and media. In 1987 he won the Oscar for Best Original Score with 'The Last Emperor'.

Performance Notes

Although the direction '*espressivo improvvisato*' gives you a certain amount of artistic licence, make sure that you retain the rhythmic framework, keeping a sense of pulse throughout. Use a *legato* bow and move your right arm with a full sense of freedom, with fluid changes of bow direction.

Spend time practising the *glissandi*, to ensure you don't under or over shoot the destination note. Keep your left hand as a unified whole, paying attention to your thumb position as your hand position moves along the string. Try using your third finger for the left-hand *pizzicato* in bars 10 and 11, being careful not to disturb the *arco* note.

Change between '*sul pont* 'and '*nat* 'with a light bow and don't let the mordents interrupt the flow of the melody too much. From bar 29, keep your first finger solidly on both strings, except when you need to use the open A string. Move your bow even more freely from 38 and give the up-bow accents a real bite with your right hand first finger.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

The Need to Be

By Ryuichi Sakamoto and Daniel Roumain

Daniel Bernard Roumain

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SAMPLE

Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 7:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose ***one*** technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied (recommended minimum tempo: ♩=100)
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Can be played with 'even notes' (quavers) ***or*** ' long tonic' rhythms (candidate choice).

If choosing 'even notes' (quavers):

- Three octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: three quavers to a bow
- Two octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: four quavers to a bow

If choosing 'long tonic' rhythms:

- Three octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: one octave (seven quavers) to a bow
- Two octave scales must be played ***either*** with separate bows, ***or*** slurred: four quavers to a bow

Major Scales

A major, three octaves

B major, three octaves

SAMPLE

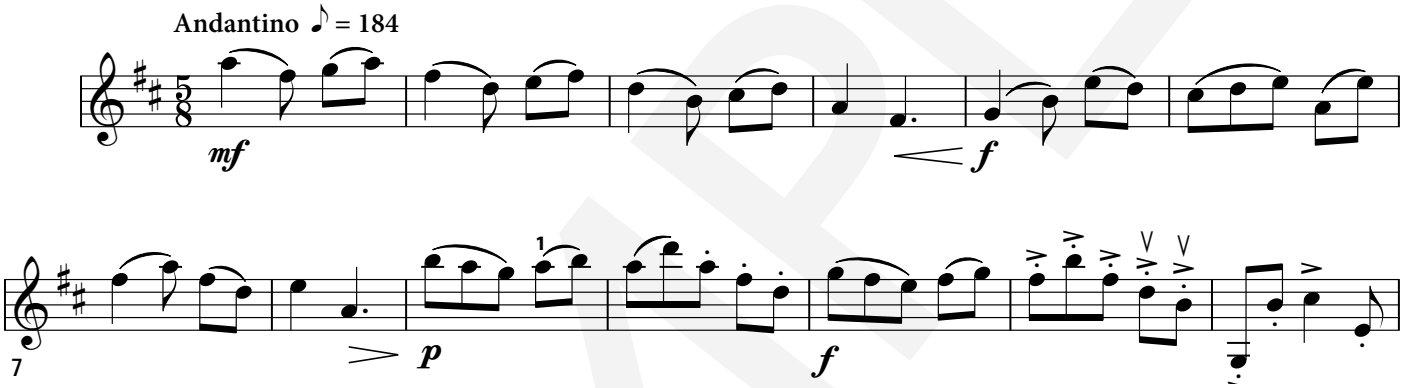
Sight Reading

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

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a 16 to 20-bar piece, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

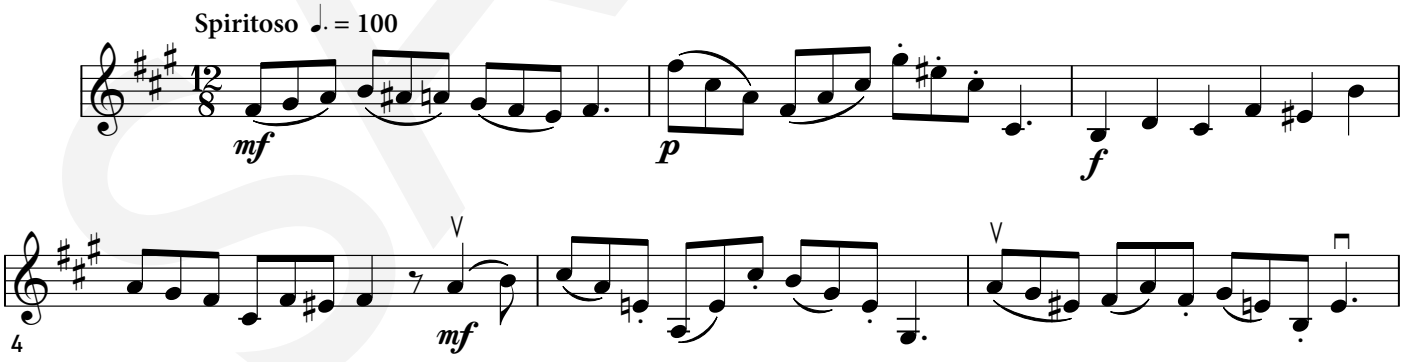
While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1



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

Sight Reading | Example 2



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

SAMPLE

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GRADE 8

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Lili Boulanger
Clean Bandit
Black Violin
Fats Waller

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RSL CLASSICAL VIOLIN GRADE 8 MUSICAL SKILLS AND FEATURES

Duration	2 mins 30 secs – 3 mins 45 secs
Key	Any, with changes.
Tempo	50-200 bpm
Time Signatures	Any, with changes.
Dynamics	Any, with changes, including strong contrasts.
Articulation & Phrasing	Complex and subtle combinations of nuanced articulation, ornamentation and phrasing.
Rhythmic Features	Any. Complex combinations, variations and changes in conjunction with other elements such as rubato, position shifts, articulations, double-stopping and chords. Possible cross-rhythms with accompaniment part.
Other Features	More complex inter-relationship with the accompaniment part, requiring greater musical awareness and ensemble skills. Cadenzas may feature.
Technical Elements	More complex position changes including shifting across strings, chromaticism and/or range of accidentals requiring accurate finger placement. Greater tonal range, expressive and nuanced vibrato and bow control required, more challenging, faster string crossing passages and likely use of double-stopping. Possible use of harmonics, glissando, more complex use of pizzicato, perhaps fast changes between arco/pizzicato.

Allegro

Composer: Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)
Nationality: Italian
Source: *Spring, Concerto No. 1 in E Major*, Op. 8 (1723)

'Allegro' is the first movement of Vivaldi's famous violin concerto, *Spring*. The concerto is part of a set of four known as *The Four Seasons* published in 1723, with each concerto inspired by one of the four seasons of the year. One of Vivaldi's most famous works, *The Four Seasons* suite remains a favourite to this day and is regularly performed across the world.

Antonio Vivaldi was an Italian composer, teacher and violinist. He is widely considered one of the most influential Baroque composers, and is believed to have even had an influence on renowned composer Bach. Throughout his life, Vivaldi composed hundreds of concertos, and more than 40 operas. Vivaldi was also a catholic priest, and wrote many sacred works for an all-female music ensemble while working in an orphanage as a violin instructor.

Performance Notes

A key consideration for this piece is that it is programatic music. Spring, nature, flowers blooming, birds tweeting, streams rippling and leaves whispering in the wind are all asking to be imitated in your playing. The opening should be crisp and full of joy and energy, using a brisk bow stroke that is well-articulated and a sparkling narrow, fast *vibrato*.

There are obvious moments for flexibility in timing – there is no 'right' way to approach these – you should feel free, but have specific ideas in mind as to why you take more time over one note than another. At bar 31, use a *flautando* bow, floating softly over the string as you are portraying murmuring streams and gentle breezes. At bar 44 there is a brief thunderstorm heralding the arrival of spring, before a moment of sunshine at bar 47. Practise the string crossings here slowly with a relaxed wrist, keeping the bow on the strings. The birdsong moments need quick and narrow trills, with a percussive up-bow *staccato* on the quavers as if the birds are pecking.

Audio Access

Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right *(requires a compatible smartphone or tablet)* or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Allegro

from *Spring, Concerto No. 1 in E Major*, Op. 8

By Antonio Vivaldi

Spring has returned.

Allegro

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Technical Exercises

There are three groups of technical exercises at Grade 8:

- Group A: Scales
- Group B: Arpeggios
- Group C: Technical Studies

For groups A and B, the examiner will request a selection from each group to be performed. For group C, you may choose one technical study to perform from the three listed in the grade book.

Group A: Scales

All scales must be played:

- Unaccompanied
- Ascending and descending across the number of octaves as shown for each example

Major and minor scales:

- Must be played at a minimum tempo of ♩=120
- Must be played with separate bows, ***or*** slurred with three quavers to a bow ***or*** three octaves to a bow, changing bow on the top note *(**examiner** choice – the examiner will state which with each requested scale)*
- With 'even note rhythms' (no long tonic)

Major Scales

A♭ major, three octaves

D♭ major, three octaves

SAMPLE

Ear Tests

The examiner will play a two-bar diatonic melody in the key of D♭ major, with a range up to an octave. There will be a D♭ root note at the beginning of the test, then the melody will be played twice, each preceded by four clicks. After this, there will be a one-bar count-in and then candidates need to play the melody back to a drum backing. The first note of the melody will be either the root, third or fifth. The tempo is ♩=95.

The downloadable audio is representative of what candidates will hear in an exam.

Melodic Recall | Example 1

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

SAMPLE

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