

# Listening to Music with Understanding - 3

## ABRSM Aural Tests “Musical Features”

\*\*\* Please read Sections 1 and 2 (Grades 1 - 4) first \*\*\*

### From Grade 5:

#### (1) Texture

Texture describes the way the melody, harmony and rhythm are combined. There are three basic types:

##### **Melody with accompaniment**

A tune (in the foreground) is accompanied by more static harmony (in the background). The static harmony may be broken chords.

##### **Homophonic (the ABRSM calls this 'block chords')**

Like a hymn - all the parts in the music have the same rhythm at the same time.

##### **Contrapuntal**

“contrapuntal” is the adjective: “This music has a contrapuntal texture”

“Counterpoint” is the noun.

The two parts are rhythmically independent of each other. (Imitative counterpoint is a special class of contrapuntal music, where the two parts imitate each other. Much contrapuntal music is imitative. Fugue is a type of imitative counterpoint.

#### **Notes:**

- (1) I haven't included unison and canon here.
- (2) This is not the same texture question that most students will do at school in KS3 when they study the Elements of Music. Schools use words like thick and thin to describe texture, meaning many or few notes are heard at once, which is also useful.

#### **Keywords:**

Homophonic, Block chords, Contrapuntal, Imitative counterpoint, Thick, Thin.

#### (2) Form

Form describes the structure of the music

There are two main types at this level:

Binary : A-B

Ternary : A-B-A

Keywords: Form, Binary, Ternary, Variations, Ground Bass, 12-bar blues, fugue.

There isn't time to play a Sonata form, or rondo in a Grade 5 exam, nor even at higher grades in all probability.

#### (3) Rhythmic Forms - Dance music

Some pieces have an identifiable rhythm, that is specific to their period. For example, the dances of the Baroque Suite. I have made a separate print-out for dance forms.