

BLITZ!

How To ~~Pass~~

AMEB Musicianship Grade 4 Teacher Guide

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Introduction

When I first started writing BlitzBooks at the end of 2000, I had been preparing students for AMEB theory and musicianship exams for twelve years. Over this time, I have tried several texts and workbooks, none of which my students found particularly stimulating. I also found that the various texts did not address the way in which the questions are asked in the actual exams. My inspiration to write a series of books arose from this lack of appropriate materials.

At the time of publishing this web edition it is nearly 17 years on from there and BlitzBooks is about to celebrate its – you guessed it – 17th birthday. I am delighted to say that there are now some students who used BlitzBooks who have grown up to become teachers who recommend BlitzBooks.

This teacher guide is designed to support and enlighten teachers who are unfamiliar with the general expectations of AMEB examiners. Apologies if some of the page numbers are slightly inaccurate; these can change with new edition of workbooks. The content, however, is appropriate to any edition of the workbook.

I hope that the workbooks together with engaged teachers will create confident and well-prepared students. If students know their stuff and they know what to expect when they walk into the exam room, they should come out feeling like they “blitzed” it.

About AMEB Grade Four

Grade 4 Musicianship seems to be on a planet all of its own. There is comparatively little to study for the written exam, supposedly to compensate for the fact that there is an aural exam. Even so, thorough preparation is needed for both the written and aural components. Grade 4 requires a sound understanding of all the rudiments covered in grade 3 as well as a firm grasp of basic chords and cadences.

Preparation for the aural component involves constant practice. Some students will find this more challenging than others; the most important thing is not to leave the aural elements to 'last minute' drills.

Note to Teachers of Instruments Other Than Piano

Although the Grade 4 workbook will be easy to follow no matter what instrument is being learned, there is no question that non-pianists are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to harmony. In order to hear their harmony examples students will rely on either their instrumental teachers having piano skills (and indeed access to a piano during the lesson) or a friend who can play for them.

As a piano teacher it is easy for me to say that students must always hear what they have written in order to develop an inner ear, however I understand that this is not always possible. I have deliberately left out such instructions as 'play this phrase' in favour of 'see if you can get someone to play this phrase for you'. I believe that as difficult as it may be to organise, students MUST hear their harmony examples played at some stage if they are to develop an 'inner ear'. It is true that simply following rules and regulations can enable a student to complete a harmony example, but it then becomes less about music and more about maths.

It would be helpful though to organise a couple of sessions during the year with a piano (and pianist if necessary!) to play through all the harmony examples and discuss why they may or may not sound good.

In learning about the keyboard suites of Bach, recordings should be used wherever possible.

About the BlitzBooks Style

These books are written specifically for those students preparing for AMEB written examinations. For each grade there is a workbook, teacher guide and answer book. This workbook is also suitable for students who wish to complete an online exam. There is no need to purchase an online Musicianship course.

Each new concept is introduced with a 'step-by-step' worksheet which shows the student how to approach the question. Many teachers who use BlitzBooks prefer their own methods of explanation for new concepts and leave the 'step-by-step' pages until close to the exam, when the student can use them as a revision resource.

The conversational style of the worksheets makes revision easy, and the book sets out the concepts in the same order as an AMEB exam. The multiple-choice section shows up silly (and not so silly!) mistakes in an amusing way that appeals to children. There is also a Test Paper at the end for students to mark. This is a great way to help students understand how to check their work.

This teacher guide outlines certain points for discussion and shows common mistakes or variations of acceptable answers. Answer books are also available – these consist of replicas of workbook pages with answers written in.

How Long Will It Take to Complete This Book?

This depends on the type of music lesson. If theory is taught as a small part of a practical lesson, each book will last approximately 9-12 months. If lessons are solely theory or musicianship, it will potentially take much less time. However, teachers should allow a minimum of approximately six months to cover syllabus requirements and at least a further 2-3 months for revision. The workbook is designed to make revision easy: it would be quite adequate to read through all the 'Remembers' and 'Hot Tips' and anything else highlighted or boxed on the page.

The important thing for teachers to remember is that apart from this book, there are three important ways to practice for an exam:

Past papers, past papers and past papers!!

There is no better learning experience than seeing your mistakes. Completing past papers, sometimes under 'exam conditions', is an important revision strategy.

If you have students enrolled for an online exam, they have the advantage of being able to complete as many online practice papers as they wish, prior to the exam.

Exam Techniques

Students need to have a few good 2B pencils and a really good eraser. Also, some students prefer/need to use a ruler for bar lines and/or stems.

I often put my hair in a tight bun, put glasses on and, just for a joke, pretend I am the "fussy old lady" who is going to mark their exam! It's amazing how their performance improves.

We all know how hard it is to proof read our own work. This course aims to help the students to get it right the first time, but the most important thing is for them to be able to check their work properly. So I tell them they must turn themselves into the "fussy old lady", and go about marking their own paper two or three times. This works wonders!

Revision

Many of these worksheets are step-by-step instruction sheets with one or two examples. With my own students I usually continue this step-by-step style on the whiteboard for at least 2-3 more examples or until I'm sure they've really got the hang of it. Even so, upon revising these concepts most students have forgotten the specific order of processes required. I feel that a lot of the art of teaching theory lies in getting the students to understand all of the concepts at the same time! The step-by-step pages provide an excellent resource for revision.

Doing past papers is a very important learning device for students and teachers. Attempting a past paper two or three months before the exam will show up any weak spots and will perhaps jolt the more laid back student into doing some revision!

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Guide to Workbook Sheets

This guide does not contain answers to every workbook question; most of them will be immediately obvious to the teacher. It provides handy teaching tips and common mistakes to look out for.

Some worksheets are not featured in the guide as they are either straightforward revision or self-explanatory.

New Scales and Keys in Grade 4

Comments

The syllabus states that all major and minor key signatures will be tested. Rather than rote learning all the different keys, students need to understand the entire system of key signatures. They should know all about the cycle of fifths by this stage of their learning. They may not always be diligent in learning their key signatures, but at least they've got the bigger picture.

In terms of the practicalities of memorising key signatures, students' lives can be made much easier with a key signature table. The problem with most tables is that they are either too hard to read or too hard to write out. Students need to have a table that is incredibly easy to remember and write out — this ensures they are looking at a CORRECT key signature table in the exam! The Blitz Key Signature Table is a booklet that teaches a particular (foolproof) way of writing out a cycle of fifths. Having said that, it is of course important for kids to know their key signatures off by heart, but I find that this will eventually happen through learning to play the scales.

Double Sharps and Flats / Double Sharps in Scales - pp.5-6

Comments

This is usually quite a straightforward concept. Occasionally I have had students who think that by changing F sharp to F double sharp that it is raising the F sharp by a tone, hence the "Hot Tip" about there being no sign to raise or lower a note more than a tone!

Although knowing the definitions of 'diatonic' and 'chromatic' is not a requirement according to the syllabus, I feel it is important to know them. A diatonic scale is one in which each note has a different letter name, which is why an F double sharp is needed to raise the 7th of G sharp minor, rather than simply writing the note G. It can be fun to point out that in principal there are twice as many key signatures if we use double sharps and flats in the key signature. I remember an exam question a long time ago which asked for the scale of G sharp major, the key signature of which would look like this:



If we continue up the cycle of fifths, we would eventually end up with the key of C double sharp major with seven double sharps in the key signature, which of course is completely impractical. The same applies to flats! When students ask (relieved) why we don't use them, the answer is simple: G sharp major (for instance) is the same as A flat major, and having only 4 flats, A flat major is much easier to read! There would be no point in having keys such as C double sharp major when we can simply have D major instead. So in practice, there are 30 different key signatures (some of which are enharmonic equivalents, like Gb/F#), but in theory (e.g. if we had signs for triple sharps/flats) there are an infinite number of key signatures!

Let's Practice Rudiments - p.7

Comments

The same old mistakes still tend to crop up when writing scales, although hopefully less frequently. These are:

- Forgetting to raise the leading note in minor scales
- Marking scale degrees 6-7 as a tone
- Marking tones/semitones incorrectly in a descending scale

Another interesting point is the inclusion of a natural sign to raise the 7th in flat keys written with accidentals. The natural sign may go in brackets; there are some teachers however who are adamant that the natural should not appear! Either way is correct; a student will certainly not lose marks for including the natural, and it is beneficial to reinforce the habit of always raising the 7th.

Composing 8-bar Rhythms - p.8

Comments

For many students, this is their first attempt at rhythmic composition. It's important to have a good grasp of what sounds good before embarking on this, so 'Question and Answer' clapping games can be good to get the creative juices flowing! Although the workbook suggests aiming for a sequence in bars 5 and 6, this is not compulsory and is merely a composition tool. (In the Answer Book the rhythm in ¹⁸ does not contain a sequence.) A sequence tends to 'take the pressure off' the student as it means actually composing 2 bars at once, so for students who struggle with creativity it can be useful to point out that if they choose their favourite bar from the given rhythm for their sequence, as well as placing one note only in bar 8, this means that they need only really think about bar 7!

The point about using notes and not rests is also not a hard-and-fast rule. However, rests can easily hold up the flow of the melody and need to be very carefully placed. The most common mistakes are:

1. Forgetting to complete the fourth bar before composing the rest of the rhythm

2. Forgetting to adjust the last bar in the case of an anacrusis

Melody Writing – pp.10-13

Comments

This is approached in much the same way as grade 3 - through analysis. It is much easier for students to understand how to compose a melody if they have heard one that sounds good and can understand the different factors that contribute to it sounding good. In this way, kids start out with a clear set of guidelines but end up with the ability to write good melodies on the spot, without thinking about why a particular phrase sounds good. Even though there are suggested chord progressions in the workbook, it must be remembered that these are **suggestions** and not actual answers. In the Answer Book, the third melody on p.13 does not use any of the suggested chord progressions in the workbook.

On the subject of sounding good, this is of course a very subjective thing. A melody that is given full marks by one teacher may not be enjoyed by another.

One year, an adult student of mine sat for an exam and, finding that the poetry example was the same as that of a recent past paper, had the opportunity to write down the melody we had worked on together! We had a good laugh when the results came back – ‘we’ got 8 out of 10. The examiner thought it lacked shape – yet I thought it was great!

Most students at this level of Theory or Musicianship have encountered subjective marking at school. It is important to prepare them for the fact that from now on, with melody and harmony writing, that there is no single ‘correct’ answer. I like to tell them that if Mozart himself sat the exam, he wouldn’t necessarily get full marks!

Pianoforte Style – pp.15-16

Objective

To introduce pianoforte style.

Comments

The musicianship syllabus is quite strange from this point of view. Piano Style is only examined in 4th grade. Students who go right through the Musicianship syllabus find that 4th grade seems to be on a planet of its own; they study 4-part vocal for grade 3 then switch to Piano style for grade 4, then back to 4-part vocal for the rest of the syllabus!

There is, however, not much difference between the two styles. There are of course no vocal ranges to worry about in Piano style, and the only spacing rule is that of making sure a chord does not span more than an octave. The rest is the same though: it is called **4-part** piano style, so it is still part writing and the same rules of consecutive 5ths and 8ves apply. Many students bring in their piano music and show me all the consecutive octaves they see! I explain to them that we are not writing piano music; we are writing 4-part harmony in piano style. In the case of 8ves in the bass, this can be seen as doubling the bass part.

If four-part vocal style cadences are well understood and students are writing them with relative ease, pianoforte style will usually present few problems. Once again, it is a lot easier for piano students to grasp this style, but there are fewer rules and things to remember so most students, piano or not, find it quite easy.

The most common mistake is not keeping 'leading note to tonic' in the same part of the chord e.g.



This would not sound terrible but does not follow the rules of harmony.

Although minor keys do not appear in the musicianship syllabus in grades 4 and 5, it can be a rude shock to get to grade 6 without ever having had to raise the seventh note or deal with a diminished chord. For this reason, there are some minor examples in the workbook.

For students referring to the M4 Answer Book, it is important to keep in mind that there are many different 'correct' answers to a harmony question, once the different possibilities due to inversions and registers are taken into account.

The most common mistakes apart from those of part writing are:

- Not following the given rhythm values
- Writing notes above the given note
- Not making stems long enough

Imperfect Cadences / Using Chord Two - pp.17-18

Objective

Revision of imperfect cadences covered in Grade 3 and an introduction to II-V.

Comments

The use of chord II in root position is an interesting one. Whilst the 'standard' rule for doubling is to double a 'primary note', which is the third of chord II, it does not work very well to follow this 'rule' when only dealing with root position. Until we deal with chord II⁶ in grade 5, it is best to continue to double to root. This does mean, however, that the habit of always doubling the root is very hard to break!

I try to resolve this conflict by introducing first inversion chords to my more capable students. I did not, however, include this in the workbook as many students would get confused and it is not on the Grade 4 syllabus.

Another drawback of having only major keys until grade 6 is the lack of practice in dealing with chord II in a minor key (a diminished chord). This is a shame because it is so beautiful! Once again, more capable students can easily be extended with these

extra concepts, but as minor keys are not part of the syllabus the use of diminished chord II is not dealt with in the workbook.

In the worksheet on page 17, it is worth pointing out that passing notes are not harmonised, and that a minim can be written under a dotted crotchet melody note.

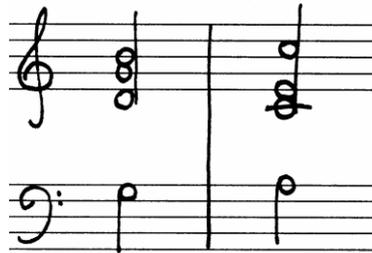
The Interrupted Cadence - p.20

Objective

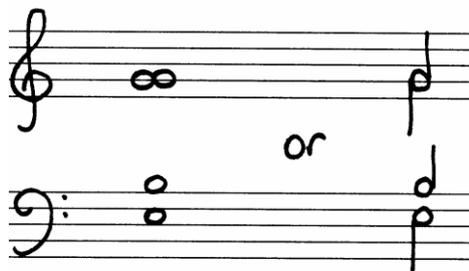
To analyse an interrupted cadence and to establish guidelines for writing this cadence correctly every time.

Comments

The reason for only 2 notes in the right hand of chord VI in the second example is that the leading note must rise to the tonic, which means that 2 'parts' double the F. The only instance in which one can end up with a 3-note chord for chord VI in piano style is when 'leading note to tonic' is in the top voice, e.g.



The most common errors in writing an interrupted cadence in piano style occur when a 2-note chord is needed. In four-part vocal style, two voices on one note are indicated in either of the following ways:



In piano style this cannot be shown as clearly, therefore it may look 'wrong' when there are only two notes in the RH of chord VI. If the students try to always think in vocal style and remember that there are really 2 'parts' on one note, it makes it much easier.

If possible, students should learn to recognise the sound of these before attempting to write them... it helps so much to understand the structure. Only perfect and imperfect cadences are tested in the aural exam, so there is always the potential that the Interrupted cadence is ignored from an aural perspective!

Writing Interrupted Cadences - p.21

Objective

More practice in writing Interrupted Cadences.

Comments

Mistakes in writing interrupted cadences are only ever due to not following the three steps. If these 3 steps are followed religiously, the cadence will NEVER go wrong! The mistakes in the three cadences at the bottom of this worksheet all arise from the fact that the three rules at the top of the page have not been followed!

I once had a conversation with a student about harmony rules. She was getting quite annoyed with all the different rules for different cadences! I suggested to her that instead of learning the rules, how about she tries to do all her cadences without following any steps, the only thing she had to do was avoid consecutive 5ths and 8ves.

After a week of trying this, she realised that it was actually much quicker to follow the steps than to scan for incorrect consecutives all the time!

The conversation then moved on to WHY consecutive 5ths and 8ves need to be avoided. The reason is that they don't sound good in 4-part writing; they are too strong and it weakens the tonality. Once there are two consecutive intervals of a 5th or 8ve, it's all the ear can hear.

The most important part of learning harmony rules is to be able to **hear** why certain things are not allowed. Kids are far more likely to follow the rules of harmony if they have an aural reason to do so, rather than a whole set of mathematical formulae to follow.

The BlitzBook of Harmony Rules has the rules for each type of cadence set out in clear, simple point form. It is an excellent resource for students doing Grades 4, 5 or 6.

Harmonising a Bass Line - pp.22-23

Objective

To learn to make decisions on which chords to use in a cadence according to the bass notes given.

Comments

This is usually not too difficult as the bass notes decide the chords, and only root position is studied. If students understand which types of cadences are likely to be used (i.e. that perfect cadences don't go in the middle!) and have no problem identifying the key, this question presents few problems. The only thing to watch out for is the 'ending'... is there a double bar line, or an 'etc' sign showing the piece continues? It's important to check this.

Exercises 1 and 2 (also on page 21) could potentially be identical except for the key, so it's a good idea to get students to write the cadences in different combinations/voicings.

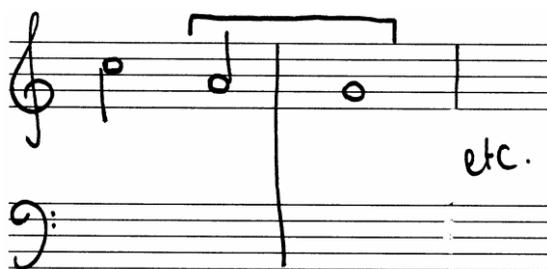
Harmonising a Melody - pp.24-25

Objective

To learn how to choose chords for the harmonisation of a melody line.

Comment

The most common problem here is that students think the melody note decides the chord, for instance:



They see A to G and think "Oh, that's chords VI - V". Apart from the fact that this choice of chords would create consecutive octaves, it is completely the wrong way of approaching the question.

The melody note is simply **part** of the chord; it could be the root, third or fifth. It may even belong to 2 or 3 different chords... this takes several weeks for some students to grasp. It can help to drill this by looking at melody lines from their repertoire and discussing which chords are indicated by particular notes, an activity in which single clef instrumentalists actually have the advantage here, as they are constantly having to imagine the accompaniment.

Another very common mistake is harmonising L.N.-tonic with a perfect cadence for the middle example. This is **WRONG** - an interrupted cadence should be used.

It's also important to keep track of given rhythm values and to make sure all the notes follow suit.

Supertonic-Tonic Endings - pp.28-30

Objective

To learn the special treatment of a perfect cadence when the given melody ends with scale degrees 2-1.

Comments

I find that this is the place where even the most diligent students get caught out. There are a few reasons for this:

1. Tripling the root is a totally new concept
2. A 2-note chord is something we come across only occasionally in an interrupted cadence

3. The importance of the third of the chord has never really been discussed before now
4. Students are so used to having a 'note in common' that it's very hard for them to leave it out!

The set of rules on page 29 are very helpful and although it is a lot to learn, once students are good at identifying a Supertonic-Tonic ending, they will have no problems with it. The crux of the matter is in making sure the Supertonic-Tonic ending in the melody is actually noticed!

Suggestions such as these and all harmony rules up to Grade 5 are summarised in [The BlitzBook of Harmony Rules](#)

7 - Yes, 7 - Cadences to Remember - pp.31-33

Objective

Revision of all cadences learned.

Comments

The fact that only root position chords are studied means that the harmony question will only cover these seven possibilities.

Puzzle - p.34

Comments

The golden rule is "Leading Note to Tonic"! This is simply a fun way of revising a few key points.

Bach, Purcell and Handel - pp.37-40

Comments

I tell my students:

'This is where it all gets exciting. We get to learn real history!' They groan and talk about how history at school is boring, but I guess in the end my excitement rubs off on them, and we have a good time researching the topic together.

At this point I should mention that I agonised over having the actual music history info in the workbook, but in the end decided against it. The syllabus states that there will be 'general questions on the life of the three composers' – so how does one decide which information is the most essential?

Most other musicianship textbooks contain a reasonably concise version of the composers' lives, however my problem with this is that students always think if they learn all the stuff in one particular book that they will be well prepared for the exam.

If the exam asks for a piece of information not contained in their book, the student exclaims, 'But it wasn't in the book!'

It is very important for kids to realise that a topic of this size cannot possibly be covered in just a few pages of one book. I encourage them to gather information from at least three different sources. The Answer Book contains answers that would most probably gain full marks for pages 34 – 36 of the workbook.

The Baroque Suite - pp.41-44

Objective

To introduce the Baroque Suite and to provide paragraphs with missing words to encourage students to do their own research.

Comments

This is another area where being a pianist comes in very handy. My favourite way to approach learning the suite is to analyse the French Suites of Bach, concentrating on one dance movement at a time. I play my students a little of each of the six Allemandes, for instance, and ask them to watch the score and listen while I play. We can then discuss what aspects each Allemande has in common, and therefore arrive at the 'answers' for page 37. The following week, before we go on to the next dance, I get them to quickly study these answers and then write the paragraph on the Allemande (without peeking).

For non-piano teachers, this can work perfectly well with a CD and a score; for cellists for instance, the cello suites can be fun to analyse, although this does not really do the trick as the syllabus clearly states that the **keyboard** suites of Bach will be examined... also it's pretty hard to get the concept of fugal treatment on one cello!

Other dance movements

The collective noun for these is actually 'Galanterian', however this word is so rarely used I decided to leave it out of the workbook. If using the French Suites for analysis, this is a good opportunity to play some of the Galanterian movements.

An excellent summary of the Baroque Suite movements and composers can be found in [How to Blitz! General Knowledge](#)

Crossword – p.45

Objective

Like the puzzle, this is a fun way to do some revision, and also to test that the music history research has actually been done! There are a few clues/words that I threw in just for fun that have nothing to do with anything on the syllabus; these are:

8 Across: A Romantic composer we haven't studied yet – **Schumann**

9 Across: Person with no magical powers – **Muggle**

25 Across: Princess Leia's home planet – **Alderon**

If your students have no idea of the answers to these clues, at least they can fill in all the rest of the crossword and then have a good guess!

Test Paper – pp.46-49

Objective

To find all the mistakes and therefore practice 'proofreading' in preparation for checking their own work in the exam.

Comments

In 'completing' this mock exam paper I have tried to include as many common mistakes as I could think of.

This works best when marked *in the lesson*, stopping for discussion each time a mistake is found. It is also a great idea for the student to rewrite the answer correctly on spare manuscript.

Sometimes answers are wrong for more than one reason, some answers are actually correct! This is sure to provide an amusing resource for revision and is invaluable in helping students learn how to check their work.

The Aural Exam

Comments

The aural component makes up 40% of the final mark, yet it is often the most neglected aspect of the exam. It is **extremely** important to practice aural every week, particularly if the student finds it tricky. In just the same way that it might take several weeks for students to write an imperfect cadence correctly and confidently, it may take several weeks to easily **recognise** an imperfect cadence aurally. All too often the aural component is approached in the same way as for a practical exam: a last-minute brush-up a couple of lessons before the exam.

Go to <https://blitzbooks.com/audio-files> for:

- A thorough tutorial on the various components tested in the exam
- Practice examples on each topic

- Six practice melodies for 'Expression and Mood' as per page 46 in the workbook
 - 2 complete aural exams (papers printed on pages 47 – 52 of the workbook)

Wherever possible, examples have been put on separate tracks to allow for easy repetition during practice.

I have tried to make the 2 aural exams sound as much like a real AMEB exam as possible. Achieving such authenticity means using less than fabulous piano sounds, a droning male voice and reasonably boring melodies! 😊

Expression and Mood – pp.50-51

Comments

Go to <https://blitzbooks.com/audio-files> for a tutorial for this section of the exam. Many students find it quite tricky because the melody is only played 3 times, and apart from marking dynamics and articulation students must mark the cadence points and describe the mood 'in a few words'.

As mentioned in the workbook, I find it useful to use the following plan:

1. (First playing) Mark the dynamics
2. (Second playing) Mark the articulation – not just staccato notes but adding slurs for legato sounds
3. (2-minute break) Check that all notes have some sort of articulation, whether staccato, accent, slur or tenuto; also mark the cadence points with square brackets above the notes (one at the halfway point and one at the end)
4. (Third playing) Listen and check everything thoroughly; decide on the 'mood' of the piece

Some students prefer to listen only during the first two playings and use the 2-minute silence to mark everything in. This is fine! It's a matter of doing this question a few different ways and deciding on a plan of action that best suits each student.

Describing the mood 'in a few words' is a very general and subjective part of this question. I usually get my students to pick two adjectives, for instance "slow and mournful" or "bold but cheerful". There is nothing in the syllabus to suggest that Italian words could not be used here, however it is the mood that is being described, not the tempo, so it is easier for most students to do this in English!