

# BLITZ! How To ~~Pass~~

## Grade 5 Theory Teacher Guide

Samantha Coates

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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 – 17<sup>th</sup> 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 Five

Grade 5 Theory is not as difficult as one would expect it to be after the enormous jump from Grade 2 to 3 and then Grade 3 to 4. There was so much involved in getting four-part harmony well in hand for the fourth grade syllabus that the new requirements for Grade 5 are not at all daunting.

The new concepts on the syllabus are musical forms, composing with modulation and woodwind instruments. The rest of the exam concentrates on extending and refining skills learned in Grade 4. For students 'jumping in' at Grade 5 level, it is highly recommended to prepare by working through the Grade 4 workbook.

## Note to Teachers of Instruments Other Than Piano

Although the Grade 5 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.

## 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 theory 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. 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 12 months. If lessons are devoted to theory, it will potentially take much less time. At this high level, it is impossible to speculate as to how long each student will need to adequately cover and grasp all syllabus requirements.

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

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. In the written exam, I suggest that they should go about 'marking their own paper' two or three times. Many students allow time to write out their answers on their spare manuscript paper before they leave the exam room, with the intent of showing it to their teachers after the exam and discussing how they went. This is a waste of good checking time as most supervisors are pretty strict about keeping the spare manuscript!

## Revision

I feel that most of the art of teaching Grade 5 Theory lies in getting the students to understand all of the concepts at the same time. There is a lot to master and it is important not to leave any concepts for too long without drilling them in the lesson.

Although there are numerous revision sheets in the workbook, 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, as most of them will be immediately obvious to the teacher, as will most of the missing words.

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

## Scales... ALL of Them! - p.3

Although 23 keys were studied in Grade 4, and that certainly seemed like a lot, now that all diatonic scales are to be learned it opens up a whole can of worms because of enharmonic equivalents, e.g. C sharp/D flat major and A sharp/B flat minor. However, scale writing has been on the syllabus since grade 1, and by this level it is only a matter of inserting or applying the correct key signature.

As I mentioned in the T4 teacher guide, I feel that a broader approach should be taken which helps the students to understand the entire system of key signatures. Students should know all about the cycle of fifths by this stage of their learning, but I have not included a diagram of one in the workbook is because there are so many different types of key signature tables that work more effectively than the good old cycle of fifths!

The Blitz Key Signature Table is one such example – it is a booklet that teaches a particularly foolproof way of writing out a cycle of fifths. As soon as they are told by the examination supervisor to start writing, students write out the table in just a couple of minutes and then refer to it throughout the exam. This eliminates the difficulty of learning every existing key signature and 'takes the pressure off' in the exam. Having said that, it is of course important for students to know their key signatures off by heart, but I find that this will eventually happen through learning to play the scales on their instrument; if we can make students' lives easier during exam time, why not?

## Double Sharps in Scales - p.4

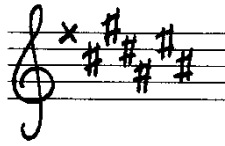
### Objective

To learn how to write these accidentals and the application of them in scale writing.

### Comments

This is usually quite a straightforward concept. The most common error is not grasping the concept that a double sharp overrides the key signature. (In fact **any** accidental overrides the key signature.) I have had students who, after thinking about it very carefully, place a single sharp against the seventh note claiming that since it was already a sharp in the key signature they are raising it again and it is therefore now a double sharp! Conversely, I have occasionally 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!

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! So 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 24 key signatures, but theoretically, if we had signs for triple sharps and flats, there would be an infinite number!

## The Melodic Minor Scale - p.5

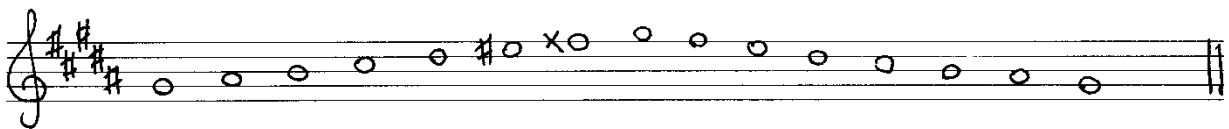
### Objective

To learn the structure of a melodic minor scale and to learn how to mark the accidentals correctly.

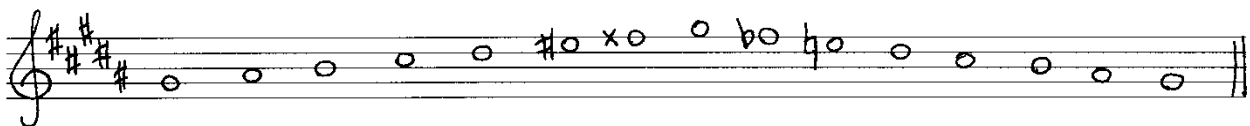
### Comments

There should generally be no problem here. Most students doing grade 5 Theory will have played a melodic minor scale on their instrument many times, so there is no difficulty in understanding the concept – it's simply a matter of learning how to place the correct accidentals.

The biggest mistakes crop up when a double sharp is required. Many students become confused as to how to lower this on the way down, and assuming that the key signature will work its magic, end up with an answer like this:



Or worse, like this



because they think that the flat lowers a double sharp by a semitone.

Another common mistake is assuming that the semitones occur in the same places as a harmonic minor scale. It is important for students to remember that there is no augmented 2nd, so the old rule of never marking 6-7 in a minor scale does not apply to melodic minor scales.

As the semitones fall in different places in the ascending and descending octaves, I have generally found that rather than memorising any particular scale degree numbers to mark, it is easier simply to work out the tones and semitones by examining each interval up the scale. Many students discover for themselves that the semitone between scale degrees 2-3 remains consistent in both octaves, and it only the 'other' semitone that changes. By this level students are pretty good at imagining playing the scale on their instruments (particularly advantageous for piano students).

It is worth pointing out that there are potentially four different ways a melodic minor scale can be written:

1. Ascending/descending with key signature
2. Ascending/descending with accidentals
3. Descending/ascending with key signature
4. Descending/ascending with accidentals

A good activity is to get students to write out these four possibilities and keep track of how many accidentals are required in each.

The use of the natural sign just before another accidental is completely optional. Students will not be marked down either way. My personal preference is to leave out the natural sign, as this helps to reinforce the concept that any accidental overrides the previous accidental.

## Intervals - p.8

### Objective

To learn the effect accidentals have on major, minor and perfect intervals.

### Comments

The diagram of the two 'species' is most effective in both capturing students' imagination and ensuring their understanding of quality of intervals.

Many textbooks attempt to explain this concept using prose, for instance:

"Major 2nds, 3rds 6ths and 7ths when enlarged one semitone become augmented, and when decreased one semitone become minor; Minor 2nds, 3rds, 6ths and 7ths when enlarged one semitone become major, and when decreased one semitone become diminished; Perfect intervals when enlarged one semitone become augmented, and when decreased one semitone become diminished."

What a nightmare!

It's much better to use a table, and the table on this page of the workbook is simple and easy-to-follow. It is very important that students discuss the effect accidentals have on various intervals. I rarely encounter a child or adult who becomes confused by this table!



## Naming Intervals – p.9

### Objective

To improve on skills developed in Grades 3 and 4.

### Comments

Since intervals are on the syllabus in every grade, I have assumed that by this stage students know exactly how to determine the quality of an interval, and so I have not included revision on this particular skill in the workbook. Students should consult their Grade 3 or 4 workbooks if they are feeling a bit rusty. There is really nothing new in Grade 5 – the skill now is learning how to factor in the accidentals.

Accidentals are the sole cause of the level of difficulty of intervals in this grade. Students see double sharps and flats all over the place and pretty much panic. But if the accidentals are removed, the interval is much simpler to work out, and then it is a matter of discerning how the accidentals affect the interval once they have been replaced.

The approach in the workbook is to strip (quite literally, making it 'naked') the interval of its accidentals before attempting to name it. This ensures that the bottom note belongs to a key that actually exists! (Something not possible if the bottom note is F double flat.) The interval becomes very easy to name – in fact, as featured in the 'Interesting Fact' on the bottom of the page, there are only two intervals without accidentals that do not turn out to be major, minor or perfect – the diminished 5<sup>th</sup> above B and the augmented 4<sup>th</sup> above F.

The table on page 10 is designed to break down the elements involved in naming complicated intervals, in the hope that it establishes a habit of doing so!

## Drawing Intervals – p.11

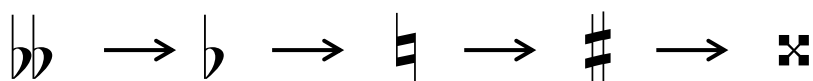
### Objective

To establish a habit of remembering to adjust accidentals where necessary when drawing complicated intervals.

### Comments

Once again, if the accidental in the question is removed, drawing the interval becomes easy; the bottom accidental is then 'applied' to both notes. This means that the top accidental may need to be adjusted.

Most Grade 5 students will feel quite confident adjusting accidentals, as this skill was covered in Grade 3 Theory in regards to transposition. However, some students may need some revision here. It's a good idea to go over the 'pecking order' of accidentals, namely:



When reapplying an accidental such as a double sharp to a flat sign, this will move the flat up two 'places' in the pecking order ... to a natural!

## Diminished and Augmented Intervals - p.12

### Objective

To extend skills learned in previous pages to include diminished and augmented intervals.

### Comments

If the table on page 8 of the workbook is clearly understood, drawing diminished or augmented intervals should technically not be much of a big deal. The approach in the workbook is to draw a major, minor or perfect interval first, then adjust one of the notes to make it diminished or augmented.

The main cause of mistakes is forgetting the order of the two 'species' of intervals on page 8, and as a result lowering or raising intervals too much or too little!

The 'Top Tip' at the bottom of page 12 about keeping the right distance between the notes is a very important one. Even though two intervals may sound exactly the same, e.g.



the way they are **notated** indicates different names. It is the distance between the actual notes that determines the number of the interval, whereas the accidentals determine the quality.

A demonstration on a keyboard is very useful here. Ask a student to play a perfect 4th and say the letter names, e.g. E to A, then ask them to raise the top note one semitone and re-name the interval and the letter names. It is amazing how many students will answer 'Augmented 4th, E to B flat', which of course is not correct. Doing the same exercise lowering a perfect 5th should get the point across.

Students often ask what exactly is the difference between an augmented 4<sup>th</sup> and a diminished 5<sup>th</sup>. Well, on a piano and in terms of sound, nothing! (For strings it's a whole different ball game.) But in terms of notation, it all comes down to musical spelling – notes are spelled different ways depending on the context of the music they occur in. All children have learned at school about the different uses of to vs too vs two; they sound the same but you have to spell it the right way according to the context. This is a handy analogy when explaining enharmonics!

## Intervals with Key Signatures - p.13

### Objective

To apply the previously learnt skills of naming and drawing intervals to questions where a key signature is given.

## Comments

It is worth reminding students of a point made back in 'Double Sharps in Scales' – that accidentals always override the key signature. Therefore, any accidentals present in the original interval will remain the same when writing the interval without the key signature.

Provided this is well understood, the problems only arise once the key signature goes back in! The tricky thing is remembering to check which notes are affected by the key signature – it could be neither, one or both of the notes.

From Grade 4 onwards the intervals tested are not necessarily above the tonic. However, as there is often such a well-established habit of assuming the bottom note **is** the tonic (since it is much easier to name an interval this way), some students will accidentally misread the key signature. For instance:



In the above interval many students see the given note is F, assume it is the tonic and misread the key signature as F sharp minor. In this case the interval would be wrongly named a minor 6th. The best and most foolproof way to approach these intervals is to regard the key signature as 'just a bunch of accidentals' and deal with them accordingly!

## Inversions/Compound Intervals – p.15

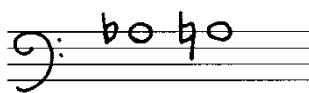
### Objective

To revise the skill of inverting intervals, and to learn the meaning of 'compound' intervals.

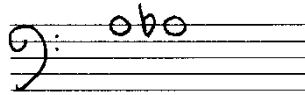
### Comments

In Grade 4 it was necessary to name the original interval before inverting and renaming - this ensured the student was working with one of the required keys for the grade. There is no need for this in Grade 5, however the original interval may just be simpler to work out, in which case it is easier to do so and then derive the name of the inversion from the 'rules' above. I think students should just go with the flow on this one... however it is very useful to 'double-check' answers by naming both intervals and making sure they complement each other.

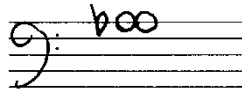
Until now students have not had to deal with anything other than perfect octaves and perfect unisons. For this reason it is important address the order in which to write unisons involving accidentals. For instance, second example on this page asks for the inversion of a diminished octave (A to A flat). The answer is an augmented unison, which must be written as such:



If the notes are written the other way around, it becomes a diminished unison instead:



Even trickier, if the natural sign were not included, it would become a perfect unison:



### ***Compound Intervals***

I have noticed that many textbooks delve into explanations about simple and compound intervals, concords and discords, and perfect or imperfect concords.

**Nowhere** on the syllabus does it state that students must be familiar with these terms, nor in fact does it state that compound intervals will be examined. The syllabus does not specify that intervals will always be **within** an octave, but neither does it for grades 1-4!

I have included information on compound intervals as they are easy to grasp, but not on any of the other abovementioned topics – I feel it only confuses students. I have yet to come across an instance in past exam papers where a compound interval is tested or where any such knowledge is required! Having said that, it is a great idea to broaden the knowledge of those students who can handle it, but this should be done on a case-by-case basis.

## **Drawing Intervals BELOW the Note – p.16**

### **Objective**

To learn that the quality of an interval must be determined from the **bottom note**.

### **Comments**

Drawing perfect intervals below the note is usually no problem at all, but major and minor intervals are much harder. This is because the quality of the interval must be calculated from the bottom note, even though it is the top note that is given – very confusing for some students!

This worksheet provides five examples of varying degrees of complexity, but more practise may be needed. This type of question (i.e. drawing intervals below the note) crops up only occasionally in exams and as a result is often not drilled enough in lessons.

The 'thing to notice' about intervals 2 and 4 at the bottom the page is that they are complementary, i.e. inversions of each other!

### ***A note about diatonic and chromatic intervals***

It can be very confusing trying to remember which intervals belong to diatonic and/or chromatic scales. Although the definition of a diatonic interval is 'an interval occurring within a diatonic scale', it cannot be said that a chromatic interval is one occurring within a chromatic scale, as chromatic scales also contain diatonic intervals! It's worth pointing out to your students, just for the record, that chromatic intervals are those NOT occurring in a diatonic scale. These are:

- Augmented 3rds and 6ths
- Diminished 3rds and 6ths
- Augmented unisons and 8ves
- Diminished unisons and 8ves

And just for interests' sake, here are some intervals that do not occur in either a diatonic or a chromatic scale. They exist only in a mathematical sense...

- Diminished 2nds (really a perfect unison)
- Augmented 7ths (really a perfect 8ve)
- Diminished unisons (really a minor 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- Augmented 8ves (really a compound augmented unison, it's larger than an octave)
- Double diminished or double augmented intervals

And finally, a colleague of mine sparked an interesting debate amongst music nerds: would an augmented 8ve be classified as simple or compound???

## The Tonic Key Family Tree / More Modulations - pp.18-19

### Objective

To learn that any one key has five closely related keys, and to spot modulations to those keys.

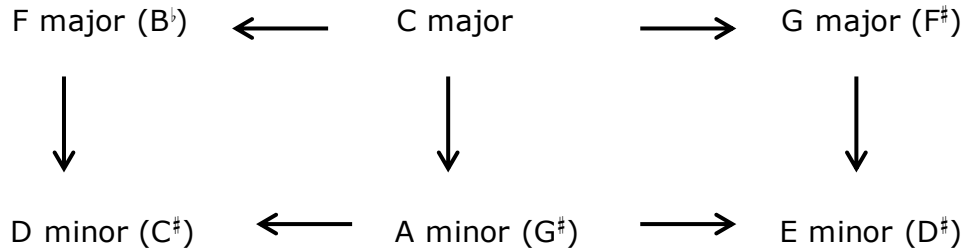
### Comments

All the same techniques for spotting modulations learnt in Grade 4 apply to Grade 5, there is simply a wider range of keys to which the melody might modulate. In fact, the syllabus states that the short melodies given in the modulation question will only modulate to the dominant, subdominant, or relative major or minor – not the relatives of the dominant or subdominant! There are three good reasons however for learning the entire 'family tree':

1. Later on in the 'modulating cadences' question, the syllabus states that the given part will modulate to **closely related keys**
2. The 'option' of modulating in melody writing (discussed later) is easier to grasp knowing five close relatives rather than three
3. Most pieces of music in general repertoire will show examples of modulations to anywhere on the 'tree'. It is very important for students to be able to identify any modulations in pieces they are playing, and to understand the relationship to the tonic key.

Many textbooks describe closely related keys as being those with one sharp or one flat more, or one sharp or one flat less in the key signature. This is **exactly** the same as saying the dominant and subdominant keys, and their relatives - much easier!

Knowing which accidentals to look for is a great aid in spotting modulations successfully. When filling in and drawing the family trees, students should write in brackets the new accidental for each close relative. For instance:



The primary clues for deciding the tonic key are of course the key signature and the last note. It's also important to look for other clues such as the tonic triad in the first bar or an anacrusis based on chord V leading to the tonic in bar I. A few other things worth going over (particularly in relation to minor keys) are:

- There may be no raised 7th if the leading note either does not appear or only appears in a descending passage
- If the leading note is not raised, the melody could modulate to the relative major and this would result in there being no accidentals at all!
- There is a remote chance that the melody does not end on the tonic – it's good to double-check the original key.

## Harmony Revision: Tonality of Chords- p.21

### Objective

To understand the tonality of each chord, enabling good 'decision-making' later on when deciphering doubling guidelines (see 'The Doubling Dilemma' below)

### Comments

I find that students often have a lot of trouble remembering whether chords are major or minor, particularly if they are not pianists.

Filling in the grid by listening is a very straightforward task, but it doesn't actually help them to **remember**. I have found it quite helpful to look at the grid in the following way:

- Look at the options for major and natural minor scale first, leaving out chord VII for now
- Primary chords (I, IV, V) are the same tonality as the key/scale; 'secondary' chords (for arguments' sake being the others: II, III, VI) are the opposite tonality
- Chord II is the only exception to this, being diminished in a minor key
- When discussing chord tonality for the harmonic minor scale, discuss which chords are affected by the raised 7th, and adjust these accordingly. Chord III becomes augmented (chord III is not on the syllabus for this grade), chord V becomes major
- Chord VII can be discussed separately as always being diminished, except for in the natural minor scale when the 7th is not raised

In this way students start to look at the grid a little more analytically and see patterns.

## Harmony Revision: 4-Part Writing – p.22

### Comments

Revising the difficult area of harmonisation is something that will be different for every student, and of course also depends on the length of time between completing Grade 4 and starting Grade 5. Some will carry on as if never having stopped after Grade 4; others will stare at the page and have no idea what to do.

The example on page 20 is deliberately Grade 4 standard... in fact I felt as though the rest of the book could easily be taken up with revision examples such as these! But in the end it is really up to each individual student (and teacher) to ensure a good grounding in harmony before attempting Grade 5. This sole page called 'Harmony Revision' is designed to briefly and simply remind both student and teacher of what is required 'so far'. For students who are 'jumping in' at Grade 5 level, I strongly recommend working through the Grade 4 BlitzBook first.

The harmony question in Grade 5 differs very little from Grade 4. It is 2 bars longer and often provides opportunities for the use of the cadential 6/4 (discussed later), but apart from expecting the use of a slightly larger harmonic vocabulary, the question is essentially the same. It should therefore be approached in just the same way as was taught in grade 4:

- 1) Do the cadences first
- 2) Choose a solid bass line for the rest.

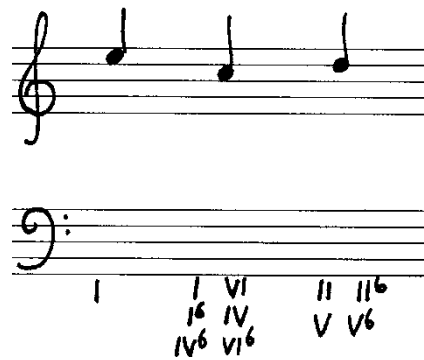
Page 24 is devoted to exercises on choosing bass notes. This was covered in Grade 4 but often needs careful revision – that is, students must remember that the melody note does not determine the harmony! Once the bass line is in, the next step is to add the inner parts, and finally passing and auxiliary notes should be added.

Most students, particularly non-piano students, need some sort of written guide to help them remember which notes are in which chords. Whilst in high school myself, I remember visualising piano chords when doing my harmony, while my cellist friend next to me would write out the following:

I	CEG
II	DFA
IV	FAC
V	GBD
VI	ACE

Some examiners do not like to see this little table written on the paper. This is such a shame – it's like enforcing a rule that you can only harmonise properly if you can do it in your head. However, since we don't know who'll be marking the papers, it's probably best if students write the 'table' on spare paper or at least rub it out when finished.

I always get my students to write down every chord possibility (in both root position and first inversion) for each melody note eg.



(It would not be appropriate to harmonise the first chord of a piece with VI<sup>6</sup>, so there is no point in considering this possibility.)

When choosing a bass line, it's a matter of deciding which choice of chord would make the smoothest progression. Students should try to remember that root position chords rising or falling in 4ths or 5ths sound great, as do descending thirds (e.g. I-VI-IV).

Suggestions such as these and all harmony rules up to Grade 6 are summarised in "**The BlitzBook of Harmony Rules**"

## The Cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ (or Ic-V) - pp.24-29

### Objective

To learn the function of chord I in second inversion.

### Comments

Page 25 deals with the progression Ic-V, and once that is well in hand page 26 introduces the concept of following Ic-V with either I or VI.

There is much conjecture about chord Ic and whether it should actually be defined as a 'chord' at all. To simply call it a second inversion chord implies that it can function on its own as a piece of harmony. However, the sole purpose of this chord (as far as a Grade 5 student is concerned) is to lead to chord V – it acts as a suspension, or an appoggiatura, always resolving to the dominant chord by step... no exceptions!

There is a strong need for an aural demonstration here. Once students can hear where the I $\frac{6}{4}$  chord 'wants to go', they rarely forget that it cannot be used without chord V, and it helps them to understand (from an aural perspective) the reason for chord Ic being on a strong beat.

It is vitally important to get into the habit of doubling the fifth (which **is** the bass note) in chord I $\frac{6}{4}$ . Once again, this 'rule' of doubling the fifth exists because there is no other way of resolving this chord with good voice-leading and no consecutive 5ths or 8ves.



The most common mistake I come across is doubling the fifth in chord V as well as in chord  $I_4^6$ ! However, as long as the doubling is correct and the tonic is going to the leading note, there is not a lot that can go wrong.

The skill lies in detecting **opportunities** for using Ic-V. Although there is no reason why I-V-VI or  $I^6$ -V-VI should not receive full marks if done correctly, for instance in a cadence such as this:



it is a fact, however, that  $I_4^6$ -V would work well here instead of  $I^6$ , and since it is the new inversion on the syllabus and the idea is to show that it has been learned, students are encouraged to use chord I in second inversion wherever appropriate, and to choose this chord over root position or first inversion.

Once students have this drilled into them, they sometimes start using Ic-V at all the cadence points without even checking to see if it works! The harmony examples on pages 28-29 provide many opportunities for using  $I_4^6$ , however there are just one or two instances when using it would mean putting it on a weak beat... a definite no-no... hopefully students will pick this up themselves!

The comment on page 27 of the workbook that  $II^6 - I_4^6 - V - I$  is the 'best chord progression in the world' is something my students have always found quite amusing but have really responded to. I always encourage them to use  $II^6$  over chord IV when approaching a cadential  $_4^6$ , in major or minor keys, as it just sounds so beautiful. Care must be taken though to avoid consecutive 5ths; consecutives are created too easily when there are so many neighbouring notes. There is of course nothing wrong with using a different chord, particularly if the given melody won't allow for  $II^6$ , but the idea is to approach a cadential  $_4^6$  by step wherever possible, and the change in tonality from minor to major is what makes it sound so special.

### **The Doubling Dilemma**

There are so many different views on doubling that it is difficult to write about any particular right or wrong things to do. Some teachers believe that one must never double the third, some believe one should always double a major third and some believe that there are no hard and fast doubling rules and that if it sounds good, do it!

I must say I was brought up with the latter philosophy. My music teacher would play examples that broke all the 'rules' but which sounded great, and would therefore give them full marks! On the other hand, I have never heard an example sound bad that DID follow all the rules... and that is the crux of the matter. The rules or guidelines exist because of what sounds good. I vividly remember studying Bach Chorales and my teacher saying: "Bach didn't follow the rules, he *made* the rules!"

When teaching harmony to beginners, however, it is not good enough to say that anything goes as long as it sounds good. Very few students can hear what they are writing, and for non-pianists especially it is very difficult to find out how their harmony compositions have turned out unless they have a teacher or relative who plays piano. Students need a clear set of guidelines that will help them to develop good harmony skills. I tend to teach the following:

- Doubling the third of a minor chord sounds better than doubling it in a major chord (doubling a major third should be avoided – it sounds too strong)
- Doubling the fifth instead of the root is often a very good option
- Tripling the root is always an option
- Decisions on which note to double should mostly be based on voice-leading, i.e. which notes will enable all parts to have a smooth line to sing.
- When in doubt, double a 'primary' note (i.e. scale degrees 1, 4 or 5)

The main problem I come across is trying to break my students' habit of always doubling the root! There is no easy way around this; to introduce different doubling options as early as Grade 3 would be far too confusing.

As mentioned in regard to melody writing, some examiners will accept things that others will not. It is important for teachers to keep an open mind and prepare their students for this! The main aim is to help students develop an inner ear; no matter how a student is marked in an exam, he/she has done brilliantly if able to **hear** the harmony example while composing it.

### **'Consecutives'**

In my classes I usually refer to consecutive 5ths and 8ves as 'consecutives'. It occurred to me one day, when I was asked for the umpteenth time if consecutive 3rds were OK, that my students had become a little confused by this generic use of the word 'consecutives', and fair enough too! So even though I tend to use it in this teacher guide, in class I have found it much better to always use the whole phrase 'consecutive 5ths and 8ves' all the time!

## **Puzzle – p.30**

### **Comments**

The thing that must be done to chord I in second inversion is "Always Double the Fifth"! This is simply a fun way of revising a few key points.

## **Passing Notes /Auxiliary Notes – p.32**

### **Objective**

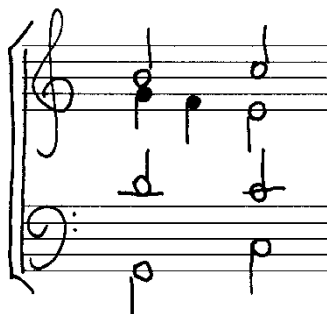
To understand the function and usage of these notes.

### **Comments**

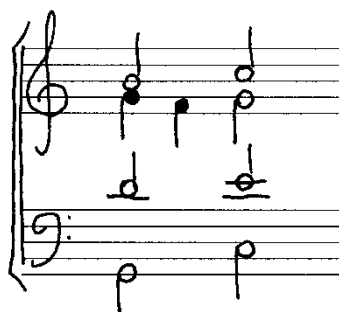
I find that students either forget to use passing and auxiliary notes, or they completely saturate their harmony example until it is wildly complicated! A happy medium is definitely something to strive for here. A good way to do this is to get

students to take a visual approach - just sit back and **look** at the completed harmony example. If it looks too crowded, it will sound too crowded. There should be no more than two parts singing passing notes at the same time, and passing notes should generally not coincide with auxiliary notes.

A passing note forming a  $V^7$  chord in a perfect cadence sounds great, e.g.



This automatically resolves correctly without students needing to understand the function of a  $V^7$  chord, although this will be covered later on in melody writing. It is important however NOT to use an auxiliary note here, as this would result in an incorrect resolution of the  $V^7$  chord, e.g.



It is not really appropriate to have an auxiliary note in any perfect cadence! However, if students remember the point made about raising their lower auxiliary notes by a semitone, incorrect resolutions will be avoided most of the time.

## Voice Exchange - p.33

### Objective

To learn how to spot opportunities to use the chord progression I-VII<sup>6</sup>-I<sup>6</sup> and vice versa.

### Comments

This chord progression is a precursor to the 'Passing 6/4' which is on the sixth grade syllabus. Chord VII<sup>6</sup> functions in the same way as a dominant chord and works very well between two tonic chords in different inversions. The 'formula' is very easy to follow; it's just a matter of learning where to apply it.

Eight of the last ten exam papers have provided opportunities for voice exchange.

## Harmony Hints / Practise - p.34-37

### Comments

There are so many things students need to remember when writing and checking harmony examples. Voice leading is probably the most important of these, and can be done in a visual way. The voices should always **look** evenly spaced, and they should not **look** like they are all moving in the same direction. Some other useful tips are:

- Since there is no spacing rule between bass and tenor, the tenor voice should always sing as high as possible. This allows much greater freedom in choosing alto and soprano notes
- No more than two voices should move in similar motion at the same time. There are very few instances in which consecutive 5ths and 8ves can be successfully avoided.
- The example should not **look** too 'empty' or too 'crowded'. Passing notes and auxiliary notes should be added in keeping with the style of the given part.

## Harmonising Cadences/Modulating Cadences - p.40-44

### Objective

Preparation for the modulation questions to come.

### Comments

This particular question has been presented this way for many years. Interestingly, the syllabus says candidates will be required to 'harmonise cadences', but does not specify that there will be four cadences, nor that each cadence must only be used once. This is another example of the inadequacy of the syllabus details. As mentioned in the introduction, it is extremely important for students and teachers to keep track of the changing trends in AMEB papers. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the format of this question will change, it might be a good idea for teachers to keep in the back of their minds that it may well be a trend!

Page 40 should be very easy, as it is simply practise in cadence writing without modulations. The only thing to get used to is only using each of the four principal cadences only once.

From page 41, as long as the question is approached with care and patience, it should be fairly straightforward. The most common error is the omission of relevant accidentals, especially in the inner parts.

## Melody Writing - p.46

Some of the following comments are from the Grade 4 Teacher Guide, but are still highly relevant in grade 5:

When writing melodies in a minor key, students should take particular care when using scale degrees 6-7, and AVOID an augmented 2nd. There is often confusion surrounding this issue; many textbooks explain the use of the melodic form of the

scale, however neglect to point out that it is **not** necessary, for instance, to raise the 6th degree of the scale if not followed by the leading note!

The reason the melodic minor scale raises the sixth and seventh notes on the way **up** is because the leading note needs to be raised to give the feeling of wanting to rise to the tonic; it is a very unsatisfying sound to hear a flattened leading note followed by the tonic. In a descending passage, however, the sixth and seventh degrees could be raised or flattened, it sounds fine either way. As a general rule, it's best to raise the 6th and 7th in an ascending melodic passage, and for descending passages just see what sounds best!

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 upon 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, in terms of melody and harmony writing, there is no single ‘correct’ answer. I like to tell my students that if Mozart himself sat the exam, he wouldn’t necessarily get full marks!

The changes on the syllabus for Grade 5 are that the melody must be longer, and there is the possibility of modulating to a related key, which is ‘optional’ according to the instructions on the exam paper. (See below)

As mentioned in Grade 4, things that should be brought to a student’s attention are:

- The importance of adding interest to a rhythm at appropriate spots, a topic covered in grades 3 and 4
- Credit will be given for sensitive treatment of the words
- It’s best to keep within a particular vocal range e.g. soprano or alto (or tenor or bass if the student really wants to – often the boys do!)

‘Sensitive treatment’ of the words is also referred to as ‘word-painting’ - for instance, a student would receive extra credit for this setting:



As opposed to this:



Often there is no particular opportunity for word-painting, but as long as the student can be aware of the more creative possibilities when setting words to music, it will stand them in good stead for song writing in the future.

## Continuing a Motif – p.48

### Objective

To learn how to write a melody based on a short given motif.

### Comments

As discussed in grades 3 and 4, it is much easier for students to understand how to compose a melody if they have analysed one that sounds good/bad and can understand the different factors that contribute to it sounding good or bad! In this way, students 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. For this reason they are asked to write down their comments on why the three 'solutions' to the given motif are not so good. This can provide some humour in the lesson as well as a great topic for discussion.

Most students seem to prefer the motif question to setting words to music. I admit that I prefer this myself! This is because it is easier to extend and build upon an idea than it is to start from scratch, particularly when one is pushed for time in an exam. When a motif is given, the rhythmic AND melodic ideas are in place, and students are not restricted to the meter or mood of a poem.

The approach in the workbook is to imagine that the motif is the 'question' (Q) and that a contrasting 'answer' (A) must follow. I usually introduce this Q & A concept with an analysis of familiar tunes such as 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' and 'London Bridge'. I then point out that although these songs contain exact repetitions of the Question, it's not so advisable to do this in an AMEB exam. They've only got 8 bars in which to show their stuff – some examiners will view an exact repetition of the motif a bit of a cop-out, no matter how musical!

Whether or not students are inspired to try out all the 'Q' and 'A' combinations at the bottom of the page, the most important teaching point here is to **re-use the given material**. I say to my students, 'Imagine that someone went to the trouble of composing the first phrase for you. Now imagine how offended they'd be if you didn't bother to re-use any of their ideas!' Continuing in the same style is essential.

This exercise does not involve lyrics and is therefore not necessarily for voice. Some students see this as an excuse to write instrumental melodies with enormous ranges! It is still best to keep within a range of 1½ – 2 octaves.

## Modulating is Easy – pp.50-52

### Objective

To address the concept of modulation within a melody.

### Comments

The question of whether or not to teach modulation to a student when the paper states it is 'optional' drives me around the bend. Most students will back away from anything new! As soon as they are aware they don't **have** to do something, they usually won't do it or at least won't try very hard. To say that modulation is 'optional' implies that a well-written, non-modulating melody could receive full marks, but all

teachers know that the candidates who write modulating melodies (provided they do it correctly) are likely to get higher marks than those who don't.

It is much easier to hear and understand an effective modulation in a melody when it is accompanied; therefore I always demonstrate modulations on the piano. I sing a melody and play an accompaniment to it, showing how the accompaniment can easily achieve a modulation from the tonic key to anywhere on the 'family tree'. A modulation is signalled by a perfect cadence in the new key. I have often presented this as a simple formula (over two bars):



(In words: half a bar on chord I, half a bar on chord V<sup>7</sup> of new key, then chord I of new key)

This will work for any of the keys on the family tree – the beauty and function of 'close' relatives! The use of V<sup>7</sup> is a foolproof way of making sure that the new accidental will appear. For instance, take the example of a melody in C major modulating to F major:

Chord V of F major = CEG

Chord V<sup>7</sup> of F major = CEGB<sup>b</sup>

If a student were to use the 'formula' with V instead of V<sup>7</sup>, the B flat may not appear in the melody and this would not be a satisfactory modulation. I have had students claim that the B flat was 'in the accompaniment"! Even though it is great to imagine an accompaniment to the melody, the fact is that only the melody line is written in the exam and it must show the modulation through the use of accidentals.

### **Sequences**

A sequence is a compositional tool. It is a way of emphasizing a particular musical idea. Sequences can be used to profound effect in melody writing but it is not always appropriate, especially when setting words to music. Most students seem to be obsessed with putting a sequence in bars 5 and 6 of their 8-bar melody... one can only imagine what an examiner might think about the 'creativity' of this after marking 200 sequences! Care should be taken when choosing to write a sequence and the chord progression it follows must suit the flow of the rest of the melody.

## **The Woodwind Family – pp.54-56**

### **Objective**

To learn the instruments of the woodwind family and to research woodwinds enough to be able to give a full description and fill in the grid.

### **Comments**

This section is easy for woodwind players, and for anyone who has access to demonstrations by woodwind players! Most of the time the exam questions require a description of the instrument, rather than testing knowledge on terms relating to woodwind playing such as tonguing, overblowing, etc. However, the workbook tests

all sorts of things relating to woodwinds and a decent amount of research is expected. If doing Grade 5 Theory is the only time non-woodwind students will cover information on woodwinds, it's best to feed them as much knowledge on the subject as possible!

## Woodwind Wordsearch – p.57

### Comments

The usual wordsearch format found in standard puzzle books lists all the words to find, however in this wordsearch clues are provided instead. This encourages much better learning and absorption of the information while still having fun.

There are three clues for words that are not exactly essential grade 5 information! These are:

"All woodwind players need to do this to their instruments" – **BLOW**

"You do not want to do this in your exam" – **FAIL**

"Woodwind players are great at blowing out birthday candles on this" – **CAKE**

## Handel, Mozart and their Stuff – p.60

### Objective

To introduce the requirements for the form and history section of the exam.

### Comments

Quite a lot of responsibility is put on the student here! This page is designed to whet their appetites and inspire them to go out and do some research!

Of course, students tend not to use books anymore, only the internet. Wikipedia is reasonably reliable; searching on specific names of musical forms is also good, but a great source of well-summarised material can be found in [How to Blitz! General Knowledge](#). There is also extra information at [www.blitzbooks.com.au](http://www.blitzbooks.com.au)

## Musical Forms – pp.61-66

### Comments

I have approached form and history in the same way as Grade 4... the 'answers' are not in the book, only the questions. The syllabus states that there will be 'general questions' on the topics of Minuet and Trio, Scherzo, Air with Variations and Recitative and Aria – so how does one decide which information is the most essential?

Most other theory textbooks contain a reasonably concise explanation of the abovementioned topics, however, as I said in Grade 4, 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!'

These pages are set out in a way that stimulates thinking and encourages research. Whilst all the most important questions are asked in the workbook, wider research will



ensure the discovery of more facts and interesting perspectives. This is vital to the development of good musicianship.

The best possible approach to this section is to listen to recordings of the examples students intend to quote in the workbook, particularly operatic examples. If they don't **listen** to any examples, students are not really learning much about the music, they are simply memorising stuff for the exam.

The Recitative and Aria is a fun, different and slightly irreverent way of getting the information across. The Recitative is more akin to Mozart's style than Haydn's, so students may find the rhythms in this a little difficult to follow at first. However, once they've tried it a few times, ideally with teacher guidance (and accompaniment if possible!), they will hopefully be singing it by heart and will therefore know the information by heart.

## Crossword - p.67

### 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 is just one clue/word that I threw in just for fun, which obviously has nothing to do with anything on the syllabus:

21 across: 'Bart Simpson's dad' - **HOMER**

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

## Test Paper - pp.71-76

### 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.