

PRACTICAL MUSICIANSHIP *(Subject Code: 42)*

Musicianship is a broad concept that covers a complex range of musical abilities. For the purposes of this syllabus, it is loosely defined as the ability to ‘think in sound’. This occurs when a musician is able to produce music which they perceive internally and in the imagination, whether through playing by ear, singing, reading from notation, or through improvisation.

ABRSM’s Practical Musicianship exams give students opportunities to develop their ability to ‘think in sound’ and perform spontaneously. While the other graded exams focus on aspects of performance that are prepared in detail in advance, here the playing (or singing) is in response to immediate challenges and stimuli, presented both aurally and via notation.

Grade by grade, the Practical Musicianship exams cover some of the key skills for the rounded musician:

- the ability to internalize music and to reproduce it
- interpreting written music with a minimum of preparation
- exploring the possibilities inherent in a short motif
- the ability to detect differences between what is heard and what is written

In developing their musicianship skills, students will be gaining the understandings as well as the expressive and interpretative skills needed to master the musical language of the repertoire they are learning.

Grade 5 as a prerequisite

A pass at Grade 5 or above in Practical Musicianship (or in Theory of Music or any solo Jazz subject) must be obtained before candidates can enter for Grades 6, 7 or 8 Practical exams. We believe that a thorough understanding of the elements of music is essential for a full and satisfying performance at these higher grades.

Instruments

Practical Musicianship exams are open to singers as well as instrumentalists performing on any instrument(s) included in the current range of subjects featured in ABRSM’s syllabuses. Singing candidates will be expected to play certain parts of the exam on an instrument (either the piano provided or any other instrument of their choice).

In the exam

Approximately one minute of preparation time is allowed for the following tests:

- singing/playing at sight
- improvising (from Grade 4)
- transposing at sight
- realizing a figured bass

For any test that requires a sung response, pitch rather than vocal quality is the object. The examiner will be happy to adapt to the vocal range of the candidate, whose responses may be sung to any vowel (or consonant followed by a vowel), hummed or whistled (and at a different octave, if appropriate).

Marking scheme

The examiner will award an overall grading, rather than a mark, on the following basis:

- A Pass with Distinction
- B Pass with Merit
- C Pass
- F Failure to reach the standard required to pass

Specimen tests

Examples of the tests are given in *Specimen Tests: Practical Musicianship* and *Musicianship in Practice*, available for purchase from music retailers and from www.abrsm.org/publications.

New syllabus

A new Musicianship syllabus is planned, and may be introduced before the expiry of this syllabus booklet. For updates, see www.abrsm.org/exams.