

Performance Singing Exercises

Exercises and Scales are ways of keeping the voice fit and flexible. Technical exercises give entrants the vocal tools to sing songs with enjoyment and confidence, which helps the audience to enjoy the singing too.

Technical Work is progressive throughout the grades. Metronome markings should be used as an approximation, a reasonable proximity to these markings will be acceptable.

Scales, arpeggios and exercises may be transposed to suit the range of the entrant's voice. Entrants must select a starting note and that note or a chord will be played before each scale, arpeggio or exercise.

Where no syllable is specified, entrants must be prepared to sing on any of the vowel sounds. For Level One and Two entrants, vowels may be preceded by a consonant. At Level Three and above, except where otherwise specified, vowels may not be preceded by a consonant.

All printed technical exercises for the grade, need to be learnt unaccompanied and ready for presentation during the examination. Examiners may, at their discretion, choose to hear only a selection of these.

Teachers are encouraged to use all exercises in all Grades as a sequential vocal development tool, while concentrating on the exercises for the particular Grade for which the entrant is entered.

The unaccompanied folk song is a constant in Preliminary to Grade 2 as it allows personal choice to suit entrants' strengths, and is an excellent tool for assessing pitch, diction and communication skills.

In Grades 3 to 8 the entrant must present one of the vocal studies or an unaccompanied folk song as listed for the grade.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) has been used to indicate vowels and consonants on which to sing these exercises.

NB. Unless otherwise stated, all exercises should be practiced on all vowels.

Preliminary

- This is seen as a confidence building examination, hence the accompanied exercise, followed by the repetition of it unaccompanied.
- The basis of the major scale is reinforced, but with fun words to sing.
- Some of the cardinal vowels [i], [a], and [u], along with [œ] are introduced.
- The consonant [g] works on loosening the back of the tongue, and the consonants [j] on the front of the tongue.

Exercises below. NB Each exercise is to be sung twice. Once with a very soft accompaniment, and once unaccompanied.

1.

Gig - gle, gig - gle, gig - gle, gig - gle, ha

2.

Gig-gly Gertrude, gig-gly Gertrude, gig-gly Gertrude, gig-gly Gert

3.

Yum, yum, yum, yum, yummmm!

Grade 1

- These are compulsory and will be performed A capella, beginning on a note of the entrant's choice
- Exercise 1 reinforces the back of the tongue looseness.
- The interval of singing a major 2nd is introduced.
- The vowel [ɛ] is introduced.
- The concept of a diphthong in the word 'nice' [ai] is introduced.
- The consonant [z] aims to create a depth of tone.
- Breathing in all these exercises uses the principle of 'onset and release'.

Exercises below

1.

mf ga ga ga ga ga ge ga ge ga ge ga ge ga

2.

mf Ve-ry ve-ry nice. Ve-ry ve-ry nice. Ve-ry ve-ry nice.

3.

f za za za

Grade 2

- These are compulsory and will be performed A capella, beginning on a note of the entrant's choice
- Further reinforcement of the major scale, but this time slurred, and the loosening of the front of the tongue with the [j].
- Ascending arpeggios, using [b] for frontal resonance.
- The vowels [ɔ] and [e] are introduced.
- The tracking of vowels [i]-[e]-[a] is used.
- Triads are introduced with words to reinforce the major tonality. These words introduce [h] to get the breath moving and a further diphthong [ei] in the word 'day'.

Exercises below

1.

Yo _____ yo _____ yo _____ yo _____

2.

Bub - ble, bub - ble, bub - ble bath

3.

i e a i e a i e a i e a
i e a i e a i e a i e a

4.

Hap - py, hap - py, hap - py, hap - py day

Grade 3

- These are compulsory and will be performed A capella, beginning on a note of the entrant's choice
- Major scale now sung both ascending and descending.
- Five Cardinal vowels now tracked.
- Onset and release breathing pattern further established.
- Descending scale reinforced with the 'Tui softly singing' exercise - care will need to be taken that the initial [t] in 'tui' is not too aspirate. The [u]-[i] is good front to back vowel practice.
- Major triads reinforced and minor triads introduced.

Exercises below:

1.

mf $\text{♩} = 72$

2.

mf $\text{♩} = 72$
i e a o u i e a o u i e a o u i e a o u i e a o u

3.

mf $\text{♩} = 80$
i e a o u

4.

mp $\text{♩} = 72$
Tu-i softly singing, tu-i softly singing, tu-u softly singing, tu-i softly sing

5.

mf $\text{♩} = 60$
o u i

Grade 4

- These are compulsory and will be performed A capella, beginning on a note of the entrant's choice
- The use of the syllable 'vra' encourages a forward tongue placement.
- The melodic minor scale, both ascending and descending, is introduced slowly giving entrants time to think about what notes they are singing. This encourages aural acuity.
- Two short phrases, one major and one minor are introduced but with different words to each.

Exercises below

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Grade 5

Exercises and scales are ways of keeping the voice fit and flexible. Technical exercises give entrants the vocal tools to sing songs with enjoyment and confidence and that helps an audience to enjoy the singing also.

1. **AGILITY** - agility exercises will help to train the voice to move quickly and neatly from one note to the next. Singing with agility from the top of the scale down to the lowest note is an excellent way to begin the daily practice or to start the singing lesson. The scale can be sung to any vowel - e.g. a or i or u or o, and putting an "L" in front of the vowel encourages the tongue tip to stay flexible and agile too. The letter "D" can also be helpful in this way. "D" is an excellent consonant for using only the tongue tip without tightening the whole tongue. Experiment with these suggestions to find which give the best results.



2. **STACCATO** - the staccato way of singing or playing is another way of keeping the tone light and short, but not breathy. The entrant should aim for a focused tone in the staccato note which is accurate but unforced as the voice and breath meet each other neatly without being "pushed". Use thought to prepare the pitch accurately before the sound is made. Practise this slowly at the beginning, and speed up with proficiency.



3. **ARPEGGIO EXERCISES** - these too, are good exercises for the development of rapid and accurate movement of the voice. When combined with the major and minor scale, the entrant is working for skill in their ability to change the pitch of the major third into a minor third with correct tuning.



4. **THE NINE NOTE SCALE**: ascending and descending - This scale is to be sung with the enjoyment and musical feeling it deserves. The ninth note is a peak in the music and the singing voice must stay consistent while reaching the peak then descending to the lowest pitch. The breath is a source of energy and it must be managed with care through each note. If the chin juts forward, or the tongue becomes tense, the breath energy will be interrupted and the vocal tone will suffer. It would be a good idea to practise this exercise slowly at first until all the suggestions can be managed.



5. **MESSA DI VOCE**: the line of the voice - This is an exercise which will train the voice to respond to the commands of thought. Start by thinking of the vowel 'a' and how it feels inside the mouth, then start singing a quiet but focused sound and swelling it to a strong, vibrant and unforced one. Now gradually return to the quiet dynamic level. Don't change the shape of the 'a' sound from the beginning to the end.



6. **THE MELODIC MINOR** - This minor scale will already be known. This should be sung with thought and enjoyment to demonstrate confidence in knowing the place of each note as the entrant sings upwards with a focused and even tone.



Grade 6

Technical exercises play an important part in the study of music performance. By practising and achieving the vocal techniques of the exercises, the voice will become stronger, flexible and wider in range. However, remember that the technical exercises are not just a collection of notes but are also music! This means that they must be sung as a musical performance to make them enjoyable and fully achievable. Knowing what each exercise is for, and carrying that thought over into songs is very important.

1. THE TEN NOTE SCALE - This scale should be sung with even and steady sound. Enjoy the ascending scale with a sense of excitement as it goes beyond the usual eight notes to the peak. Energy from the breath will carry the voice without having to reach up for high notes, and therefore feeling strain in mouth, throat or tongue. Entrant must be careful not to jut out chin or lift shoulders during the upward scale.



2. THE TEN NOTE SCALE IN HARMONIC MINOR MODE - this is a challenge because of the technique needed to sing an upward scale and also the tonality of the harmonic minor. Slow practise is the method needed to master both challenges.



3. THE CHROMATIC SCALE - this scale has twelve notes with no whole tones, only semi-tones between the pitches. When learning this scale and working out the best way of singing it well, it helps to think of the intervals between each note as being large steps on the way up and as smaller steps on the way down.



4. EXTENDED ARPEGGIO WITH CHANGING TONALITY BETWEEN MAJOR AND MINOR MODES - The entrant should study this exercise with care because of the challenges it holds. Be very careful about intonation which demonstrates knowledge of the major and minor keys and the ability to sing each with confidence.



5. AGILITY - the strong rhythmical impulse in this exercise must be maintained with evenness within the triplet figure. Take care that the first note of each triplet arrives exactly on the beat of the bar for which it is intended. Careful not to allow the exciting rhythm to pull you off the beat. The use of a metronome to reinforce the beat will prove useful for this. Notice that the pattern of the triplet figure changes on the descending half of the scale. There is an intonation challenge in singing the ascending thirds to make sure that the interval is wide enough between them and then narrowed with the notes descending in a stepwise pattern.



Grade 7

Grade seven is an advanced level. It is important for the entrant to read the criteria in the syllabus very thoroughly to prepare for the standards which will be expected at the examination. They challenge vocal technique and musicianship. The criteria covers both grades seven and eight in Level Four. The entrants in Grade Seven will be expected to perform the technical exercises and repertoire at a satisfactory level of proficiency to achieve a successful outcome in the examination.

The development of vocal technique is an essential component for singing performance as it enables the singer to do justice to their chosen selections and to safeguard the health and stamina of the singing voice.

Repertoire should be carefully chosen, making sure that selections are not beyond the entrants present state of vocal development. Songs and arias which entrants are not yet ready to sing, no matter how much they want to include them in their performance which are beyond their present ability, may result in a disappointing or discouraging outcome. This is a lesson to learn early in their performance life. Note and follow the speed marking in each exercise.

1. THE EXTENDED SCALE: the eleven note scale - this is well beyond the normal diatonic scale. The advice given in earlier grades about the posture of head and neck when passing through the scale towards the higher pitches is very important. Jutting the chin, tightening the jaw, or reaching for the high pitches will make the singing of the scale difficult and also affect your tone in an unhealthy manner. Increasing the energy in breath flow is the only extra effort needed to keep the steady line of tone going throughout the transitions of pitch. Allow the position of the head to remain stable, although the position of the jaw will adjust as the pitch rises.



2. THE EXTENDED SCALE: the eleven note scale in minor mode - these test the entrants vocal ability and musicianship in the accurate singing of the minor modes.



3. THE CHROMATIC SCALE: the twelve note scale - in semitones ascending and descending: this scale requires accurate intonation. It is helpful to think of the ascending intervals as wide steps and the descending notes as narrow steps.



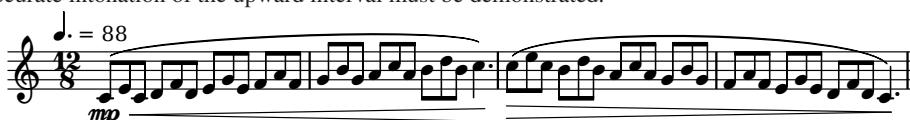
4. THE EXTENDED ARPEGGIO - note dynamic changes and the flattened third in the second part of the exercises. The entrant's ability to achieve these instructions are required in the criteria for assessing technical proficiency.



5. EXTENDED ARPEGGIO - this exercise covers a range of twelve notes and requires you to show your ability to keep the vocal tone consistently even throughout the registers and to demonstrate the skill of vibrant staccato sound without any pushing.



6. AGILITY IN ASCENDING AND DESCENDING TRIPLET SINGING - the strict rhythmical performance of this exercise and the accurate intonation of the upward interval must be demonstrated.



7. MESSA DI VOCE: the line of the voice - in sustained tones with a changing dynamic of pianissimo through to forte and back to pianissimo in a diatonic scale. The entrant is to demonstrate an ability to follow these markings without forcing of the higher dynamic or losing vocal

focus in the soft tones.

♩ = 144

pp *f*

6 *pp* *f*

continue through ascending scale

Grade 8

Technical exercises are fundamental to singing training as they prepare the singer for the challenges of the complex vocal repertoire they are to perform. By becoming familiar with the co-ordinations of singing in the technical exercises, and by practising and repeating them under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher, it is hoped that the singer will learn the skills and stamina of healthy vocal technique. Although the exercises are the foundation of vocal technique, they are also music, and by singing them with enjoyment and commitment, the entrant will increase the enhancement of their voice and their performing experience.

The criteria in the syllabus for level four state the vocal and musical standards which entrants are expected to demonstrate in their work. These are the criteria for both grades seven and eight; but grade eight entrants are expected to demonstrate a level of competency even higher than the grade seven level of satisfactory. To achieve a pass grade within this level, the examination entrant must have good competency. Exercises must be sung at the dynamic and tempo markings given on the page.

1. THE EXTENDED SCALE - the ascending and descending major scale in compound time: this scale must be sung rhythmically with accurate intonation, and the vocal technique to achieve an even tone throughout the register changes.



2. THE EXTENDED SCALE:
 - a. The ascending and descending melodic minor of the scale



- b. The harmonic minor of the scale



When you can sing these three versions of the scale with consistent tone and accurate intonation, you will have achieved a great deal of knowledge and skill. It is well worth the effort.

3. THE CHROMATIC SCALE: ascending and descending - take notice of the minim rest before beginning the downward scale. This allows time to prepare the breath and the voice.



4. ARPEGGII: major and minor - changing note values and scale type within the exercise.



5. MESSA DI VOCE: the line of the voice - in sustained tones with a changing dynamic of pianissimo through to forte and back to pianissimo in a diatonic scale. The entrant must demonstrate an ability to follow these markings without forcing of the higher dynamic or losing vocal focus in the soft tones.

