

## ABRSM Exams – Style and Period in the Aural Tests

At Grade 5 the examiner will end the aural tests with a short piece, and ask you what the style and period is. He/she will give you a choice, and ask you for reasons why.

At Grades 6-8 you are expected to be able to state what style and period a piece is and give reasons.

Here is a brief overview to help you prepare for this question.

### **BAROQUE STYLE** (e.g. Purcell, Vivaldi, Bach, Handel)

- Texture will often be polyphonic – lots of parts moving independently
- There will be regular cadences – this is called functional harmony
- Modulations will be to related keys
- Melodies will not necessarily be balanced, and could be quite elaborate with ornaments (trills, turns etc)

### **CLASSICAL STYLE** (e.g. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven)

- Melodies will be simple, often stepwise, and well balanced
- The style will sound quite graceful and measured
- Harmony will use simple chords and cadences – functional harmony
- Texture will be homophonic – a melody with an accompaniment
- Modulations will be to related keys
- Chromatic notes or chords might be used for effect
- Dynamics will contrast

### **ROMANTIC STYLE** (e.g. Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt)

- Melodies will be less balanced and very lyrical and expressive
- There will be a dramatic, expressive feel to the music
- Harmony will be more complex with chromatic chords
- Modulations will be to strange far-away keys
- The music will still sound tonal but very harmonically complex
- Contrasts of dynamics will be vivid
- There could be a lot of rubato – pulling around the tempo

### **TWENTIETH CENTURY** (e.g. Ravel, Stravinsky, Britten)

- Melodies could sound quite angular and strange
- Harmony might be tonal but is likely to be clashing and dissonant
- Rhythms could be exciting, vivid and unpredictable
- The overall feeling of the music will be unpredictable and irregular
- Not all 20<sup>th</sup> century music is ‘clashing’ but much of it is
- You might hear jazzy influences