# Recognising Styles

This resource teaches students how to appreciate the style of music they study or hear. This is useful for general music appreciation, as well as preparing for theory exams, but is intended for preparing students for aural tests in grades 6 to 8 of Trinity Guildhall and Royal Schools (ABRSM) examinations. The characteristics which students are expected to recognise as different grades are printed in different colours.

It is different from *Music Topics for Revision* in that it does not just give lists of points to learn, but also quotes musical examples in which students can see how these principles they learn affect the character of the music. Students come to understand differences in style, and to recognise the features that create those differences.

For example, the section about cadences describes what a cadence is, and why cadences are used. It then explains how to tell where cadences are. The four "accepted" cadences are listed, along with the chords they use. Those common before 1800 are marked out from those which were rare before 1800. Then there is a description of which contexts particular cadences are *usually* used in, and the effect they *usually* have on the character of the music:

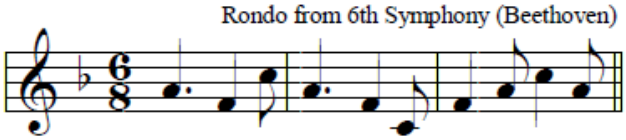
> **Perfect** cadences tend to give a stronger finish than plagal cadences. Often sad songs or lullabies will end with **plagal** cadences. **Imperfect** cadences are often found at the 'half'way point': they give a feeling of being at rest, but expecting more to come. **Interrupted** cadences are the least 'settled': they tend to give a feeling of surprise, mystery or drama.

Other topics covered are:

- Types of melody (e.g. triadic and angular), and the way they are phrased, articulated and ornamented

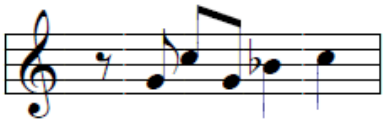
Many melodies written in the Classical Period are **TRIADIC**: they follow the notes of a chord. In this melody all the notes belong to the F major chord:

Rondo from 6th Symphony (Beethoven)

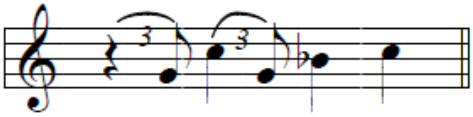


- Time – syncopation, swing, cross-rhythms and hemiolas

This rhythm, when swung



would be performed like this:



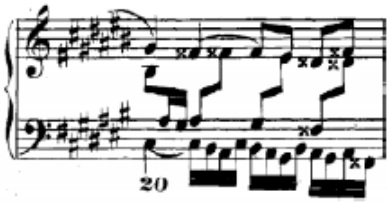
- Texture – lines and chords (block chords and broken chords), imitation, melody and accompaniment
- Structure – parts of a movement (e.g. development); styles – barcarolle, nocturne, scherzo, etc.
- Harmony – scales and chords; cross relation, walking basses, pedal points, tierce de Picardie, etc.
- Features of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Twentieth-Century music; impressionism and jazz
- Dances – minuet, gavotte, polka, polonaise, mazurka, waltz, tango

The final section lists ways of describing the style of a piece of music. Below is the summary of texture.

**uniform/varied**
**chordal/contrapuntal/mixture; block/broken chords**
**melody and accompaniment (where is the melody?)**
**thick/complex; thin/simple**
**imitation**
**imitative / canonic/fugal entries**
**how many parts?**

There is also a list of pieces illustrating various styles that students can listen to.

(Most can be found on *Youtube* and IMSLP.)



***Baroque***

- **J. S. Bach**'s "The Well-Tempered Klavier" (keyboard) pieces in every key show that in a modern tuning they would sound "correct". (Right)
- **Handel**'s keyboard music mixes counterpoint and chordal passages (often in different figurations).
- Domenico (not Alessandro) **Scarlatti** wrote sonatas which developed new styles for the harpsichord.