Examination Notes
Tips for teachers

Section III refers to AMEB’s tests for practical music examinations on Accompaniment, Sight Reading and General Knowledge. Teachers often ask for help in preparing students for these tests. Clarinet Advisor Anna Lester has been working on this matter recently in an Examination Preparation Seminar and her summary may be of use to many teachers.

I find the AMEB publication, “Aural Tests, Graded Exercises in Aural Skills” (with CDs if required) to be an excellent resource, providing students with the means to practise aural tests between their weekly lessons.

During the examination, candidates need to remember that each test will be played twice before their response is required, except in the Preliminary and Grade 1 Examinations, where only one play is required. Therefore, candidates need to concentrate and think carefully about the question before answering.

According to Anna Lester, factors to consider when answering a sight reading question include:

- reading and counting all the notes accurately;
- observing the key signature and the accidentals;
- observing the dynamics and tempo indications;
- reading and counting the rhythms accurately;
- playing the correct fingerings and bowings;
- accurately placing the articulation marks; and
- understanding and applying the musical concepts of the piece.

General Knowledge

- The requirements for each grade are clearly described on Page xv of the current AMEB Manual of Syllabuses.
- As part of the final preparation for the examination, all pencil marks need to be erased from each candidate’s music so that the examiner can properly examine this section.

Performance aids such as fingering, accidentals and key signature reminders, breath marks, bowings etc., can, of course, be left in place in the music.

Skills which are developed by and tested in Section III form an integral part of the developing musician’s “musical toolbox,” and consequently warrant timely and thorough preparation by all candidates.

Anna Lester
AMEB Clarinet & Saxophone Examiner

Violin Technical Work

Technical Work is an important component of the violin practical examination. It is often presented in the exam with hesitation and without the same level of preparation given to pieces.

Ideally, teachers should begin technical work preparation at the commencement of each grade and include it regularly in lesson time. This will help to reduce stress at exam time as students will become very familiar with the Technical Work requirements and be able to perform them promptly in the examination.

The Violin Technical Work Book (TWB) provides teachers and candidates with a wide range of options to tailor the technical work requirements. You will need however to refer to the syllabus to ensure that you are familiar with the objectives, choices and specific requirements for each grade. It’s worthwhile transferring relevant information such as examiner’s choice; candidate’s choice; exercise options; and key, string, fingering, position and bowing options into your copy of the TWB.

Ensure that scales, arpeggios and exercises are performed at the tempo indicated, with the appropriate bowing style and where specified on the bow. Performance at significantly faster or slower speeds can hinder the candidate’s ability to control the bow.

Managing bow speed pressure and distribution is an essential skill in the Technical Work syllabus.

Apply logical and systematic fingerings for scales and arpeggios to encourage secure intonation and aid in memorisation. Fingerings for exercises must be chosen from the options provided in the TWB.

When you receive your exam slip you will also receive a Violin Technical Work Advice Form. Take the time to fill this out carefully and detail all of your exam choices including sets, bowing patterns, keys, strings etc. The information on the form will help to keep the exam running smoothly and to schedule.

Elizabeth Collins
AMEB Violin Examiner