

Edexcel AoS1: wider listening, part 1

KS4

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Introduction

Each of Pearson Edexcel's four areas of study (AoS) for its GCSE Appraising component contains two set works, but the exam paper for this component also requires students to have listened to a wider selection of relevant music, and to answer questions on music that they've probably not heard before. In Section A they will be asked questions on **musical elements, contexts and language** in an unfamiliar extract, and in Section B they will have to **compare** a piece of unfamiliar music to one of the set works.

In older GCSE and A level music specifications, the study of purely prescribed music risked giving students a narrow, perhaps even skewed knowledge of musical style. Current specifications have addressed this, encouraging students to listen to a broad range of music and relate it to the music they study in more detail. Over the past two years our resources in the ongoing *Developing Wider Listening* series have attempted to support this, covering several genres and styles from Baroque times to the present day.

Conversely, studying too wide a range of music in a limited number of lessons can result in students having rather superficial contextual and stylistic awareness, which might not be so helpful when they're asked to make critical and analytical judgements about unfamiliar music. It's important to focus the wider listening on a small number of targeted, well-chosen pieces.

This is the first of two resources in which we'll focus on Edexcel's AoS1, Instrumental Music 1700-1820, and look in some detail at the four pieces of music suggested by Edexcel for wider listening. These pieces are not 'set works' in any way, and of course you can choose to study other instrumental pieces from Edexcel's timeframe. The choice of music matters less than the need for students to develop listening and analytical skills that will help them to address these quite daunting exam questions with confidence. Hopefully it will also deepen their appreciation for the wide array of instrumental music written during this 120-year period.

For each of the four pieces, we'll consider the context in which it was written, and take a brief listening journey through the piece, finding links to the two set works – the third movement from Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, and the first movement from Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Piano Sonata in C minor. Part 1 will focus on the wider listening suggestions by Handel and Vivaldi, which are most closely linked to the Bach set work.

Unfamiliar listening in the Appraising paper

As well as several questions about the eight set works, there are two questions in Edexcel's Appraising paper that require students to write about unfamiliar music. The final question in Section A provides students with a **skeleton score** and a **recording** of an unfamiliar piece from one of the areas of study, and expects them to answer questions about its musical elements, context and musical language. The piece will be closely related in some way to one of the set works.

The single question in Section B is a comparison question, setting an extract from one of the set works alongside an extract from another related but unfamiliar piece, again with skeleton scores provided. Here, Edexcel requires an **extended response**, meaning that students need to compare, identify characteristics, evaluate and draw a conclusion in written prose. Their quality of musical knowledge, understanding and communication is assessed, as is their awareness of context, ability to express judgements, use of musical vocabulary and ability to cite other relevant pieces of music.

Edexcel's first two suggested wider listening pieces for AoS 1 complement Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 very well. The second movement from Handel's Concerto grosso in D, Op. 6 No. 5, is similar to Bach's in style and character, and in 'Winter' from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* we see the solo concerto form in all its glory. Both Handel and Vivaldi were strong influences on Bach, and all three composers did much to develop the sparkling **Italian Baroque** style – though Bach was the only one of the three who did not spend any time in Italy.

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An earlier *Music Teacher* resource (September 2016) looks in more depth at teaching the Appraising component

Edexcel emphasises that the idea of wider listening is to provide breadth and depth to the study of the AoS, so that the set works are not just seen in isolation. It also reminds us that the wider listening pieces do not need to be studied in as much depth as the set works. The specification lists a useful range of skills for learners to develop in looking at these, or other, wider listening pieces:

- ▶ **Listening perceptively** to unfamiliar music.
- ▶ Developing skills of **aural analysis**.
- ▶ Placing music in wider **context** and **chronology** – perhaps by identifying genre, composer or rough date of composition.
- ▶ Recognising **keys and chords**.
- ▶ Completing simple **aural dictation** tasks.

After each overview and listening guide in this resource, there will be a Section A-style listening question, ideas for the Section B question, and some suggestions for related composing work and further listening.

Handel: Concerto grosso in D, Op. 6 No. 5, second movement



George Frideric Handel

Listen to the movement with a live score here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSaKmYGs1bE

When the word ‘concerto’ first appeared in the Baroque period, it was used to describe any music for a group of instruments and usually featured a single instrument (**solo concerto**) or small ensemble (**concerto grosso**) in **dialogue** with a larger ensemble. After the Baroque period it came to mean primarily a work for soloist and orchestra.

The concerto developed initially thanks to Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), who decided to expand the **trio sonata** (a type of **chamber music** for two instruments and **continuo**) to allow more of a dialogue between the soloists and the accompanying group. The result was sets of concertos like his *Concerti grossi* Op. 6, which influenced several subsequent composers.

One of those influenced in this way was George Frideric Handel. He was born in the German town of Halle in 1685 (the same year as Bach was born) and began his career in Hamburg as a violinist, keyboardist and composer. Handel developed his compositional style in Italy before moving to London in 1712, just two years before his biggest **patron**, the Elector of Hanover, became George I of England. Supported by this royal patronage, he was able to develop his own Italian-influenced style, particularly through writing **operas**. His work in developing an effectively new genre, the English **oratorio** (a choral work based on a sacred subject), further cemented his reputation. He died in London in 1759 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Handel’s 12 *Concerti grossi* Op. 6 were written in the space of a single month and published in London in 1740, just two years before the first performance of his famous oratorio *Messiah*. They are written for strings, with a solo **concertino** group of two violins and cello playing an important role throughout. John Walsh, Handel’s publisher, had asked him to write the set to build on the popularity of similar concertos by Italian composers such as Corelli, hoping that they would sell well. Handel also had the novel idea of playing them in the intermissions of his oratorio performances and added oboe parts to some, including No. 5.

Handel’s Italian influences run through all these concertos, and there are similarities and even direct quotes from music by composers including Corelli and Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757). Handel also liked to reuse material from his earlier compositions. No. 5, in the key of D major, was completed in early October 1739 and contains material lifted from the **overture** to his recently completed **cantata** *Ode for St Cecilia’s Day* in its first, second and sixth movements. Encourage your students to listen to this overture and compare it with the opening two movements of the concerto – here are links to both:

- ▶ Ode for St Cecilia’s Day: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh148uwSKN8
- ▶ Concerto grosso in D, Op. 6 No. 5 (complete): www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2Rjr7SlscA

Continuo is the name given to a combination of bass instrument (usually cello) and keyboard (harpsichord or organ), which help underpin the harmonic and rhythmic detail of the music.

Most composers in the Baroque and Classical periods relied on **patronage** – the financial support of wealthy, sometimes aristocratic or royal families, or the church, in return for the delivery of frequent commissioned compositions.

Copying, imitating or re-using other music was common practice in the Baroque period, and was not considered to be plagiarism – as it possibly would be today.

Handel vs Bach

The second movement of Handel's Concerto grosso Op. 6 No. 5 has probably been suggested by Edexcel because it can be compared quite easily with the Bach set work, which is also in the key of D major.

Get your students to listen to the first minute or so of each extract below:

- ▶ Handel: www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSaKmYGslbE
- ▶ Bach: www.youtube.com/watch?v=A__qtCwGEag

Through discussion, ask them to consider how the two extracts compare in terms of:

- ▶ tonality
- ▶ texture
- ▶ character
- ▶ instrumentation

A brief listening guide

This bright, lively movement begins with just one violin part, playing in **unison** a melody in D major that features a four-semiquaver/two-quaver pattern also found in the *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*. The second violins enter in **counterpoint**, beginning on the **dominant** note A. The third part – violas, cellos and continuo – enters (back in the tonic key) at 0:16. This complex, **polyphonic texture** conveys a busy, energetic character.

The first solo section is at 0:27, again with **imitative** entries and this time over a **dominant pedal**. A brief **tutti** follows, containing a **melodic sequence** and coming to rest on a **perfect cadence**. Then, the main material returns in the dominant key of A major at 0:42, answered in the tonic two bars later.

The semiquaver/quaver idea is developed in a long, complex passage that takes us into E minor, and then via E major back to A major, alternating between concertino (soloists) and **ripieno** (accompanying) groups. Perfect cadences underline some of these modulations. Then the music moves via F sharp minor into B minor before returning quite abruptly to the tonic.

At 1:27 the main material returns, in the tonic key, played by the whole ensemble, arranged imitatively in two parts half a bar apart. Further dialogue between the two groups follows and the dominant pedal first heard at 0:27 returns at 1:38. The melodic sequence then takes us into a **homophonic, cadential** ending.

Section A-style listening question

Listen to the second movement of Handel's Concerto grosso in D, Op. 6 No. 5, from 0:26 to 0:41 and answer the following questions. A skeleton score is provided below.

- Which of the following is the most appropriate tempo marking for this extract?
Largo **Andante** **Allegro** **Presto**
- Name **one** of the instruments that plays the melody at the beginning of the extract.
- Name the harmonic device played in the bass part at the beginning of this extract.
- What word best describes the texture at the beginning of this extract?
- Identify **two** features from the list below that can be heard in this passage.
Sequence **Ostinato** **Trill** **Hemiola** **Suspension**
- Name the **cadence** and the **key** at the end of this extract.
- Name the musical period in which this piece was composed.

For Section B practice, you could ask your students to compare the first minute of the Handel movement with the first minute of the Bach set work and evaluate how these pieces use **musical elements** to convey **energy** and **vitality**.

Related listening and composing ideas

For further related listening, try the following:

- ▶ Corelli: Concerto grosso in D, Op. 6 No. 1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wog052iFeBo
- ▶ Handel: Concerto grosso in D, Op. 3 No. 6, second movement (this movement is in D minor) www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJsp8LJmBdA
- ▶ Domenico Scarlatti: Concerto grosso No. 5 in D minor www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhLfhJrPSYk

A composition challenge:

- ▶ Challenge **all** students to write a short melody with a repetitive signature rhythm, like the one in Handel's piece.
- ▶ Challenge **some** students to get this melody to modulate and end in the dominant.
- ▶ Challenge **a few** students to arrange their melody for two instruments, with imitative entries.

Vivaldi: 'Winter' from *The Four Seasons*, Op. 8 No. 4

Listen to the Concerto with a live score here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYNDAoMT4Qk



Probable portrait of Antonio Vivaldi, c.1723

Edexcel's next wider listening suggestion is also a concerto, but one where just a single instrument is featured in dialogue with a larger group. Vivaldi's famous *The Four Seasons* (actually the first four of his 12 solo violin concertos Op. 8, called collectively 'The Contest between Harmony and Invention') is a collection of four concertos for solo violin, with strings and continuo, published in 1723. Vivaldi and his earlier compatriot Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709) wrote a great number of solo concertos, developing a style that allowed the soloist to show off their **virtuosity** and trade musical material with the accompanying ensemble, which was usually strings and continuo. Vivaldi wrote over 500 concertos, and through them developed the concept of **ritornello form**, adopted by Handel and Bach in their own concertos.

Ritornello literally means 'little return'. Found mainly in concertos (but originating in opera, where instrumental sections would keep returning to break up the singing), ritornello form was a favourite of Handel, Vivaldi and Bach, who used it a lot in their fast movements, so that they could set up a dialogue between their soloists and ensemble players.

Typically, the ritornello would contain the main melodic material of the movement and would appear at important points and in different related keys, played by the ripieno (main ensemble). The ritornello would alternate with various **episodes** of contrasting material, much of which was played by the soloist or solo group. Some of the ritornello sections would be short, revisiting only part of the main melodic idea.

Born in Venice in 1678, Antonio Vivaldi was an extraordinarily talented violinist who was ordained as a priest in 1703, the same year that he became an employee at the Ospedale della Pietà, an orphanage, convent and music school in Venice. Throughout his life he held various positions there as violin teacher, composer and director of music for the gifted young musicians who were under its care, writing sonatas and concertos for them. He also had these works published and distributed around Europe, and quickly achieved renown.

Vivaldi also wrote choral music and operas, working for a time in Mantua as director of secular music, and in the 1720s he enjoyed a successful freelance life, based back in Venice but touring extensively and receiving commissions. After his death, in Vienna in 1741, it was discovered that despite his renown he was not a rich man but had left a huge legacy of music that influenced composers for years to come, not least in the realm of the solo concerto.

Vivaldi perfected the form of the three-movement (fast-slow-fast) concerto and the ritornello structure, which allowed soloists to demonstrate their virtuosity in the outer movements and their expressive depth in the aria-like slow movements. Several of his concertos had descriptive titles, including *The Four Seasons*, paving the way for dramatic and allusive works of the Classical and particularly the Romantic periods, such as Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Sonata and 'Pastoral' Symphony.

Vivaldi, Handel and Bach

It's possible that Handel and Vivaldi met – Handel was certainly in Venice at the same time as Vivaldi (in 1708) – but it is certain that Bach did not meet Vivaldi, since the German composer never left his home country. Bach was a huge fan of Vivaldi's music, though, and transcribed several of his concertos for keyboard instruments.

Many musicologists consider Vivaldi's music to be Bach's strongest influence, since his writing developed many of the Italian's characteristics, such as his ability to blend lyrical melodies with complex textural and rhythmical writing.

A brief listening guide

Each of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* was prefaced by a poem – probably by Vivaldi himself – that vividly described visual scenes. He even cross-referenced points in the score with lines in the poems, using letters of the alphabet, so that the musicians could understand what the music was describing.

The first movement of 'Winter' – Allegro non molto – is in ritornello form and describes shivering in snow and wind, running and stamping feet to keep warm, and trying to control chattering teeth. The key is F minor, and the ritornello consists of repeating **trilled** quavers belonging to a **minor triad**, on top of which are placed further **dissonant** notes to create a cold, pulsating, unsettling effect.

The first solo episode (1:29 in the linked YouTube video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYNDAoMT4Qk) sees the violin playing extremely fast **arpeggios**, marked 'a horrid wind', punctuated by short bursts of quavers in the ensemble. Then the ritornello reappears, becoming a harmonic sequence (1:49) with faster notes to portray the trembling in the icy cold, and the second solo episode (from 2:12) contains running passages for the violin followed by fast-repeating orchestral chords (2:34), simply marked 'winds'. Vivaldi visits a great many keys in this passage.

The third return of the ritornello is in E flat major (2:49) and, after a brief lyrical solo, is followed by fast repeated notes, marked 'teeth chattering' (3:16). As in other parts of the movement, Vivaldi uses **dynamics** and **suspensions** to create tension, and adds lots of **rhythmic drama**. The trembling returns (3:43) to conclude the movement.

The short second movement (Largo) is in E flat major and describes quiet days spent by the fire while the rain pours down outside. **Pizzicato** (plucked) notes from the violins, cellos and basses and longer **arco** (bowed) notes on the violas portray the rain. Over this, the solo violin plays a lyrical melody to communicate the warmth and contentment of being inside on such a foul day (4:20 to 6:20). The music modulates to the dominant, B flat major, at 5:10, and subsequently returns to the tonic.

Back in F minor, the final movement (Allegro) unusually begins with a solo section. The violin plays a sliding semiquaver melody in triple time over a **tonic pedal** (6:34) that portrays walking gingerly on ice, and the orchestra responds with falling and rising figures, cleverly interwoven between the parts over a dominant pedal (6:56).

Legato and detached quavers, still over the dominant pedal, signify careful and fearful steps on the slippery surface, and at 7:17 aggressive, fast, downward patterns tell us that the inevitable has happened. The dominant pedal continues until a perfect cadence in the tonic at 7:30.

There is more clever imagery as semiquavers are played by the solo violin (running) over quavers and sustained notes from the upper strings (the ice). The running becomes hastier and less controlled, shown through increasingly complex rhythms, and downward arpeggios for the soloist portray the cracking of the ice underfoot (8:12).

After a calmer, sparser passage for upper strings marked Lento (8:23), the movement concludes with **virtuosic** demisemiquaver runs from the soloist punctuated by orchestral chords (9:05), and a final, frantic tutti, over which Vivaldi describes in the score the many winds that battle against each other.

Section A-style listening question

Listen to the second movement of 'Winter' from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, from 4:20 to 5:12, and answer the following questions. A skeleton score is provided below:

- 1 Complete the statement below:
The extract begins in the key of and ends in the key of
- 2 Explain the meaning of C in the first bar of the extract.
- 3 Name the melodic device in the solo violin part in bars 3 and 4.
- 4 Complete the missing part of the solo violin melody in the section marked by a square bracket (bar 4).
- 5 Describe **three** ways in which Vivaldi uses musical elements to convey the atmosphere of being inside on a foul, rainy day.
- 6 Give **two** characteristics of Baroque musical style that can be heard in this extract.
- 7 Identify the type of work from which this extract is taken.

Sonata Quartet Concerto Symphony

For Section B practice, ask your students to compare the opening minute of the first movement of 'Winter' with any part of the Bach set work you care to choose, and compare how the two composers use **sonority** and **texture**.

Related listening and composing ideas

For further related listening, try the following:

- ▶ Torelli: Trumpet Concerto in D www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIHxgJAC-I
- ▶ Bach: Organ Concerto in A minor, BWV 593 (based on Vivaldi) www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-xvW9z0gqk

A composition challenge:

- ▶ Challenge **all** students to compose a simple, lyrical melody for a solo instrument, using stepwise motion and balanced phrases.
- ▶ Challenge **some** students to modulate to the dominant at the end of this melody.
- ▶ Challenge **a few** students to arrange their melody for a solo instrument with keyboard accompaniment, or perhaps accompaniment by string instruments.

A listening challenge:

- ▶ What other examples of music that describes weather-related scenes can students find?

In the second of this two-part resource, we'll focus on the other two suggested wider listening works for this Area of Study, which are both movements from Classical piano sonatas.

Answers to the two listening exercises

Handel:

- 1 Allegro
- 2 Violin/cello
- 3 Dominant pedal
- 4 Imitative/counterpoint/contrapuntal/polyphonic
- 5 Sequence and suspension
- 6 Perfect cadence, A major (dominant)
- 7 Baroque

Vivaldi:

- 1 E flat major, B flat major
- 2 4/4 or 'common' time
- 3 Sequence



- 5 Lyrical/smooth/legato violin melody; pizzicato violins (rain); sustained notes from violas; repetitive quavers in bassline; major key; slow (relaxed) tempo.
- 6 Ornamentation/sequence/harpsichord/string instruments/irregular phrasing/any other valid point
- 7 Concerto