

# Online wider listening activities

KS5

## Simon Rushby

### Introduction

Last month we provided five listening activities for Key Stages 3 and 4 students to do at home to widen their listening experience (*Music Teacher*, June 2020). Here are four more listening activities, intended for students who will be in Years 12 or 13 in September this year. The activities have been written to help them improve and build upon their wider listening, which becomes an ever more significant part of the A level course.

As before, the hope is that these activities can support teachers as off-the-shelf resources that can be sent straight out to students in whichever order works best. Each activity comes with a set of listening questions (deliberately not in the style of any particular board's exam paper), some context and plenty of ideas for further listening or composing activities. 'Mark it yourself' answers are provided at the end of the resource.

A playlist containing all the tracks, including further listening suggestions, can be found on Spotify (<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2epNwn5xiZoeuKNhiWhSFr?si=qICiaVVASmzrfyo4AmnoaQ>). I've also supplied YouTube links for those that prefer, though any references to timings apply to the Spotify versions.

I've selected four pieces that reflect the wide range of areas of study found in the A Level specifications of the four major UK exam boards. There is one piece from Western classical music, one from popular music, one contemporary piece and a song from musical theatre.

Each activity begins on a new page so that they can be isolated and sent out or uploaded to students, perhaps in the final weeks of the summer holidays or early in the autumn term.

Simon Rushby is a freelance musician, writer and education consultant, and was a director of music and senior leader in secondary schools for more than 25 years. He is the author of a number of music education books and resources, an ABRSM examiner, and a songwriter, composer and performer.



## Mozart's Symphony No. 31 in D, K297 Paris (second movement)

### Context

In late 1777, the 21-year-old Mozart toured Germany and then visited Paris to look for employment, having resigned from his job as a court musician in Salzburg. Mozart and his mother remained in Paris for many months, but times became very hard, with money, food and warm accommodation scarce, and few people interested in hiring the young musician.

However, Mozart found a little success in Paris – despite his lack of French, and his increasing disdain for the city. He stayed for some time at the house of an acquaintance who worked for the nobility, and received some commissions for new compositions, the most significant being a symphony that was performed in a private concert in June 1778.

Mozart's mother fell ill during their stay in Paris and died there in July 1778. A second performance of the *Paris* Symphony took place in August, with a new second movement (Andante) since the original Andantino had not been well received. Shortly after, Mozart returned to Salzburg to take up a job secured for him by his father. The *Paris* Symphony has remained one of Mozart's most popular.

The Symphony has a larger orchestra than others of the time – two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, plus timpani and – at the premiere – a large string section. The inclusion of clarinets is unusual, but we know that Mozart was fond of these relatively new instruments. There are three movements (fast-slow-fast) with the traditional minuet (normally found between the slow movement and the finale) omitted. We are concentrating on the slow, Andantino movement which is in the subdominant key of G major. The replacement Andante movement still exists, though it is less commonly performed now.

Listen to the track on the Spotify playlist or here ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXI6IukTdGE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXI6IukTdGE)).

### Listening questions

These questions refer to the music from the beginning until 0:45. The melody of bars 1-8 is shown below:

The musical score shows the first eight bars of the melody. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The dynamics are: *f* (bars 1-2), *p* (bar 3), *mf* (bar 4), *p* (bar 5), *f* (bar 6), *p* (bar 7), and *p* (bar 8). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and a trill in bar 8.

- 1 The melody above is mostly played by violins. Which woodwind instrument doubles this melody in bars 3-4 and 7-8?
  
- 2 Which instruments can be heard on the last two quaver beats of bar 2?
  
- 3 Describe the texture of these opening eight bars.
  
- 4 Describe the phrase lengths and phrase structure of these opening eight bars.

Relevant areas of study: Western Classical Tradition 1650-1910 (AQA), Instrumental Music (Edexcel), Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (OCR), The Development of the Symphony (Eduqas).

- 5 The key during these opening eight bars is G major. Name the cadence in bars 7-8.
- 6 Compare the music from 0:23 to 0:45 with these opening eight bars. What similarities and differences can you hear?

### Composing ideas

In question 4 above, we looked at how Mozart's melody is phrased. Other characteristics of his melody writing include the use of a mixture of conjunct (step) and disjunct (leap) patterns, and a balance of rising and falling lines. The melody is also completely diatonic – all of the notes in it belong to the key of G major.

Write your own, major-key eight-bar melody in this balanced, Classical style. As you compose, think also about the chords that would harmonise it, and try to restrict yourself to tonic, dominant and subdominant chords. There should be cadences – perfect or imperfect – at the halfway point and at the end of your melody.

### Suggestions for further listening

Three slow movements that chart the development of the Classical symphony:

- ▶ Mozart: Symphony No. 41 in C *Jupiter* (second movement) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXBaD2a7K6c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXBaD2a7K6c)). The slow movement of Mozart's last symphony, written in 1788.
- ▶ Haydn: Symphony No. 94 in G major *Surprise* (second movement) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILjwkamp3II](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILjwkamp3II)). Haydn wrote this Symphony in London in 1791, the year of his friend Mozart's untimely death. The unexpected loud chord at the end of the first theme is the reason for this symphony's nickname.
- ▶ Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 in E flat *Eroica* (second movement) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF1KRUYiUjM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF1KRUYiUjM)). The haunting 'funeral march' from Beethoven's monumental Third Symphony, first performed in 1805 and originally dedicated to Napoleon, though Beethoven withdrew this dedication before the premiere.

### Suggestions for follow-up work

Listen to the whole of the second movement of this Symphony, and note down the characteristics of melody, harmony, tonality, texture, use of instruments and form that you notice. Which of these characteristics are typical of other music by Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven that you have studied? If you haven't studied any other music by these composers, find some information online about the musical style of the Classical period (c1750-1820) to help you with your notes.

## Ray Charles: 'Georgia on my Mind'

### Context

'Georgia on my Mind' was written in 1930 by songwriter and bandleader Hoagy Carmichael, with lyrics supplied by his room-mate in New York at the time, a banker named Stuart Gorrell (it was the only lyric Gorrell ever wrote). The story goes that the two men were looking out of their window at the wet weather and decided to write a song about the warmer southern state, but Carmichael had a sister named Georgia and many believe that the song was written for her.

The most successful version of the song was released by Ray Charles, who was himself born in the state of Georgia, and became his first US number one in 1960. Blind from the age of seven, Charles was a prodigious pianist who was strongly influenced by musicians such as Nat King Cole and Louis Jordan, and combined blues, rhythm and blues and gospel styles in an original blend of music that many identified as the beginnings of soul.

In 1979, Charles performed the song before the Georgia General Assembly, which subsequently adopted it as its state song.

Listen to the track on the Spotify playlist or here ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRgWBN8yt\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRgWBN8yt_E)).

### Listening questions

- 1 Using words such as 'intro', 'verse', 'bridge', etc, or letters A, B, etc, describe the structure of this song as precisely as possible.
  
- 2 What instruments are playing in this song? Describe the role of each instrument or group of instruments as precisely as possible.
  
- 3 Describe the musical role of the backing singers in this track as precisely as possible.
  
- 4 Describe the section from 0:15 to 0:44 in terms of
  - ▶ Melody
  - ▶ Harmony and Tonality
  
- 5 Many artists have recorded their own versions of this famous song. Compare Ray Charles's version with one of the suggested ones from the further listening list below, by either Billie Holiday, Annie Lennox or Michael Bublé, each of which came from a very different period of popular music history. What similarities and differences can you hear? In what way is each version typical of its time?

Relevant areas of study: Jazz (AQA), Popular Music and Jazz (Edexcel), Popular Song: Blues, Jazz, Swing and Big Band (OCR), Jazz (Eduqas)

### Composing ideas

'Georgia on my Mind' follows a structure common in popular songs of the 1930s onwards – that of a repeating verse with contrasting bridge section in an AABA (and sometimes another BA) form. See if you can write a simple song that follows this form, with two or three verses to the same melody and harmonic progression, and a bridge section with new a melody and chords. The contrast between the verses is normally achieved by varying the instrumental accompaniment and texture.

### Suggestions for further listening

Three other versions of this classic song:

- ▶ Billie Holiday ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6wc41N-GYY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6wc41N-GYY))
- ▶ Annie Lennox ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_TbAlKPouss](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TbAlKPouss))
- ▶ Michael Bublé ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=am1MobFQaVg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=am1MobFQaVg))

Another classic song written by Hoagy Carmichael:

- ▶ Nat King Cole: 'Stardust' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjU6ZjrQulc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjU6ZjrQulc))

Two more hits from Ray Charles:

- ▶ Ray Charles: 'Hit the Road, Jack' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8Tiz6INF7I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8Tiz6INF7I))
- ▶ Ray Charles: 'What'd I Say', Parts 1 & 2 ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTIP\\_FOdqz4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTIP_FOdqz4))

### Suggestions for follow-up work

What other songs can you find that follow the AABA structure? To get you started, 'Yesterday' by the Beatles and 'I Got Rhythm' by George Gershwin are good examples.



### Suggestions for further listening

A selection of other music by Adès, those who influenced him and other contemporary composers.

- ▶ Thomas Adès: other movements from *In Seven Days* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2B4KOGyTTk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2B4KOGyTTk))
- ▶ Thomas Adès: 'Snow Globe' from *Colette* (film music with a more tonal style, written in 2018) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_DQB9AIdMFQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DQB9AIdMFQ))
- ▶ Leos Janáček: *On an Overgrown Path*, Series I – 'Our Evenings' (played by Adès) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=YW-8\\_zD18d8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YW-8_zD18d8))
- ▶ Henryk Górecki: Symphony No. 3 – second movement ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MkjkoNog2I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MkjkoNog2I))
- ▶ Sigur Rós: 'Hoppípolla' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnAwPeqrdAk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnAwPeqrdAk))
- ▶ Arvo Pärt: 'Spiegel im Spiegel' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZe3mXInfNc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZe3mXInfNc))

### Suggestions for follow-up work

This article ([www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/oct/01/thomas-ades-contemporary-music-guide](https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/oct/01/thomas-ades-contemporary-music-guide)) about Thomas Adès, written by Tom Service in 2012, is well worth reading. It contains a range of suggested pieces that will help you to get to know better the music of one of Britain's leading contemporary composers.

It's interesting that recently Adès has ventured into film score writing, as have many composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Research examples of film scores by other leading composers – you could try Ralph Vaughan Williams or William Walton as starting points.

## Lin-Manuel Miranda: 'The Schuyler Sisters' from *Hamilton*

### Context

Born in New York City in 1980, the composer, lyricist, singer and actor Lin-Manuel Miranda is a leading innovator in contemporary musical theatre. His musical *In the Heights*, first drafted when Miranda was still at college, opened on Broadway in 2008 and ran for three years, attracting critical acclaim for its combination of hip-hop and Latin-American musical styles, and winning the Tony Award for best musical, and a best actor nomination for Miranda who appeared in the production.

To date, Miranda's most significant work is the smash-hit musical *Hamilton*, which opened on Broadway in 2015 after some seven years in development. Miranda's first ideas to write a musical about founding father Alexander Hamilton came when he read a biography while on holiday in 2008, and he performed a rap about Hamilton (which became the basis of the show's opening song) at a White House poetry evening in 2009. By 2012 Miranda and his creative team were performing a number of songs and raps about the life of Hamilton, known as the 'Hamilton Mixtape', and attracting a lot of critical interest.

The idea to have a predominantly non-white cast performing the story of an American founding father in hip-hop style resonated, and *Hamilton* has racked up a whole host of awards. Miranda played the lead role for the show's first year on Broadway and reprised it in Puerto Rico in 2019, and the show continues to sell out in New York, Los Angeles and London with frequent US tours. A film of the show was bought by Disney and is due to be broadcast this year on its Disney+ channel.

'The Schuyler Sisters' is the fifth song in the show, and introduces sisters Angelica, Eliza and Peggy Schuyler in a homage to the songs of R&B girl groups such as Destiny's Child (which launched the career of Beyoncé). It deals with the sisters' desire to be equal with men and 'part of the revolution', with the word 'work' recurring throughout. Not long after this scene, Hamilton and Eliza meet and fall in love.

Listen to the track on the Spotify playlist, or the Broadway cast recording here ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeqKF\\_NF1Qs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeqKF_NF1Qs)). There's a live, 'unplugged' performance as well as context about the creation of the show here ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLAJgiwG13I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLAJgiwG13I)).

### Listening activity

- 1 Describe in as much detail as possible the accompaniment of the opening rap, from 0:00 to 0:18.
  
- 2 The accompaniment from 0:19 uses mainly two alternating chords – Bm7 and D9. When does a new chord first appear? Why do you think it might be used at this point?
  
- 3 Compare the first verse (from 0:30 to 0:48) with the second (0:48 to 1:07).
  
- 4 Listen to 'Say My Name' by Destiny's Child on the Spotify playlist or here ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3V2wdQ9nsw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3V2wdQ9nsw)). In what ways has the vocal sound of this group been emulated in the *Hamilton* song?
  
- 5 In what ways do you think the music of 'The Schuyler Sisters' is dramatically effective? Think about how Lin-Manuel Miranda has presented the three characters musically and lyrically, and how they develop as the song progresses.

Relevant areas of study: Music for Theatre (AQA), Musical Theatre (Eduqas). Also, some relevance to those studying Popular Music and Fusion areas of study.



### Composing ideas

Both *In the Heights* and *Hamilton* represent a fusion of hip-hop and musical theatre styles. In songs like 'The Schuyler Sisters', 'Alexander Hamilton' and 'My Shot', all from Act I of *Hamilton*, the accompaniment from the band is rhythmically exciting but harmonically quite simple and repetitive, often with just two chords alternating under the rap vocals, and with short, catchy melodic 'hooks' in the choruses.

Examples of these hooks can be found at 0:19 in 'The Schuyler Sisters', 1:19 in 'Alexander Hamilton' and at the very start of 'My Shot', and they recur frequently in those songs (and elsewhere in the show).

Write a short song with a simple recurring refrain like these, separated by rap verses. If you're stuck for lyrics, consider using some of the rap lyrics from *Hamilton* and writing your own refrain to go with them.

### Suggestions for further listening

- ▶ Destiny's Child: 'Say My Name' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3V2wdQ9nsw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3V2wdQ9nsw))
- ▶ Lin-Manuel Miranda: 'Alexander Hamilton' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhinPd5RRJw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhinPd5RRJw)) and 'My Shot' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc7NqP\\_YGlg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc7NqP_YGlg)) from *Hamilton*
- ▶ Lin-Manuel Miranda: 'In the Heights' from *In the Heights* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=goBVfBwVqFo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goBVfBwVqFo)). Miranda's other Broadway success, which combines hip-hop with Latin styles.

### ‘Mark it yourself’ answers

Here are suggested answers for the questions in the activities, which students can use to self-assess. Many of the questions are open-ended and there will be a variety of ‘correct’ responses – in these cases, as in exam mark schemes, I’ve provided as much indicative content as possible.

#### Mozart’s Symphony No. 31 in D, K297 Paris (second movement)

- 1 Flute.
- 2 Horns.
- 3 Melody-dominated homophony, with melody chiefly in the violins (and flutes) and largely chordal accompaniment in strings. There are moving parts in the second violins and violas and sustained notes from other wind and horns.
- 4 Phrases are balanced, either two or four bars long – this is known as periodic phrasing.
- 5 Imperfect (in the tonic key).
- 6 The first four bars are almost identical. The second four bars begin with violins a 3rd higher, and the cadence at the end is now a perfect one. There are some other small changes to the melodic and harmonic detail to allow for this.

#### Ray Charles: ‘Georgia on my Mind’

1	Intro (from strings)	0:00 – 0:14	Intro
	Verse	0:14 – 0:45	A
	Verse	0:45 – 1:14	A
	Bridge	1:14 – 1:43	B
	Verse	1:43 – 2:13	A
	Bridge	2:14 – 2:42	B
	Verse	2:43 – 3:30	A

The final verse is extended (with a repetition of the final line) to bring the song to a close.

- 2 Drums – played lightly with brushes to keep a steady rhythm.  
Bass – probably a double bass, plucked mainly on the strong beats of the bar.  
Piano – played by Charles. Fills out chords and improvises decorative, jazzy interludes between lines of the song.  
Strings – play the intro and add extended, jazz chords throughout the song. Violins add interest with countermelodies.
- 3 They vocalise sustained ‘oohs’ or ‘aahs’ to add texture, and sometimes repeat phrases of the lead vocal in close harmony.
- 4 (a) Short phrases with a free approach to rhythm; balanced phrases that rise and fall in pitch. Quite a lot of disjunct movement and use of the pentatonic scale.  
(b) Major key with use of primary and secondary chords, and some 7ths and added notes. Chord changes are mainly two per bar.

#### Thomas Adès: *In Seven Days* – ‘Contemplation’

Some indicative content:

- 1 The piano plays mainly single or double notes in each hand, using the full range of the keyboard. Chords are therefore sparse and widely spaced. The strings sustain chords, moving together and very slowly. They begin in mid-range, close together, but become steadily further wider apart in pitch. There’s a sense of melody-dominated homophony throughout. At the end there is some rhythmic development of the string chords.
- 2 For the first part of the movement the strings are low in range and have a full, warm sound. Later there is use of harmonics and more use of higher pitches in the upper strings. Mutes are used and some of the passage played after the piano stops is non-vibrato.
- 3 The piano’s rhythms are steady and non-changing, given a sense of evenness though the metre is not necessarily clear. At the end the strings play triplet-like figures with accents, again giving the sense of regularity but in free time.
- 4 Warmth of texture and sonority and slow tempo/rhythmic movement suggests relaxation or meditation. Wide pitch range and use of accents and harmonics give a more uneasy sense, as if the ‘contemplator’ is battling with different, more challenging thoughts. The suggested context of this movement could be that the ‘process’ of creation is complete and the creator is surveying the world and contemplating what lies in store for it.

### Lin-Manuel Miranda: 'The Schuyler Sisters' from *Hamilton*

- 1 Rhythmically complex drum fill at the start, with triplets. Syncopated (or 'pushed') accented notes featuring a sampled sound punctuate the rap. Otherwise drum kit only – mainly kick drum and rimshots with a complex, syncopated groove.
- 2 At 0:44, for the line about revolution in New York. The choice of chord (G major 7) adds some light to the overall sound, perhaps to suggest positivity.
- 3 There's a little more decoration from the electric piano and the strings in the second verse. The melody and harmony are largely the same, as is the role of the backing singers though this is expanded a little more (eg in 'look around') in the second verse.
- 4 A combination of rap and highly decorated vocals, with close three-part harmony and lots of impressive vocalising, showing off the vocal prowess of the singers. The lead vocal is shared relatively evenly around the three singers, with use of question and answer phrases.