

ABRSM GRADE 1 OBOE PIECES LIST C

The pieces in List C do not have piano accompaniment; they are all unaccompanied. There is a big range of music from different eras and styles. When putting together a programme of music to play in an exam or concert it is a good idea to present variety in the programme. So the choice of a List C will need to be made in the context of the programme as a whole.

For ABRSM Grade 1 there are three lists ; Lists A & B are pieces with piano accompaniment. List A pieces are often Baroque or Classical. Baroque music is music written in the 17th & 18th centuries. List A sometimes includes pieces written even earlier & they may be from Tudor times or traditional music which has been handed down through the centuries as folk music. List B pieces are more modern pieces with piano. These can be Romantic music from the 19th century, or Contemporary music from the “0th or 21st centuries.

As a general rule it is a good idea to think about the varying kinds of musical moods that the pieces have & aim to put together a programme of music which varies these aspects :-

Musical period (traditional, baroque, classical, romantic, contemporary)

Musical style (eg classical styles, jazz, rock, Latin etc)

Mood (happy, joyful, lively, slow, sad etc)

Tempo (speeds; slow, moderate pace, fairly quick, fast)

Rhythmic elements (different time signatures 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8)

Varied articulation & dynamics (staccato, short & snappy ; legato, smooth & joined; mixed articulation, staccato & legato)

LIST C PIECES, DESCRIPTION & NOTES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SOME OF THE PIECES

C1 “The Ending’s Well” (from Jazz FX for Oboe)

By Dave Gale

Firstly I suggest going through & lightly pencilling in all the bar numbers to help you in referring the information I am giving you here to the music. There are printed bar numbers at the start of each line & there are 16 bars in total.

Character & Style

This piece is in contemporary swing jazz style and was published in 2012 making it a 21st century piece. It is delightfully catchy & once you have got into the groove you won’t forget how it goes! Its jazzy feel is achieved through swinging some of the quavers (not all!) and in using some syncopated rhythm.

Rhythm

This piece is jazzy & to be played in “swing “ style. When swinging the music remember that it is only the quavers that we swing. Crotchets & the other note values stay in place & keep tightly rhythmic. When swinging the quavers we lean on the first one & make it slightly longer than the second one.

Notes on “The Ending’s Well”, Bar by Bar.

Note the Key signature of F# & make sure you remember to play all your F’s as F#’s ! We are in a key called E Minor.

The time signature of 4/4 means there are 4 crotchet beats in a bar.

d = 100 is a metronome marking & means that the speed of the piece should be at 100 crotchets in a minute. We measure speed in music using a metronome. You can download a metronome onto your mobile phone or ipad

& it can help you to find the correct speed for each piece of music where you have a metronome marking.

Bars 1 & 2. You have minims with “tenuto” markings written underneath (tenuto = the short lines written under each note. You need to emphasize these notes & play them full length).

Underneath the music we have F. F = forte which means “loud”. This is a dynamic marking. There is no change of dynamic until you get to bars 15 & 16, so the music indicates to keep playing loudly for almost all of the piece.

Bar 3 has syncopated rhythm. This is where you are playing against the beat which you do in the first half of bar 3. The rest at the start of the bar is a quaver rest (half beat rest) and is only enough time for a quick “sniff” before playing the low E – it is a very short rest.

The dots underneath the notes are “staccato”. These dots tell you to play the notes short & detached, so they have a spiky feel.

Bar 4. The second beat here is a pair of quavers in swing. You need to lean on the first quaver & then play the second quaver short.

The minim rest tells you to have 2 beats of silence. Count these carefully but also use the time to get your fingers ready for the next note!

Bar 5. Crotchets high E’s followed by a minim B. Remember to use the first octave key on the back of the oboe for the high E’s & play them short & “staccato”.

Bar 6. Uses the same notes as Bar 5 but syncopates the rhythm to make it sound jazzy.

Bars 7 & 8. Note the staccato dots telling you to play the crotchets short & spiky. In bar 8 hold the dotted minim for 3 counts.

Bars 9 & 10. The first octave key should be used for the high notes E, F# & E. For the D# in bar 10, finger high D & reach for the furthest away little finger key. Remember that we do not usually use the first octave key for this note.

Bars 11 & 12. Bar 11 has syncopated jazzy rhythm on beats 1 & 2 with a short half-beat quaver rest at the start of the bar. In bar 12 you need to play the quavers evenly as “straight eights” – we don’t swing these quavers.

Bars 13 & 14 are similar to bars 5 & 6

Bars 15 & 16. There is a change of dynamic here. Under the notes we have P which is short for piano = quiet. The sign that follows means “crescendo” or gradually get louder. In the last bar there is an F for forte, loud.

The lines over the top of each quaver in bar 15 are telling you to play these quavers straight & not swung, “straight eights”.

The markings over the last two notes are an “accent” followed by “marcato”. Both of these markings tell you to play the last two notes strongly “with strong attack” so that these two notes stand out.

C3 "Study in C" by Paul Harris

No. 6 from "Eighty Graded Studies for Oboe Book 1"

This piece was composed in the late 20th century, around 1990, by Paul Harris, who is a professional clarinetist, woodwind teacher, & composer. Paul Harris is one of the composers & compilers of the book, "Eighty Graded Studies".

The study is designed to help you acquire fluent technique in slurring, & every note in this study is slurred.

In order to slur well you need to think very carefully about positioning your fingers just over the keys, about 1.5 cm above each key. Hold your oboe at about 45 degrees away from your body & keep good posture as you play. You will need to move your fingers very well together to slur tidily.

There are some musical terms at the start of the piece "Andante con moto". This is Italian, a language which musicians use a lot. It means, "at a walking pace, with movement". We need to keep a feeling of gently moving forward.

A speed is indicated in brackets (d = 112). This is a metronome marking & means, 112 crotchets in a minute). You can play this piece slower while you are learning it & then, when you are comfortable & can play it well, you can try & work it up to the correct speed.

There are commas in the music. These are places indicated for you to take a breath, & they are placed at the end of every four bars. When you first start learning this you may need to breathe more often but as soon as you can do try to follow the printed breathing marks.

Please note the dynamics carefully when playing.

F is forte, loud. The piece starts loudly. We keep playing loudly for the first four bars.

mf is mezzo forte, moderately loud. We have three bars here which need to be played quieter.

In bar 8 there is a crescendo. In this bar we are gradually playing louder again.

In bar 9 the music is back at forte, loud. We keep playing loudly until the end of the piece at bar 16.