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Free Choice Piece
DRUMS

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DRUMS

Please read through the following section if you are thinking of performing any songs not published in the Rockscool Drums grade books.

For all grades:

The appropriate grade book must be brought to the exam.

Candidates are allowed to perform only a certain number of free choice pieces in their exam. For a grade exam two out of three pieces may be free choice pieces, for Performance Certificate three out of five may be free choice pieces.

Candidates will need to bring a copy of the sheet music for the examiner and a backing track for all Free Choice Pieces including pieces from previous Rockscool Syllabi.

All Free choice pieces must be performed to a backing track (without the examined part). The backing tracks may be provided on CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB. Please note that the audio cannot be streamed from a device and must be a downloaded audio file for accessible playback on the exam day.

Selecting Free choice pieces:

The following checklist has been devised to help you assess whether or not the repertoire you have chosen meets the criteria established for Performance Pieces in the grade you are taking.

* Indicates that noted point should be included in the piece.

Other points are discretionary, depending on other elements of the piece chosen. If not all requirements are included in the notation, candidates are welcome to add these to the score for assessment.

If after reading this guide you still require help to determine if your chosen piece is suitable for the grade, please forward a copy of the sheet music to freechoicepieces@rslawards.com

Note! Please allow **four weeks** for a decision regarding the suitability of the submitted piece.



DRUMS DEBUT

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 45sec-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece should demonstrate simple fills

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter and 8th notes

Whole, half and quarter note rests



DRUMS GRADE 1

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate simple fills*

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter and 8th notes

Dotted quarter notes and associated rests

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi-hat; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal



DRUMS GRADE 2

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate simple fills

The piece should demonstrate some dynamic range: (p-f)

The piece should demonstrate use of accented notes

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter and 8th notes

Triplet 8th notes

Associated rests

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi-hat; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom



DRUMS GRADE 3

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1.30-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece should demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)

The piece should demonstrate use of accented notes

Other techniques to include:

Flams

Rimshots

Use of rudiments

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

RHYTHM SKILLS

Open and closed hi-hat; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom

RHYTHM SKILLS

The piece must demonstrate fills at least one bar in length*

The piece should demonstrate ad libs for at least 4 bars



DRUMS GRADE 4

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece should demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

Other techniques to include:

Simple fills

Flams

Rimshots

Use of rudiments

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted 8th notes

8th and 16th note combinations

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

2/4 and 3/4 time signatures

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi-hat; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom

FILLS & AD LIBS

The piece should demonstrate fills at least one bar in length*

Groove development

Ad libs for at least 8 bars



DRUMS GRADE 5

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

Independent hand and foot coordination

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)*

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

Other techniques to include:

Flams

Rimshots

Ghost notes

Grace notes

Extended use of rudiments in fills

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted 8th notes

8th and 16th note combinations

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

Swing times

2/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Other time signature variations

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi-hat; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom

FILLS & AD LIBS

The piece must demonstrate 16th note fills at least one bar in length*

Groove development 8 bars

Ad libs for at least 8 bars



DRUMS GRADE 6

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2.30-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate advanced independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)*

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

Other techniques to include:

Flams

Rimshots

Ghost notes

Grace notes

Extended use of rudiments in fills

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted 8th notes

8th and 16th note combinations

16th note triplets on hi-hat

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

Swing times

2/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Other time signature variations

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi hat; hi hat foot; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom; rimshot; soft mallets; hot rods

FILLS & AD LIBS

The piece must demonstrate 16th note fills *

Extended groove development

Extended ad libs



DRUMS GRADE 7

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 3-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate advanced independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)*

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

Other techniques to include:

Flams

Rimshots

Ghost notes

Grace notes

Extended use of rudiments in fills

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted 8th notes

8th and 16th note combinations

16th note triplets on hi-hat

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

Swing times

2/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Other time signature variations

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi hat; hi hat foot; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom; rimshot; soft mallets; hot rods

FILLS & AD LIBS

The piece must demonstrate 16th note fills *

Extended groove development

Extended ad libs



DRUMS GRADE 8

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 3-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate advanced independent hand and foot coordination*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate wide dynamic range: (pp-ff)*

The piece must demonstrate use of accented notes*

Other techniques to include:

Flams

Rimshots

Ghost notes

Grace notes

Extended use of rudiments in fills

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted 8th notes

8th and 16th note combinations

16th note triplets on hi-hat

Triplet 8th and 16th notes

Associated rests

Swing times

2/4 and 3/4 time signatures

Other time signature variations

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Open and closed hi hat; hi hat foot; snare; kick drum; crash cymbal; ride cymbal; floor tom; high tom; medium tom; rimshot; soft mallets; hot rods

FILLS & AD LIBS

The piece must demonstrate advanced fills *

Use of rolls in fills

Extended groove development

Extended ad libs