# Writing's on the Wall | Sam Smith

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Released: 2015 Label: Capitol Genre: Orchestral Pop

Written by: Sam Smith and James Napier Produced by: James Napier, Steve Fitzmaurice

and Disclosure

## Background Info



'Writing's on the Wall' was the theme song for the 24th James Bond feature film, *Spectre*. Performed and co-written by British singer-songwriter Sam Smith, the track was hugely successful and topped the UK singles chart on its release. Surprisingly, this was the first ever Bond theme to reach the number one spot in the UK – a record matched by Billie Eilish's 'No Time to Die' in 2020.

Sam Smith launched his career with several successful collaborations, including his performance on Naughty Boy's 'La La La' in 2013 which topped the charts on release and gave the singer his first number 1. He has since released three solo studio albums, two of which peaked at number 1 in the UK, and as of April 2021 his global sales surpassed 30 million (streaming equivalent).

'Writing's on the Wall' gained Sam Smith the 2016 Golden Globe and Oscar for Best Original Song.

#### Performance Notes



This soundtrack ballad displays the very best of Sam Smith's vocal abilities and demands a strong falsetto and register management with a powerfully supported upper chest voice into the transition. To exploit the 'falsetto style' resonance in the upper head voice, it may be useful to transpose the song to a different key, depending on your own vocal range. Studying Sam Smith's original rhythmic phrasing will help you to develop a stylistic performance that sits comfortably with the orchestral backing track.

For a powerful performance, remember to display emotional conviction to support the lyrics, using strong and clear diction throughout. You should also aim to show stylistic awareness in your delivery, leaning towards musical theatre without losing the contemporary pop feel.

'Key Features to Implement at this Grade' are shown in the Repertoire Overview on page 6.

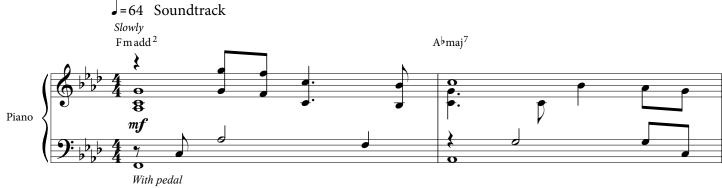
### **Audio Access**



Audio for this book can be accessed via the **QR code** on the right (requires a compatible smartphone or tablet) or by using the **URL and download code** shown on page 5.

Sam Smith from SPECTRE

Words and Music by Sam Smith and James Napier



Note: Vocal sounds one octave lower than notated throughout



# **Technical Exercises**

## **Group A: Scales**

In this group, you will be asked to perform a chomatic scale. The example below is shown from the starting note of A3, however, you may perform it *from a starting note of your choice*. Please note: the examiner can play starting notes in the range A3–G#4, but you may sing *in any octave*.

This test is performed to a compulsory metronome click. The examiner will ask you which starting note you have chosen. You will hear the starting note followed by a one-bar (four click) count-in. You may perform this test using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo is J=100.

#### Chromatic Scale



#### Group B: Arpeggios

In this group, the arpeggio exercise needs to be prepared as shown below. The example is shown on the starting note of C4, but you may perform it *from a starting note of your choice*. Please note: the examiner can play starting notes in the range  $A3-G\sharp4$ , but you may sing *in any octave*.

This test is performed to a compulsory metronome click. The examiner will ask you which starting note you have chosen. You will hear the starting note followed by a one-bar (four click) count-in. You may perform this test using any vocal sound except humming or whistling. The tempo is J=100.

### Diminished 7 arpeggio



# **Ear Tests**

In this section, there are two ear tests:

- Test 1: Melodic Recall (*The examiner will choose the scale, but you may sing back in any octave*)
- Test 2: Harmony Vocals (You may choose either a higher-pitched or lower-pitched test. The examiner will select the key.)

Examples of Test 1 and 2 are printed on the following pages. You will be given both Test 1 and Test 2 in the exam. Test 1 may be sung in any octave, test 2 will need to be sung (a diatonic 3rd or 4th) above the highest-sounding part.

#### Test 1 | Melodic Recall

The examiner will play you a two-bar melody played to a drum backing. It will use the B major or E natural minor scale (the examiner will decide which) and the first note will be the root,  $3^{rd}$  or  $5^{th}$ . You will hear the test twice. Each time the test is played, it starts with the root note and a four-beat count-in. There will be a short gap for you to practise after each playthrough. Next you will hear a *vocal* count-in, after which you should sing the melody to the drum backing. The tempo is J=90.



Please note: the test shown is an example. The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

It is acceptable to sing over the track as it is being played as well as practising after the first two playthroughs. The length of time available after the second playthrough is pre-recorded on the audio track, so the vocal count-in may begin while you are still practising. You may perform this test *in any octave*, using any vocal sound except humming or whistling.