‘La Valse D’Amélie’

Composer: Yann Tiersen (b.1970)
Nationality: French (Belgian & Norwegian heritage)
Source/Date: *Amélie* Soundtrack (2001)

‘La Valse D’Amélie’ is taken from Yann Tiersen’s award winning soundtrack for the French romantic comedy, *Amélie*. Tiersen’s beautiful composition features on the soundtrack twice, both as an orchestral piece and a piano piece. The composer also included the orchestral version in his fourth studio album, *L’Absente*, shortly after the release of the soundtrack in 2001.

Yann Tiersen was born in Brittany, France in 1970. He delved into music at the very young age of four, initially with piano lessons but soon expanding into violin and becoming a multi-instrumentalist at just six years old. At the age of 13 he added electric guitar to his bow and began playing in rock bands. Although many think of him as a composer, Tiersen is also a hugely successful touring musician and collaborator.

Preparation

When first learning this piece, you may find it useful to count out loud, particularly in the first and third sections. Bars 6, 14, 38 and 46 all contain quaver (eighth note) passages that start with a tied note from the previous bar. If you find timing this pattern a challenge, try rehearsing without the ties in place until the quaver rhythms are secure.

Be sure to look at the suggested fingering pattern in bars 14, repeated in bar 46. Playing the quaver on beat 3 with your fifth finger will allow you to get your hand in a position ready to play the lower E in the following bar. Shifting hand position mid phrase may benefit from being practised in isolation to ensure a smooth and undetectable transition.

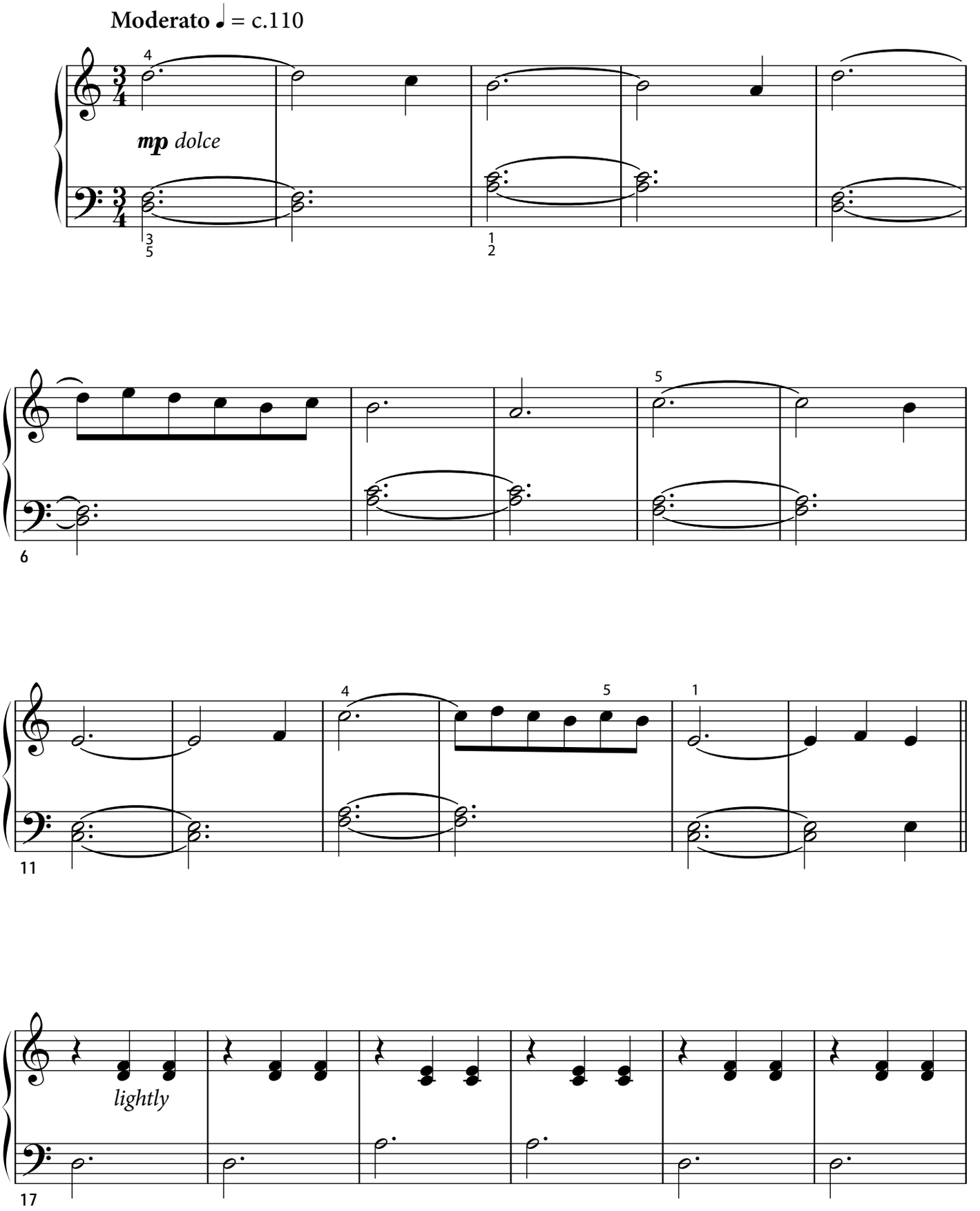
At bar 17, the right-hand part plays a more accompanimental role to the simple dotted minim (dotted half-note) melody in the left-hand part. Take care to place these dyads (two notes played together) precisely in time, both notes always sounding evenly balanced. As the roles between the two hands switch over at bar 33, the balance between the hands should also reflect this change. The right-hand part should be played slightly quieter and more lightly than in the first section to allow the left-hand part to take the leading role throughout this middle section.

Performance

The $\frac{3}{4}$ tempo of this piece helps provide a lilting dance-like character for this pretty waltz. Maintaining a steady pulse throughout is key to establishing a secure performance. Allow the melody to sing out over the accompaniment, particularly when the melody moves into the left-hand part for the middle section. *‘Dolce’* at the start of the piece means ‘sweetly’, so aim for a light touch with *legato* phrases.

‘La Valse D’Amélie’

Yann Tiersen



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Technical Exercises

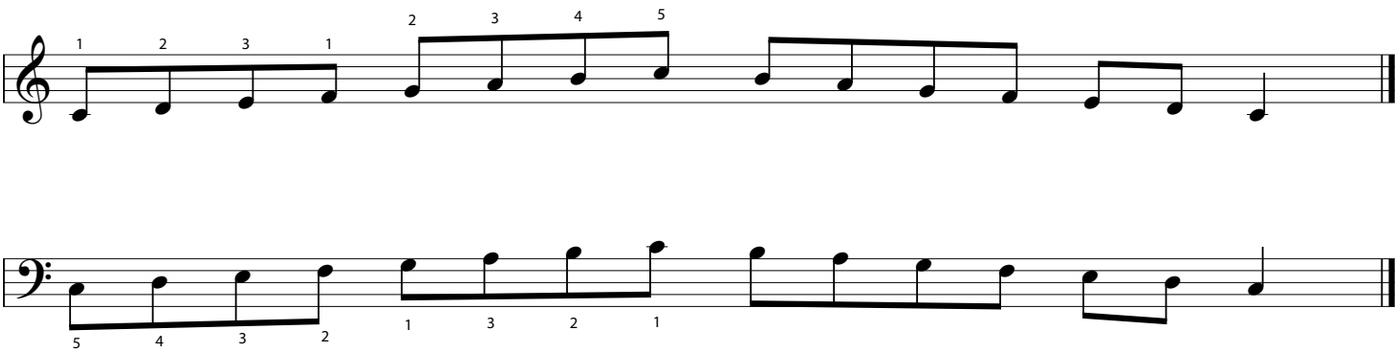
In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- All scales and broken chords need to be played hands separately, *legato*, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- There is no memory requirement, and you may use your book for all technical sections at this grade.
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

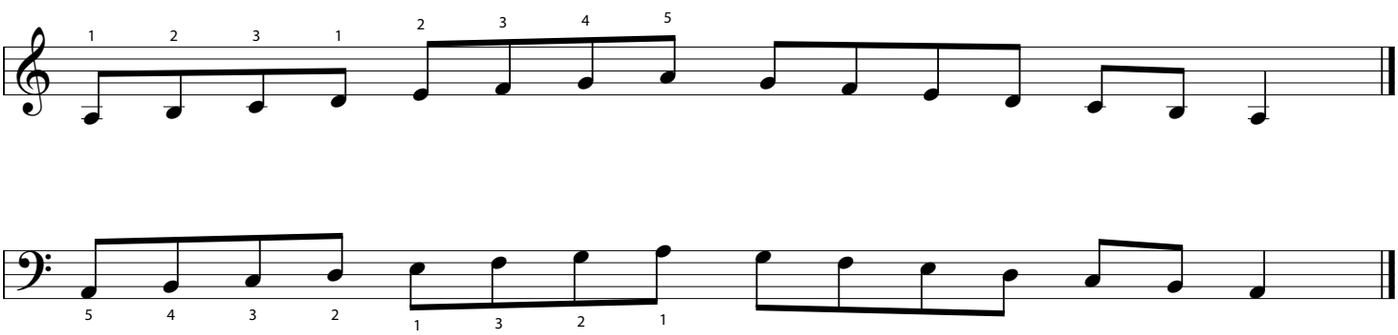
Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 52 bpm.

1. C major scale | *hands separately*



2. A natural minor scale | *hands separately*



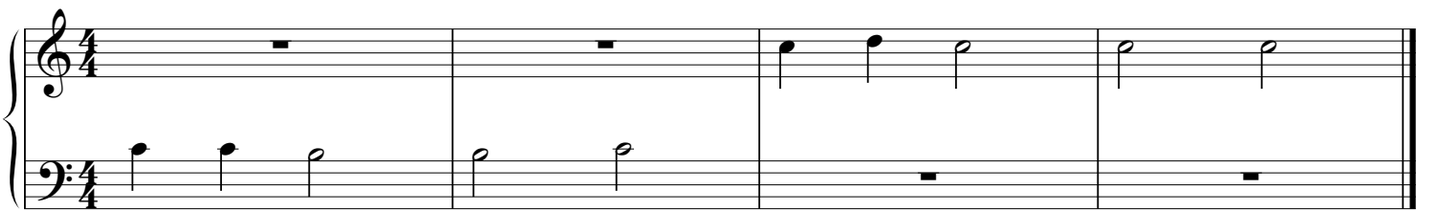
Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

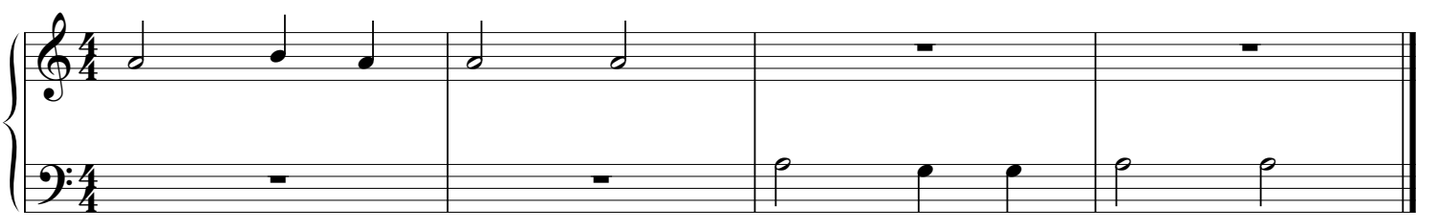
In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you a 4–6 bar melody in the key of C major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

- All sight reading tests at Debut should be played at a minimum tempo of ♩ = 60 bpm.
- At Debut, you are tested on your ability to perform previously unseen pitches and rhythms. No dynamics are shown, however, you should maintain an even tone quality throughout.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

Sight Reading | Example 1



Sight Reading | Example 2



Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam