‘Jupiter’

Composer: Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
Nationality: British
Source/Date: *The Planets* (1914–1916)

‘Jupiter’ is taken from Gustav Holst’s widely acclaimed orchestral suite, *The Planets*. The suite contains seven movements, each named after a planet, and features Jupiter in the centre. Although composition began in 1914 it wasn’t until 1918 that the suite was performed in its entirety, at Queen’s Hall in London during a private concert hosted by Adrian Boult. It is believed that Holst held Boult partly responsible for the success that *The Planets* went on to receive and was forever grateful for his inclusion of the suite.

The Planets brought Gustav Holst, born in Cheltenham 1874, worldwide fame is known across the globe as one of the most significant orchestral suites of the 20th century. Modern composers such as Hans Zimmer and John Williams site *The Planets* as greatly influential to their award-winning film scores.

Preparation

Take time to study the suggested fingering to ensure you have a pattern that is both comfortable to play and allows you to use *legato* phrasing throughout. Many students will find it helpful to rehearse both parts individually to secure the finger patterns and rhythm before putting them together. Notice the dotted rhythms in bar 1, 5, 17 and 21. These should be kept rhythmically precise, giving a nice contrast to the straight quavers in the first part of the phrase, yet remain *legato* throughout.

Take time to study the melodic shape and structure of the piece to understand how to phrase and express the music in terms of the shape of each individual phrase and as a piece overall. Notice how the pitch range increases and rises with each phrase, all leading to the top A on beat 1 of bar 23. Aim to keep this feeling of a slow but continuous build up to help give your performance direction and a feeling of constant forward movement.

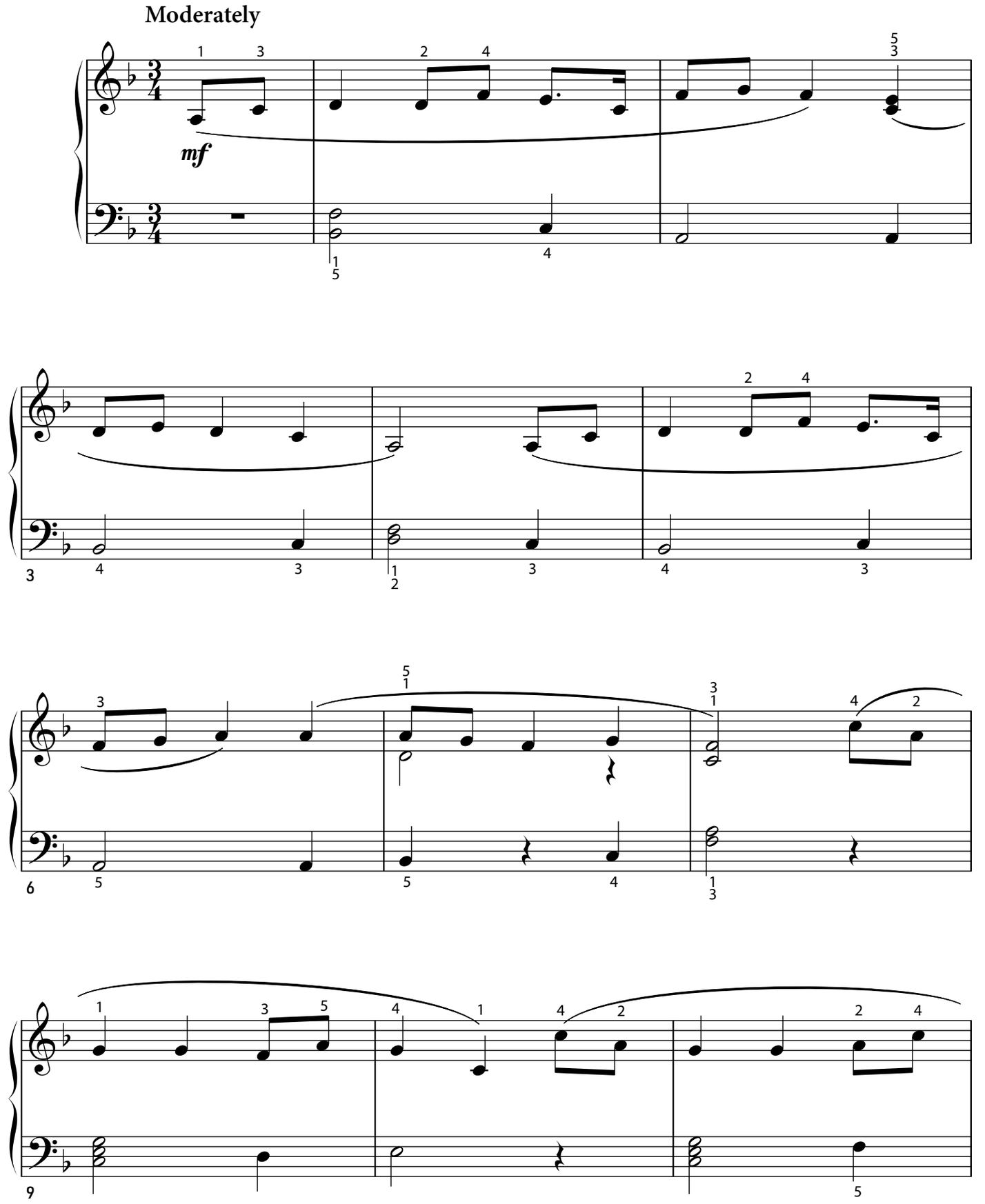
Getting the balance right between both hands is important as the melody should sing out above the accompaniment, yet the bassline should carry a feeling of weight and substance, supporting the melody.

Performance

It is not surprising that this wonderful melodic theme from Holst’s ‘Jupiter’ was later reworked by the composer to set Cecil Spring Rice’s patriotic poem to music. ‘I vow to thee, my country’, is now commonly associated with Remembrance Day. ‘Andante Maestoso’ instructs the performer to use a tempo set at a steady walking pace, and with a majestic feel. Although Holst liked his seven planet pieces to be performed as a complete Suite, and in his chosen order, many conductors prefer to end with Jupiter as this powerful and stirring hymn-like theme provides a wonderful finale. Make sure to listen to an orchestral recording of Jupiter to help you capture the stately mood of the piece.

'Jupiter'

Gustav Holst



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Technical Exercises

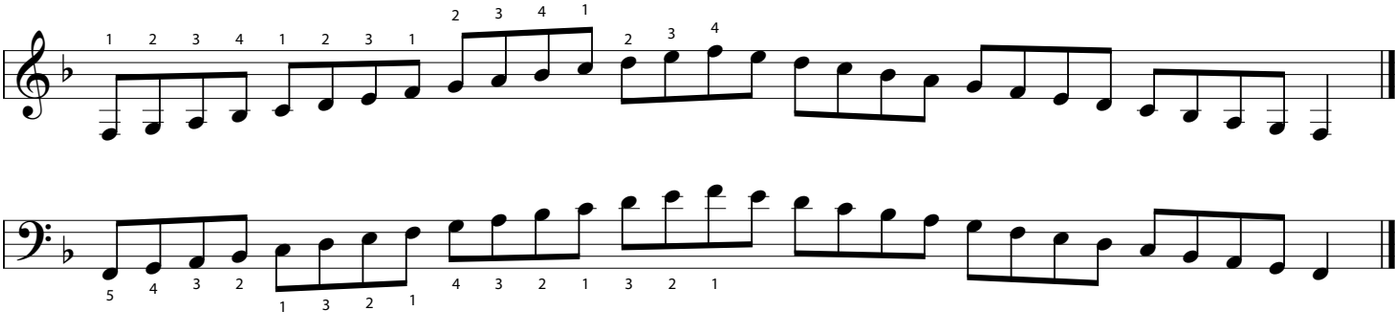
In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales and broken chords need to be played ***hands separately***, ascending and descending, in the keys and octaves shown.
- Candidates must choose to play ***either*** natural minor ***or*** harmonic minor ***or*** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are ***right hand only***.
- Groups A (scales)and Group B (broken chords) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- 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.

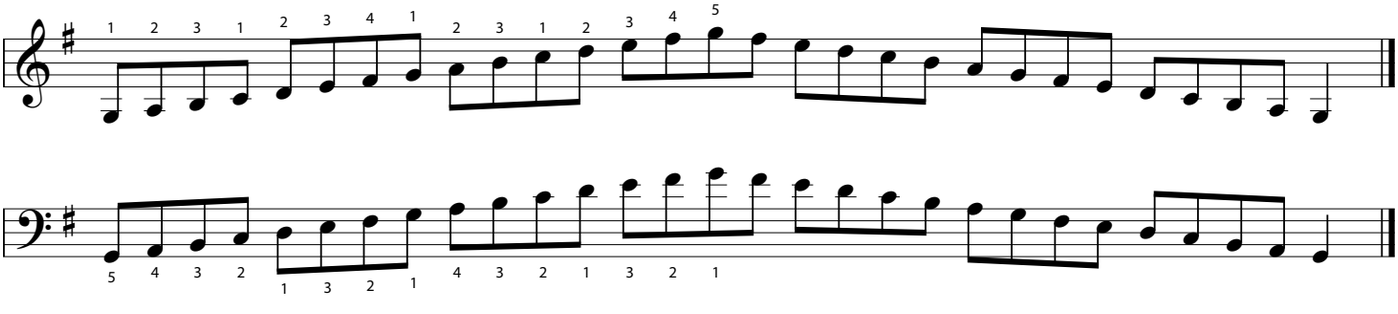
Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 60 bpm.

1. F major scale | *hands separately*



2. G major scale | *hands separately*



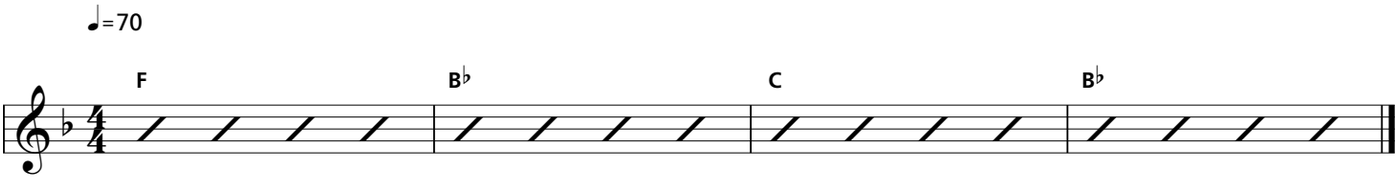
Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation

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.

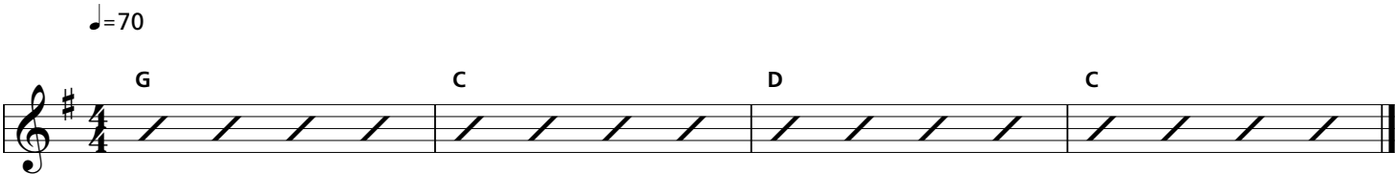
In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give you a 4–6 bar chord progression in the key of either G major or F major. You will first be given 90 seconds to prepare, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for you to practise and the second time is for you to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩=70 bpm.

- At Grade 1, you have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1



Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 2



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