‘Tarantella in G minor’

Composer: Glenda Austin
Nationality: American
Date: 2014–2016

‘Tarantella in G minor’ is a piano solo written by American composer, teacher and musician, Glenda Austin. One of her many compositions to be published, this piece functions as an exciting teaching aid with a surprising and exciting end.

Glenda Austin graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Music Education and a master’s degree in Piano Performance. She has worked as both a secondary school and primary school teacher and is also a member of faculty at Missouri Southern State University. As a composer and arranger, her work has been published internationally and she has been commissioned to produce work for major publications such as Clavier Magazine. Her piano solos are often highly recommended, with ‘Tarantella in G minor’ having been selected as one of the set pieces for the National Federation of Music Clubs in the USA.

Preparation

Make sure you have warmed up before playing this piece. If you find your hand is getting tired, stop and let the whole arm fall to your side as a dead weight until you have released the tension and are ready to start again. The muscles in the fourth and fifth fingers are often not as strong as the other fingers and the thumb. Rehearsing scales and technical exercises that build up finger strength and control can help to combat rushing.

Take time to secure the notes and hand position changes at a slower tempo, ensuring that the quaver (eighth-note) patterns are kept clean and precise. If you find you do start to rush, try rehearsing along with a metronome and slow the tempo down to a manageable speed. Temporarily changing the articulation patterns can help, for example, try playing the first eight bars as *staccato*, maintaining a relaxed wrist position.

In the first section, one of the biggest challenges for the left-hand part is in making fast and accurate hand position changes in bars 9 to 16. Students may find it helpful to apply the sustain pedal in these bars, and again in bars 44 to 49, remembering to lift at the end of each bar. This will help create a more *legato* feel, allowing the left hand to get in position for the following dyad without cutting each dotted minim (dotted half-note) too short.

Enjoy the dynamic variations within the piece, giving plenty of contrast and colour to the different sections. Ensure that the *forte* in bar 44 reserves a little volume to give room for an effective *crescendo* and *fortissimo* in the final two bars.

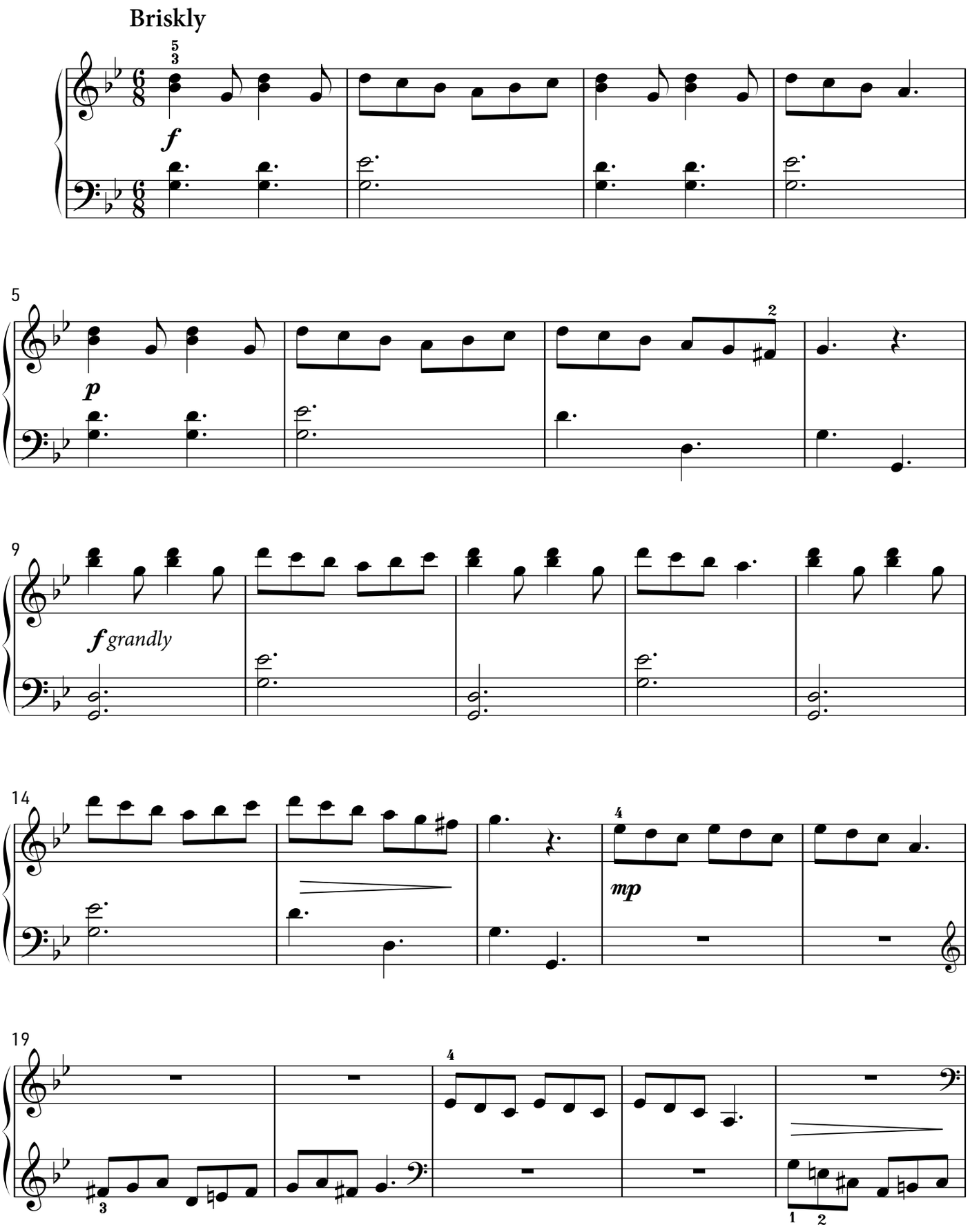
Performance

A lively dance in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, this dramatic piece fits comfortably under the fingers, while providing plenty of technical challenges for the performer. As well as the obvious similarities to the name of a rather well-known spider, a ‘tarantella’ is the name given to a group of various Italian folk dances that are characterised by an energetic tempo and dramatic ending.

The secret behind an effective performance of this piece is to start with a fast but sustainable tempo that will drive the music forward while allowing the music and dynamics to bring the music to a dramatic climax. The performance should sound exhilarating but stay very much in control with a fast and steady pulse.

'Tarantella in G minor '

Glenda Austin



© 2009 by The Willis Music Co.
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Technical Exercises

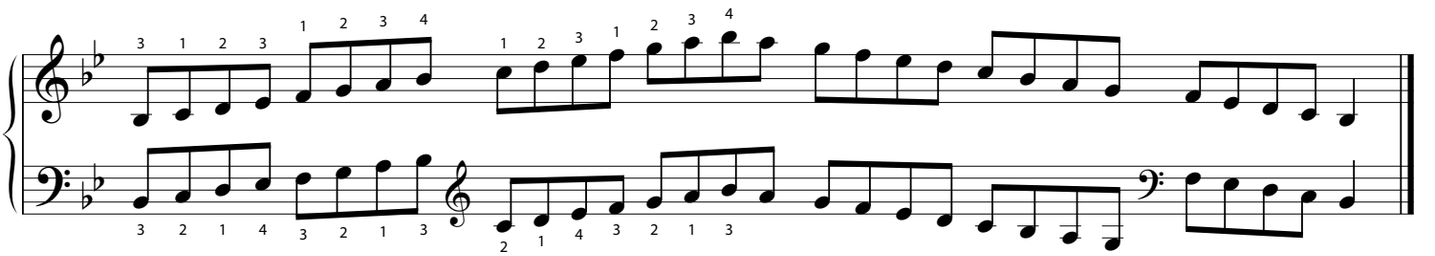
In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

- Major scales, minor scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, 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 and B (scales & arpeggios) 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.

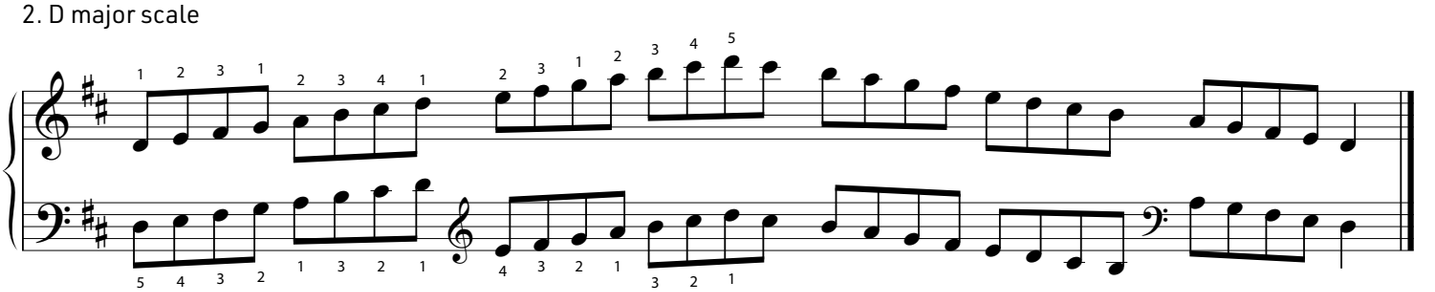
Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 66 bpm.

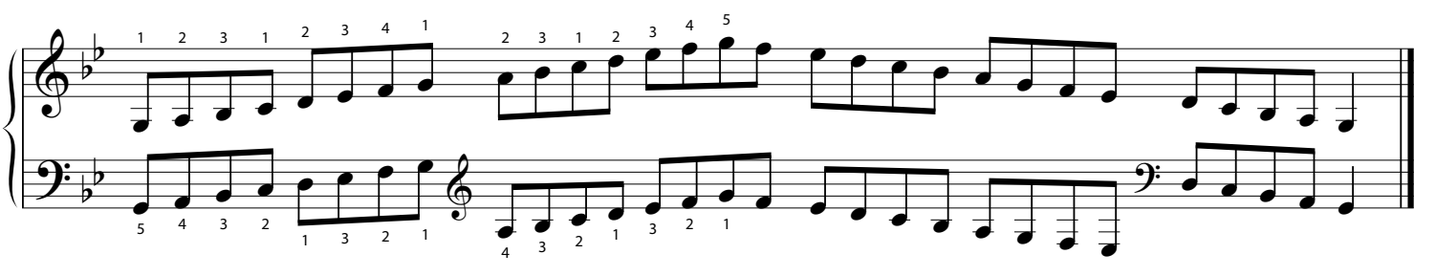
1. B♭ major scale



2. D major scale



3. G natural minor scale



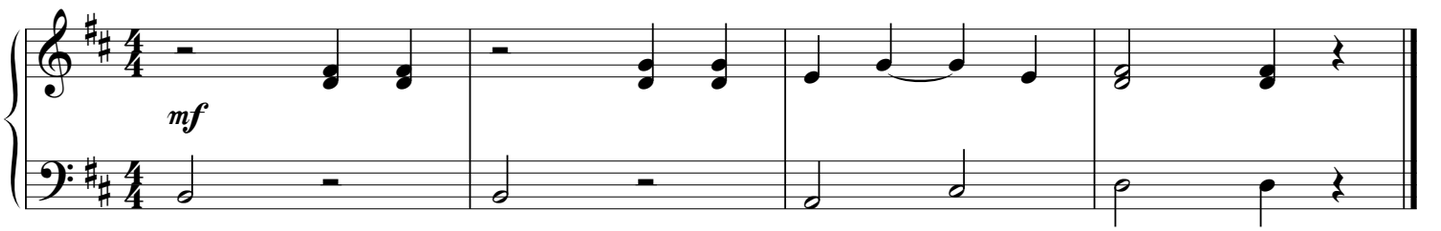
Sight Reading

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 piece in D major or B♭ 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.

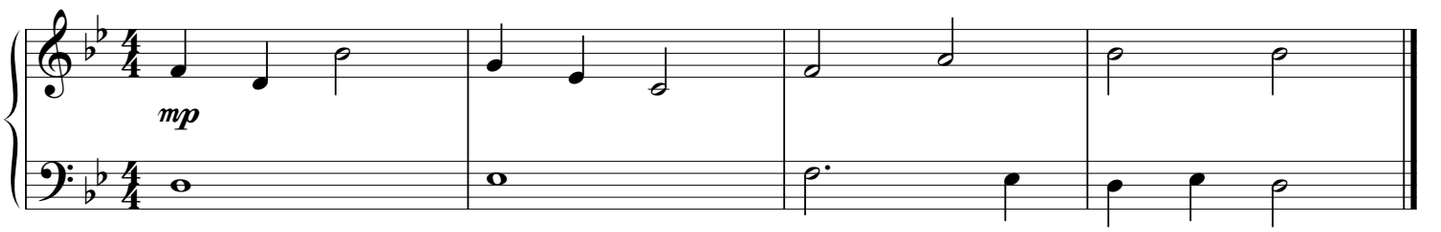
- All sight reading tests at Grade 2 should be played at a minimum tempo of ♩ = 80 bpm.
- At Grade 2, you are tested on your ability to perform previously unseen pitches, rhythms and basic dynamics.
- While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum 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



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

Sight Reading | Example 2



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