

NCEA Level 2 Music Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

Copyright © 2025 by Examzify - A Kaluba Technologies Inc. product.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, web distribution, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.

Notice: Examzify makes every reasonable effort to obtain from reliable sources accurate, complete, and timely information about this product.

SAMPLE

Questions

SAMPLE

- 1. What does the term "metre" refer to in music?**
 - A. The order of notes in a melody**
 - B. The time signature**
 - C. The key signature**
 - D. The style of music**
- 2. Which technique involves a guitar player sliding a finger from one fret to another?**
 - A. Fingerpicking**
 - B. Pull off**
 - C. Sliding**
 - D. Plucking**
- 3. What defines absolute music?**
 - A. Music that tells a story or describes an idea**
 - B. Pure music not linked to words or descriptive concepts**
 - C. Music that is primarily vocal in nature**
 - D. Music that incorporates a variety of instruments**
- 4. What characterizes the blues genre?**
 - A. A fast tempo and dance rhythm**
 - B. A slow jazz idiom with repeating lines**
 - C. A classical composition style**
 - D. Structured orchestral arrangements**
- 5. What is the primary function of a key signature?**
 - A. To change the tempo**
 - B. To indicate the volume level**
 - C. To clarify the scale and its accidentals**
 - D. To provide chord notations**
- 6. Which scale consists solely of five notes?**
 - A. Diminished scale**
 - B. Pentatonic scale**
 - C. Natural scale**
 - D. Scale of thirds**

- 7. What is a cadence in music?**
- A. A sequence of chords at the end of a phrase**
 - B. A type of rhythm used in classical music**
 - C. A technique for improving vocal techniques**
 - D. A form of musical notation**
- 8. Which of the following is true about a blues scale?**
- A. It consists of a series of half steps**
 - B. It is always played at a fast tempo**
 - C. It includes notes like 1, b3, and 5**
 - D. It lacks any flat or sharp notes**
- 9. How does a glissando affect the emotional expression in music?**
- A. It introduces unexpected rhythmic changes**
 - B. It creates a smooth and flowing transition between notes**
 - C. It emphasizes the volume of the notes**
 - D. It defines the tempo of the piece**
- 10. What does the term augmented refer to in music?**
- A. Made smaller**
 - B. Made larger**
 - C. Made softer**
 - D. Made faster**

Answers

SAMPLE

- 1. B**
- 2. B**
- 3. B**
- 4. B**
- 5. C**
- 6. B**
- 7. A**
- 8. C**
- 9. B**
- 10. B**

SAMPLE

Explanations

SAMPLE

1. What does the term "metre" refer to in music?

- A. The order of notes in a melody
- B. The time signature**
- C. The key signature
- D. The style of music

The term "metre" in music refers specifically to the time signature, which is a crucial aspect of how music is organized rhythmically. The time signature indicates the number of beats in a measure and the note value that receives one beat, establishing the rhythmic framework within which a piece is performed. For instance, a common time signature of 4/4 indicates that there are four beats in each measure, and a quarter note gets one beat. This rhythmic structure influences how the music flows and helps musicians understand how to interpret timing and accents within the composition. The other choices do not accurately describe what "metre" refers to: the order of notes in a melody relates more to melody and harmony, the key signature pertains to the scale and tonality of the piece, and the style of music refers to the genre or stylistic approach rather than the rhythmic structure. Thus, identifying "the time signature" as the correct interpretation of "metre" is essential for understanding the foundational elements of rhythm in music.

2. Which technique involves a guitar player sliding a finger from one fret to another?

- A. Fingerpicking
- B. Pull off**
- C. Sliding
- D. Plucking

The technique that involves a guitar player sliding a finger from one fret to another is known as sliding. Sliding is a method that creates a smooth transition between notes by maintaining contact with the string and moving the finger up or down along the fretboard. This technique is often used to add expressiveness and fluidity to a performance, allowing for a seamless connection between different pitches. Fingerpicking refers to using the fingers to pluck the strings, creating an intricate sound, while a pull off involves plucking a string with one finger and then pulling that finger off to allow another finger to sound the next note. Plucking simply describes the action of playing a string, often with a pick or fingers, but does not include the sliding motion. Sliding stands out as the correct answer because it specifically describes the action of moving along the fretboard to create a continuous glissando effect between frets.

3. What defines absolute music?

- A. Music that tells a story or describes an idea
- B. Pure music not linked to words or descriptive concepts**
- C. Music that is primarily vocal in nature
- D. Music that incorporates a variety of instruments

Absolute music is characterized by its independence from any external narrative or descriptive elements. This form of music is meant to be appreciated purely for its structure, harmony, melody, and rhythm, without being tied to a specific story, imagery, or idea. Composers of absolute music focus on the intrinsic qualities of the musical language itself, allowing listeners to experience the music on a purely auditory level without preconceived associations. In contrast, music that tells a story or describes an idea relies on specific concepts or narratives, which is why this option does not align with the definition of absolute music. Music that is primarily vocal in nature may incorporate text and meaning, and thus it doesn't fit the concept of pure instrumental music. Lastly, while the use of various instruments can enrich the musical experience, it does not inherently define absolute music, which is primarily about the music's self-expressive nature rather than the instruments used.

4. What characterizes the blues genre?

- A. A fast tempo and dance rhythm
- B. A slow jazz idiom with repeating lines**
- C. A classical composition style
- D. Structured orchestral arrangements

The blues genre is characterized by its unique musical structure and emotional expression. Central to the blues are the use of a slow tempo and a focus on expressing deep feelings, often revolving around themes of hardship or longing. The form of blues typically includes the use of repeated lines or phrases, creating a call-and-response dynamic that enhances the expressiveness of the performance. This repetition is crucial, as it allows the artist to build intensity and engage with their audience on an emotional level. In contrast, the other options present musical elements that do not align with the core characteristics of blues. The fast tempo and dance rhythm are more reflective of genres like jazz or rock and roll, while classical composition styles and structured orchestral arrangements belong to entirely different musical traditions. These distinctions highlight why the blues is unique, with its specific emphasis on slower tempos and lyrical repetition.

5. What is the primary function of a key signature?

- A. To change the tempo**
- B. To indicate the volume level**
- C. To clarify the scale and its accidentals**
- D. To provide chord notations**

The primary function of a key signature is to clarify the scale and its accidentals, making option C the most accurate choice. A key signature is a collection of sharp or flat symbols placed at the beginning of a staff in a piece of music, indicating which notes should be consistently altered throughout the composition. This allows musicians to understand the tonal center of the piece and the specific scale being used, which directly influences the melody and harmony. In contrast, changing the tempo relates to the speed at which the music is played and is not determined by the key signature. The volume level deals with dynamics, which specifies how loudly or softly music should be played, also independent of the key signature. Providing chord notations, while important in music, is typically included elsewhere in the music notation and does not stem from the key signature.

6. Which scale consists solely of five notes?

- A. Diminished scale**
- B. Pentatonic scale**
- C. Natural scale**
- D. Scale of thirds**

The pentatonic scale is recognized for consisting solely of five distinct pitches. This scale is widely utilized in various musical traditions across the world, including folk, pop, and even some classical music. The term "penta" refers to five, which directly indicates the scale's structure. In contrast, other scales mentioned involve either more or different structural elements. The diminished scale, for example, consists of eight notes and is built using alternating whole and half steps, creating a different sound profile and complexity. The natural scale, more commonly referred to as the major or minor scale, features seven notes per octave, making it a seven-note scale. The scale of thirds also implies a specific construction that features intervals of thirds, typically leading to a pattern that exceeds five notes. Thus, the pentatonic scale stands out clearly as the only five-note scale among the choices provided.

7. What is a cadence in music?

- A. A sequence of chords at the end of a phrase**
- B. A type of rhythm used in classical music**
- C. A technique for improving vocal techniques**
- D. A form of musical notation**

A cadence in music specifically refers to a sequence of chords that provides a sense of resolution or pause, usually occurring at the end of a musical phrase. These sequences help to establish the tonal center and often signal the conclusion of a musical idea. Cadences are crucial for creating a sense of closure or transition within a piece, and they can come in various forms, such as perfect, plagal, and deceptive cadences, each serving a distinct musical purpose. The other options do not accurately define a cadence. While rhythm is undeniably essential in music, referring to a type of rhythm does not capture the specific function of a cadence. Similarly, techniques for improving vocal performance and forms of musical notation pertain to different aspects of music, entirely separate from the chordal structure that a cadence represents. Understanding cadences enriches one's comprehension of musical phrases and their function within compositions.

8. Which of the following is true about a blues scale?

- A. It consists of a series of half steps**
- B. It is always played at a fast tempo**
- C. It includes notes like 1, b3, and 5**
- D. It lacks any flat or sharp notes**

The blues scale is characterized by its unique combination of notes, including the root (1), a flattened third (b3), and a fifth (5). This distinctive structure helps create the signature sound associated with blues music, which often conveys a feeling of melancholy or expressiveness. The inclusion of the flattened third is particularly important, as it contributes to the scale's "bluesy" quality, setting it apart from the major pentatonic scale, which uses a natural third instead. The other intervals commonly included in a blues scale are the fourth (4) and the flattened seventh (b7), forming a scale that effectively expresses the emotional depth found in blues music. The other options do not capture the essence of what defines a blues scale. For instance, the notion that it consists solely of half steps is inaccurate, as the scale contains both half and whole steps in its construction. Additionally, while blues music can be played at various tempos, it is not restricted to a fast tempo; it encompasses a wide range of tempos that align with its expressive qualities. Lastly, the blues scale does indeed include flat notes, specifically the flattened third and the flattened seventh, contradicting the assertion that it lacks any flat or sharp notes.

9. How does a glissando affect the emotional expression in music?

- A. It introduces unexpected rhythmic changes**
- B. It creates a smooth and flowing transition between notes**
- C. It emphasizes the volume of the notes**
- D. It defines the tempo of the piece**

A glissando creates a smooth and flowing transition between notes, which can significantly enhance the emotional expression of music. This technique allows for a seamless connection between pitches, often evoking sensations of longing, fluidity, or even tension depending on the context in which it is used. The continuity and lack of abrupt shifts in sound can help convey a sense of narrative or emotional depth, making the listener feel more engaged with the piece. By allowing the performer to slide from one note to another, a glissando can illustrate nuances of emotion that might not be as easily communicated through more distinct note articulations. The other choices pertain to different aspects of musical elements that do not align correctly with the primary function of a glissando. Unexpected rhythmic changes, emphasis on volume, and defining tempo do not capture the essence of the glissando's primary role in creating fluidity between pitches. Thus, the smoothness and flowing nature of a glissando is what truly allows it to shape emotional expression in music.

10. What does the term augmented refer to in music?

- A. Made smaller**
- B. Made larger**
- C. Made softer**
- D. Made faster**

In music, the term "augmented" typically refers to an increase or enlargement of a musical element. Specifically, in the context of intervals and chords, an augmented interval is one that is made larger than its perfect or major counterpart. For instance, an augmented triad consists of a root note, a major third, and an augmented fifth, which is a half step higher than a perfect fifth. This concept of enlargement conveys a sense of tension and brightness in music, which composers often exploit for emotional effect. Therefore, understanding that "augmented" signifies an increase in size, whether it be in intervals or chords, is key to grasping its application in music theory.