



Teacher's Guide to set works

**Cambridge International  
AS & A Level  
Music 9483**

Use this syllabus for exams in 2025 and 2026.

Exams are available in the June and November series.



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## Set Works (2025–2026)

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### Section A

Johann Sebastian Bach

*Orchestral Suite No. 1*, BWV 1066

Movements: 1 Overture, 2

Courante, 3 Gavotte I & II, 5 Menuet I & II.

Antonio Vivaldi

*Concerto in G minor* Op. 3 No. 2 RV 578 for two violins, cello, strings and continuo

### Section B

#### Journeys

Antonín Dvořák

Symphony no. 9 in E minor op. 95 '*New World*'

Two Songs:

Florence Price

*Travel's End*

Margaret Bonds

*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

Michael Nyman

MGV (*Musique à Grande Vitesse*)

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## Introductory comments

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These Notes for Guidance will suggest a model of exploration and investigation of the Set Works specified in the 9483 syllabus (2025–2026). They will offer teachers and candidates outlines and signposts, together with some more focused detail relating the music to the key concepts outlined on page 3 of the syllabus. The Notes will leave opportunities for teachers and candidates to make further investigations into sections of the work that require additional study.

The syllabus should be consulted as the comprehensive authority on what candidates should know and learn. These Notes for Guidance must be used together with the syllabus.

### What are Set Works for?

Throughout history, scientists, writers, artists, politicians – to name only a few professions – have learned through studying and building on the work of successful practitioners who have gone before them. A study of the work of composers shows this is also true of musicians.

By studying these Set Works, candidates will learn to describe the music they hear and develop skills to know what is important in the overall scope of the piece and how to identify and understand the role of the musical elements in closer focus.

By **repeated listening** to each of the works, real familiarity with the Set Works will be established. Knowledge of the sound of the music is essential in order to engage in the analytical process. Candidates will learn how to listen constructively and, as a consequence, will start to think and talk about the music with peers and teachers in increasingly knowledgeable ways.

In Section A, just five of the 35 marks available relate specifically to the Set Works. However, by studying the works carefully, candidates will learn about a range of devices and features that are typical of the works of this period and be able to apply their knowledge and understanding directly in the context of an 'unseen' piece/ recordings, which is the focus of the remaining questions.

### Relevance to other components

Study of the Set Works will establish connections with candidates as performers – score reading skills and interpretation of the musical information will resonate with the way candidates approach music they intend to perform.

Understanding how the music of the Set Works is constructed will include identification of a range of compositional techniques and candidates will find this is a substantial aid when they are working with their own compositional ideas.

### Recordings and scores

There are benefits to listening to a work for the first time without a score. It allows the listener to consider, 'What am I hearing?' and 'How can I make sense of this music through my ears?' Subsequent access to the music score enables the candidate to navigate the composition visually and gain insights into its construction.

Candidates should learn to identify sections of the music, often by tempo markings, and describe events simply and clearly enough for examiners to know which part of the music is being referred to in answer to examination questions. In this way, the order of events within the broad outline of each piece should become well-known.

Candidates are allowed to take their own recordings of the Section B Set Works into the examination, but scores for these works are not allowed. In their answers to examination questions, candidates should not make references to timings from their own specific recordings. The range and variety of recordings mean that such references are of little value to examiners. They also do not provide evidence of independent, in-depth familiarity with the music.

Teachers should aim to expose candidates to different performances and interpretations of music, and to discuss these; this will equip candidates to answer questions on different versions of previously unheard performances in Section A. It will also support the wider discussion of music that may be relevant to the broader questions of Section C.

## Specimen paper and past papers

Past and specimen papers are available from Cambridge and will enable teachers and candidates to anticipate the style of questions and practise the working of answers giving them confidence in what to expect in the exam setting.

Published mark schemes include the generic band descriptors; these are particularly useful for indicating the range of evidence examiners are looking for in each different section of the Listening Paper.

## Section A: Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Johann Sebastian Bach	Orchestral Suite No. 1, BWV 1066 Movements 1 Overture, 2 Courante, 3 Gavotte I & II, 5 Menuet I & II.
Antonio Vivaldi	Concerto in G minor Op. 3 No. 2 RV 578 for two violins, cello, strings and continuo

Five marks are directly related to a specific Set Work in Question 1, but it is the close familiarity with typical features of the music that are highly relevant in their application to unprepared listening in Question 2. Study of the Set Works will also support the development of music literacy.

Question 3 requires candidates to demonstrate their skills of aural perception in the comparison of performances. Listening to a variety of performance interpretations and period-related practice in these Set Works is vital, giving opportunity to apply what has been learned to an unprepared context.

Both Set Works are taken from the repertoire of the Baroque period and teachers should ensure candidates gain a working understanding of relevant terms such as continuo, concertino, ripieno etc. during their studies.

### The principle of contrast

Large-scale design containing intricate small details point to contrast as an important idea. These structural details can also be found in Baroque architecture and art, for example.

In Baroque music, strong contrasts of tempo can be seen between movements or sections within a movement. Abrupt contrasts of forte and piano are often a characteristic feature of dynamic expression. The sound of a soloist or group of soloists provides contrast with the sound of the larger ensemble.

In the Baroque era we additionally notice a texture dominated by two parts in particular: a florid treble contrasting with a secure, steady bass part. They are both melodic in character with important motivic ideas likely to be evident in either part. Equal voice polyphony formed the basis of the dominant texture of Renaissance music [preceding the Baroque period].

### The continuo

A group of players are involved in the continuo part but only a bass line is given in the score. Learners should be able to recognise the range of instruments that might be used to play the bass line, including cello and/or double bass or bass lute, for example. Instruments capable of interpreting the harmonic implications of the bass line might include harpsichord or organ, or guitar/lute, depending on what is best suited to the character of the music. Keyboard players, for example, would be expected to fill in appropriate harmonies, sometimes indicated by the 'figured bass'. They had freedom to 'extemporise' in terms of constructing a harmonic texture.

Learners are not expected to have a detailed understanding of figured bass.

## Ornamentation

Ornamentation is a characteristic feature heard frequently in the performance of Baroque music. Terms for basic forms of ornamentation are given in the syllabus (trill, mordent, turn etc.) and candidates should be able to recognise these aurally when listening to recordings. The Baroque convention of starting a trill on the upper note should be known as well as the use of appoggiatura, often found as a decoration at cadence points or an ornamentation of the melody line.

Performance directions on the score may indicate where the composer requires a trill, for example, but performances may include ornamentation not indicated on the score. More decorative ornamentation is often reserved if a section is repeated. Where these elaborations combine or extend the basic forms, candidates should be able to describe what they hear in a recognisable and convincing way.

## Tonality and the Use of Harmonic Language

It is important that some rudimentary harmonic principles are learned for answering questions on the Listening Paper. A chordal analysis of the Gavotte and Menuet, for example, will be useful exercise. Learners will be able to see the use of root position and first inversion chords and how to achieve a modulation from one key to another. They will learn to recognise the way in which cadential progressions lead the music to moments of repose or conclusion.

Understanding of harmonic practice will benefit those choosing to compose in a tonal idiom in other components of the course.

## Johann Sebastian Bach

J S Bach was the most successful of a large family working as musicians in central Germany across almost two hundred years. He learned his craft by copying manuscripts and making arrangements of the music of Corelli, Vivaldi and others. Indeed, Bach made keyboard arrangements of a number of Vivaldi's Opus 3 concertos.

From 1708 Bach worked as organist to the court of Weimar, and organ music dominated his composing output. In 1717, he accepted a post of musical director at the court in Cöthen and in 1723 moved once more, this time to Leipzig as Cantor of the Lutheran Church of St Thomas and then director of the Collegium Musicum there.

Bach is famous for his genius in contrapuntal writing and fugal forms. This was a time when the major- minor scale system of tonality was becoming firmly established in musical practice and his harmonic writing is frequently regarded as exemplary for the training of music students.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Orchestral Suite No 1, BWV 1066,  
Movements 1 Overture, 2 Courante, 3 Gavotte I & II,  
5 Menuet I & II.

**Important note:** Candidates are **not** required to study the complete work of seven movements, only the four movements specified above/ in the syllabus.

Dating this work is difficult as there is no 'autograph' score for any of the orchestral suites. Research suggests that much of the music belongs to the 'Leipzig' period. This corresponds with the evidence of confident contrapuntal writing, heard in an orchestral context in Suites 2 and 3. The earliest source for this work is a set of copied parts (1723-4) dating from early in Bach's 'Leipzig' period but it is possible that the work originates a little earlier towards the end of his time in Cöthen.



## The Suite – an important Baroque form

The 'dances' in the Baroque suite are 'stylised' – meaning that they are instrumental forms, not intended for dancing. The suite had its origins in the popular music of social dancing in the 16th century with its strong rhythms and clear phrasing. The dances in the Baroque suite often shared the same key, with contrast achieved in tempo, metre or character. In keyboard and orchestral music, Baroque dance movements associated with certain countries can be found.

In this Set Work, for example, the Menuet was a dance that originated in France in the mid-17th century.

## Movement I Overture

### Overview:

Bach's four Orchestral Suites are sometimes known as 'Overture' taking their name from the substantial opening movement of the form. The word means 'opening' or 'introduction' to a longer piece. The first movement in this work is in a style often referred to as a French Overture. It was developed by Lully and others on the model found in Venetian opera in the mid-17th century.

Some general features of the French overture in Bach's day are:

- First section – slow with 'stately' dotted rhythms in a duple or quadruple metre; fast scalar runs
- Second section – lively, often using fugal texture

Bach's Overture is somewhat reduced in its orchestration (2 oboes, bassoon, strings and continuo) compared to others in the set of four but it is his varied use of the woodwind that provides interest.

### A structural overview may be summarised as:

#### Bars 1 – 16

- A** Ceremonial, elegant, slow opening, repeated.  
C major – G major (tonic – dominant).

#### Bars 16 – 991

- B** Faster section characterised by flowing imitative textures.  
Modulation to a range of related keys.  
[The change of speed is indicated with a duple time signature.]

#### Bars 99 – 114

- A<sup>2</sup>** Return of opening tempo and altered material from A.

Although the score contains an indication of repeat of the section from b.16, in practice, some interpretations may omit this.

### Further detail:

#### First section (A) (b.1–16/17)

This stately opening is full of harmonic dissonance and resolution, with suspensions, passing notes moving against sustained notes in the bass part and various types of decoration adding to the harmonic intricacy of the texture.

This opening section provides many additional features that will enable candidates to apply their understanding of 'rudiments' in this musical context:

- A 'mobile' bass line constructed of chords mainly in root position and 1st inversion with passing notes to generate a flowing line
- The use of running semiquavers (sixteenth notes) in the outer voices of the texture
- Ascending and descending scalar passages (e.g., bar 5, ascending G major scale)
- The use of repeated rhythmic figures (with slight variation) to provide unity across the texture of this section:



- The characteristic **dotted notes**, (often performed 'double-dotted') adding to the stately, ceremonial elegance
- Cadences of various types that can be recognised aurally and identified in the score
- Instrumentation and texture: identifying doubling, independent parts, contrary motion between parts, etc.
- Identify and describe decoration / ornamentation in different performances.

### Second section (B) (b.16b–991)

There is a significant change of texture now. As each instrumental 'voice' enters there is imitation of the initial melodic idea, called the **subject**, creating a contrapuntal texture.

The structure of this section is **fugal**. Whilst textbooks provide typical formulations for **fugue** writing, in practice Bach is highly individual in the way he works with his ideas in this context.

The following description refers to the fugal concepts of **subject**, **countersubject**, **free-flowing counterpoint**, **exposition** and **episode**.

The concept of fugue is easier to hear than it is to describe. The music of this section is dominated by the recurring first 13 notes of the subject that learners will soon recognise aurally as they become familiar with the music.

A significant feature of Bach's fugal writing here, is the way he generates contrast by alternating the role of the woodwind instruments. Sometimes they double the string parts and sometimes Bach uses them as an **independent trio** of double woodwind timbres, two oboes and bassoon. (e.g., bars 27–323).

### Bars 16b–27<sup>1</sup> Exposition

The fugal **exposition** is the passage where the subject and its variants are each presented in turn. They overlap, with each subsequent entry beginning before the subject statement is complete, resulting in a 'dovetailing' of materials in the texture.



- The main theme or **subject** is presented in G, (dominant relationship to the tonic key of C) in the treble 'voices'.
- The next 'voice' to enter, a fourth lower on C (Violin II, bar 173) is altered slightly to keep the music in the tonic key and is sometimes known as a **tonal answer**.

- The third 'voice' in the viola part enters on G in bar 191.
- The fourth 'voice' enters on bassoon and continuo on C in bar 203

The decoration at the cadence varies with subsequent statements of the subject and answer. The rhythmic patterns and shapes can be seen later in the music, e.g., b.48.

The semiquaver music in the exposition is thought of as **free-flowing counterpoint**.

It is described as **countersubject** material if the identity of this music becomes recognisable and 'thematic' in its own right. A sense of unity is achieved by using repeating motifs. (Can learners identify these patterns in the music?)

Bars 22–25<sup>1</sup> is an **episode** where the subject is not heard in its entirety but is dominated by **sequential treatment** of some of the semi-quaver patterns or motifs. A partial return to the subject in the treble voices at bar 25 leads this section to a close.

### Bar 27<sup>1</sup>–32<sup>3</sup>

The independent trio of double reed instruments starts this section, with a move away from the tonic-dominant statements of the exposition. There are no strings.

Now in the relative minor – A minor, the shortened subject material is presented in tonic and dominant versions the new key.

Important new **countersubject** material with sustained notes and off-beat syncopations add to the complexity of the texture from bar 27<sup>4</sup>.



This material is heard frequently from this point onwards.

In the previous section, the answer response to the subject was consistently maintained, but here the entries sometimes occur more rapidly. When the answer enters before the subject is completed this is referred to as **stretto**. (See bar 32, for example). This creates an increasing intensity as the music works its way through closely related keys.

Can learners identify cadences and scale patterns to establish the keys at, for example, b.36; b.44<sup>4</sup>–45<sup>1</sup>; b.54?

### Bar 32<sup>1</sup>–54<sup>3</sup>

The strings return with the subject in A minor, overlapping with the end of the independent woodwind music. Throughout this section, the subject entries can be traced and noticeably, the oboes do not always double the string parts. Their independence can be seen at b.413 where the music modulates to E minor. Sequential treatment of a pattern in imitation between the bass and oboe parts creates a more open texture.

Sometime just the opening 3 quavers of the subject are sufficient to remind us of it, e.g., b. 43, violin I.

An **episode** of sequentially-treated material precedes the perfect cadence in G in b.54.

Learners should listen to and analyse how the subject material (including modulations) and use of the independent 'trio' feature in the music up to bar 99<sup>1</sup>.

An important moment is the cadence in bars 87<sup>4</sup>–88 signalling a clear arrival at the tonic key of C. The subject is played in each of the trio voices, doubled at bar 91 in the continuo part. A further passage of sequential treatment and re-stated subject themes comes to rest on a bass pedal as the final section begins.

### Third section (A<sup>2</sup>) (bars 99–114)

The long-held tonic **pedal** note of C in the bass part at bar 99 is transformed in its function into a dominant pedal in F, by the introduction of a B-flat in the upper voices.

The return to a stately common time restores the ceremonial mood of the opening of the overture. The rhythmic features, scalar patterns, dissonant and resolving harmonies are all present – but this is not a simple repeat. How does the music differ?

## The Dances

### Movement 2 Courante

The Courante became established as a standard movement of the suite from the mid-17th century. The Italian version was in a quick triple time with a light, running texture.

The Courante here is of the 'refined' French type. The tempo is a moderate one in 3/2 time with music that has shifts in emphasis between 3/2 and 6/4. This is a good opportunity for learners to refresh their understanding of simple and compound metres.

In 3/2 the stresses are heard as 1 2 3 4 5 6

In 6/4 the stresses are heard as 1 2 3 4 5 6

Bach variously

- changes the metrical emphasis from bar to bar
- changes the metrical emphasis between parts, within a single bar
- uses syncopation to add further rhythmic interest

The texture is in four-parts throughout, with the principal melodic material contained in the outer parts. Whilst the inner voices fill in the harmonies, they also have a melodic character in places where quaver movement ensures smooth 'voice-leading', much in the same way the inner parts function in a Bach chorale harmonisation.

The upper voice is a unison played by oboes I and 2 plus violin I.

The 'inner parts' are played by violin II and viola, with bassoon and continuo instruments taking the bass part.

The overall structure is an 'asymmetrical' binary form – the first section has 8 bars and a second section, 20 bars. When performed, 'A' is usually repeated but 'B' is frequently not.

Learners will find it useful to identify changes in metrical emphasis within a section of this dance. In analysing the use of harmony, it is again an opportunity to observe the way Bach uses a mixture of root and first position chords together with quaver 'passing notes' to create the 'melodic' or mobile bass line so characteristic of baroque writing.

Momentary modulations to closely related keys might also be identified.

Both the gavotte and minuet movements are designated 'alternativement', indicating that the first dance is returned to, forming a 'da capo' structure A B A. By listening to a range of recorded performances, learners will notice that some performing decisions may differ in terms of ornamentation, repeats within each section, and also instrumentation.

### Movement 3 Gavotte I and II

Continuing in the key of C major, contrast is achieved through a change of metre, instrumentation and structure.

The main characteristic of this dance is heard in phrase lengths which start and end halfway through the bar of four crotchets (quarter notes) with an overall sense of a duple metre. Each Gavotte is presented in a binary structure with the second part longer than the first.

#### Gavotte I *alternativement*

##### Bars 0<sup>3</sup>–8<sup>2</sup>

Instruments are grouped as the Courante but the melodic interest is carried by the oboes and first violin part with mainly crotchet/quarter-note movement accompanying.

Some performances reduce the instrumentation to strings only for the repeat, to add interest.

This section concludes with a perfect cadence in the dominant key of G.

##### Bars 8<sup>3</sup>–24<sup>2</sup>

From G, the music passes through D minor, A minor and F major; the use of suspension and increasing quaver movement drive the music on its way back to the tonic key of C. The repeat may be reduced to strings alone.

#### Gavotte II

With a change of instrumentation and texture, this second gavotte provides a clear contrast to Gavotte I. A trio of double-reed players (two oboes and bassoon) function together whilst upper strings (violins and viola) take an 'accompanying' role in the manner of a 'horn call' with its emphasis on tonic-dominant pitches and fanfare-like melodies outlining the harmonies.

The oboe music is characterised by movement in 3rds and 6ths, some syncopation, and articulation emphasising the slurring of notes in pairs.

Whilst the repeats of each section are executed in this section, the return to Gavotte I often entails a performance for this final time without repeats.

### Movement 5 Menuet I and II.

The English word **minuet** is derived from the Italian and French forms of the word. The Urtext score of the Set Work uses the word **menuet** but the meaning of both words is interchangeable. The minuet has its origins in a stately dance of the French royal court from the mid 17th-century. In triple metre, most minuets are in binary form but in Bach's suite, the menuet is presented in a 'da capo' form with the second menuet being more lightly scored. In this larger 'da capo' form, the structure becomes ternary.

Learners should be able to describe the texture and observe how repeats, instrumentation and ornamentation, for example, differ across alternative interpretations. With the example of the structuring of the Gavotte movement in mind, they will be able to recognise a similar 'asymmetric' binary structure. They will be able to compare the way instruments are grouped and the way passing notes are used to generate flowing lines in each of the four parts.

## Antonio Vivaldi

Concerto in G minor Opus 3 No 2 (RV 578)

- 1 Adagio e spiccato – Allegro
- 2 Larghetto
- 3 Allegro

### IMPORTANT

#### Number of movements and labelling of bar numbers in these notes.

Some scores and recordings reference the concerto as having four movements / tracks. In these notes, we follow the consensus that the first 13 bars of the music form an introductory section to the first movement rather than an independent movement. Most of the *L'Estro Armonico* concertos are structured in three movements, reflecting the independent developing of the concerto from the four-movement structure of the trio-sonata. This concerto can be seen as in the typical fast-slow-fast structure favoured by Vivaldi but preceded by an opening slow section.

Bar numbers are given for the Adagio e spiccato – Allegro as a single movement in the first instance but a bar number is also given in brackets for Learners using scores that notate them as separate movements.

Whilst *ürtext* scores are always recommended, there are differences between *ürtext* scores available.

### General

This Opus 3 set of concertos by Vivaldi is full of confidence and invention. Performers enthusiastically talk of the energy required to play these concertos and also the joy derived from engaging with such delightful and powerful works.

The end of the 17th-century and the early 18th-century were dominated by musical creativity coming mainly from Italy. Anton Corelli had established the Concerto Grosso in Rome, developed from the trio-sonata model with its (usual) structure of four contrasting movements.

Vivaldi was a performer, teacher and director at *Ospedale della Pietá*, a Venetian institution that provided care and music education for orphaned girls. It produced singers and instrumentalists of the highest quality ensuring that Vivaldi had a set of impressive musicians at his disposal to perform his compositions.

Vivaldi was becoming more widely known in Europe more widely from around 1700 but it was the publication of twelve concertos as *L'Estro Armonico* in Amsterdam in 1711 that demonstrated the composer's craftsmanship and originality to a wider world. A precise translation of *L'Estro Armonico* is difficult; various suggestions include 'inspired harmony' and 'musical delight'.

The reception of this collection and its influence was highly significant. J.S Bach was sufficiently impressed to make arrangement of six of the concertos for organ or keyboard-instruments and strings.

The collection of concertos includes various structural models and Learners may wish to explore the music of other concertos in this set.

The concertos were published by Estienne Roger in a set of 8 part-books: 4 violin, 2 viola, one cello and one 'continuo e basso'. Concertos focus variously on

- a solo violin as used by Torelli, or
- 2 solo violin parts, as in the model of Corelli, or
- the colourful and exotic deployment of four independent violin parts in concertos 1, 4, 7 and 10.

These various forms of the concerto provided all the signposting needed for Vivaldi to make a definitive contribution to the classical concerto to come. (See below for the move from a four to three-movement structure.)

RV 578 is the second concerto of the set and features two solo violins and violoncello obbligato. The inclusion of the solo cello line makes the concerto feel closer to a 'concerto grosso' model where a group of 'concertino' instruments are placed in contrast to the tutti or ripieno ensemble.

As a result of this ambiguity, when scores were published based on the original part books, differences of opinion resulted. Centres may find a score layout presented as a concerto grosso with concertino instruments grouped and marked accordingly. Alternatively, the ensemble might be presented as eight equal staves including continuo. In this presentation, solo lines are indicated in the score at the appropriate moments.

### Listening to performances

This is a relatively short work and Learners can be encouraged to listen to a range of recordings / performances before they even look at a score. Can they hear the difference between modern and historically informed performances? Is it possible to identify the basso continuo instruments used in any particular recording? What difference does a venue (recording studio, church, concert hall) make to the overall sound?

Comparing performances of an unfamiliar work is a significant part of the exam questioning and Learners can 'practise' on carefully selected extracts from this work. This provides a good opportunity for teachers to help Learners to navigate the many recordings that they might consider.

What do reputable writers and music critics have to say about recordings or performers?

prestomusic.com collates information about recordings that have won praise and awards, for example, in Gramophone, BBC sources, Grammy Awards, Penguin Rosettes. International Classical Music Awards, etc.

### Concerto in G minor Opus 3 No 2 (RV 578)

Most scores give the key signature of a single flat, as in the original. The flat for the sixth degree of the scale was commonly omitted in minor flat keys. You will notice more frequent use of accidentals in the music when different forms of melodic and harmonic scales are used.

#### I Adagio e spiccato – Allegro

The detached quaver movement of the opening bars gives a bright, brittle sound. There is more than a passing resemblance to the opening movement of Vivaldi's Concerto No.4, Op.8, RV 297. 'Winter' (*L'Inverno*) – from *The Four Seasons*, written some years later.

From the start, Learners will hear a series of suspensions (including preparation and resolution) as the quaver movement chords move purposefully to a perfect cadence in the dominant minor in bars 5<sup>4</sup>–6<sup>1</sup>. The dissonance created by these suspensions adds significantly to the harmonic richness of the opening of this movement. After a brief moment where violins 1 and 3 take the music to a higher register, the quaver movement continues to use suspensions across all instruments, concluding with a perfect cadence in the tonic key of G minor in bar 10.

For the first time, violins 1 and 2 play as soloists with a significant contrast in the lighter sound and texture. Only the violas continue with quaver movement as an accompaniment to the quiet, melodic, decorative figuration characterised by a dotted rhythmic pattern and parallel motion in thirds. It is followed by the return of all parts, including the continuo in a strong perfect cadence, concluding this opening section.

## Allegro

After a pause on the final note in bar 13, the Allegro sections begins at bar 14 [bar 1].

Following the rich harmonies of the Adagio, the fast-paced downward scalic movement in a four-violin unison provides a dramatic contrast.

Vivaldi is a master of invention, including quirky twists and turns when it comes to handling his ideas. The scores are full of material that can be used to illustrate melodic and harmonic devices.

There are two important ideas in the opening unison violin statement:



- a descending and ascending melodic minor scale
- a rhythmically interesting response starting with a semiquaver rest and angular leaps in quaver movement at the end before a similar phrase a major third lower is stated in bar 16 [2]

A syncopated idea begins at bar 17 [4] which also incorporates an ascending sequence of a 3-note pattern:



The Allegro is in a ritornello structure: sections of repeated material for the full ensemble (ritornellos) alternate with sections focused on the soloists (known as episodes).

The following table outlines the use of the principal musical ideas.

Bar	Tutti / Solo	Description	Keys, etc.
14–22 [1–9]	T	The opening ritornello is characterised by scalic movement followed by a syncopated pattern in the unison violins. Other strings accompany with harmonies moving chromatically through a series of secondary dominant chords.  At bar 20 [7] roles between upper and lower strings are reversed (violins and violas have repeated semiquavers while the cellos and basses have the syncopated pattern.)	G minor then modulating through various keys back to G minor.



Bar	Tutti / Solo	Description	Keys, etc.
23–27 <sup>2</sup> [10–14 <sup>2</sup> ]	S	The two soloists (Violins I and 2) play entirely alone, in thirds. The melodic movement makes use of repetition and sequence leading to...	
27 <sup>3</sup> –33 <sup>2</sup> [14 <sup>3</sup> –20 <sup>2</sup> ]	T	... a re-statement of the ritornello material. How does Vivaldi vary the music this time? (texture, roles, dynamic, placement of the pattern within the bar?)	
33 <sup>3</sup> –45 <sup>3</sup> [20 <sup>3</sup> –32 <sup>3</sup> ]	S	The two soloists play the same music as in Episode 1 but displaced by a half-bar. This is now extended by introducing the solo cello part in imitation a (compound) fifth lower than Violin I, over a bass line outlining a circle of fifths. (See notation below*)	Modulation to D minor
45 <sup>3</sup> –54 <sup>3</sup> [32 <sup>3</sup> –41 <sup>3</sup> ]	T	The material from the start of the Allegro is repeated in the dominant minor key, although displaced to start halfway through the bar.	D minor
54 <sup>3</sup> –70 <sup>3</sup> [41 <sup>3</sup> –57 <sup>3</sup> ]	S	Although Violin I starts alone, Violin 2 follows, the soloists alternating their quaver / semiquaver patterns antiphonally. The texture is derived from the inner string parts heard earlier in the movement. The ensemble accompanies with punctuating chords that allows modulation.	
70 <sup>3</sup> –74 <sup>1</sup> [57 <sup>3</sup> –61 <sup>1</sup> ]	T	The syncopated material and driving semiquaver accompaniment in lower strings returns, propelling the music to a return of ...	
74–83 [61–70]	S + T	... the opening descending scale idea (now in Violin 1 only), marking a final section of varied and decorated solo lines with developed accompanimental material in the tutti parts. The use of sudden contrasts of dynamic (often referred to as 'terraced dynamics') adds to the drama of the final forte statement with unison violins returning.	G minor

\*From bar 37<sup>3</sup> [24<sup>3</sup>] Vivaldi ingeniously creates a three-part texture which combines

- the rhythmic idea, now in a solo cello part, imitating
- the solo Violin I part started two beats earlier
- over a circle of fifths outlined in the continuo part, shown here:

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Violin I' and contains a treble clef with a series of eighth-note patterns. The middle staff is labeled 'Solo cello' and contains a bass clef with a similar eighth-note pattern, starting two beats later than the Violin I part. The bottom staff is labeled 'Continuo' and contains a bass clef with a simple harmonic line consisting of quarter notes and eighth notes, illustrating a circle of fifths progression.

## II Larghetto

This slow central movement contrasts in both tempo and in time signature – now a lilting, triple metre.

The opening is suggestive of the opening of movement I in its block chord textures followed by melodic lines with dotted rhythms in the solo violins.

The movement is structured in two parts:

Bars 1–13      The music begins in G minor, modulating to B $\flat$  major (relative major).  
This section is repeated.

Bars 13<sup>4</sup>–47    In this section, the materials already presented are explored and expanded in terms of keys and textures.

In the **first section** Learners will notice

- a tendency to 'double-dot' rhythms in performances – a distinctive baroque performance practice
- the use of terraced dynamics in the opening sets of cadences
- an appoggiatura effect, using second inversion chords (e.g. bar 2).

The first five bars consists of tutti playing of perfect and imperfect cadences. The spacing and distribution of notes bears closer examination in terms of voice-leading and orchestration. The tutti melodic response in bars 6–9 moves to the relative major key and is followed by four bars of solo voicing of the same material (violins 1, 2 and cello), gracefully concluding the section.

The repeat of this section is a good opportunity for Learners to discuss and describe the way performers sometimes ornament the music on the repeat. Historically informed performances may use a bass lute (theorbo) or archlute (baroque guitar) in the continuo part. The moments of lighter texture of this movement will enable elaborations to be heard clearly and for instruments to be identified.

In the **second section** the music commences with a dramatic move to a G major chord that becomes the dominant chord in a perfect cadence in C minor. There is plenty of opportunity in this section for Learners to identify a range of passing modulations.

Features to notice include:

- the change of texture as Violin I enters with a legato descending scale at bar 18, imitated by Violin 2 a bar later generating a texture in thirds over a tonic (G) pedal in the solo cello
- a further series of rhythmic tutti cadences from bar 21<sup>4</sup>, moving towards a legato imperfect cadence at bars 28–29
- a tutti version of the descending, dotted melodic line in upper strings, (from bar 30), now accompanied by bass line outlining a circle of fifths with a rhythmic shape that emphasises the second beat of the bar
- an echo of this 8-bar section in the solo parts from bar 38 leading to a strong perfect cadence conclusion from the ensemble, in G minor.



### **Keys**

Vivaldi continues to present his main material in G minor and contrasts this with passages of harmonic exploration including to the subdominant and dominant minor keys. The return of the opening scalar material of bar 1 is heard in D minor at bar 38.

### **Harmonic and melodic devices**

The music of this movement provides many further examples of devices that candidates might be required to identify in the unprepared music of Section A of the listening exam.

Can Learners locate (using precise bar and beat numbers) devices such as pedals, circle of fifths, ascending and descending sequences, repetition, fragmentation and extension of materials? Can they identify scale shapes / types, cadences and key changes? Can they convincingly describe and compare ornamentation or articulation (use of legato / staccato, etc.) in different performances/ recordings?

**School feedback:** ‘While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.’

**Feedback from:** Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

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