

ABRSM Pathways through the Recorder Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A8 Egg and Spoon Race by Ailie Robertson (Treble)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The recorder and the piano combine to create a vision of an egg and spoon race where the egg doesn't always seem to stay on the spoon. The mainly tongued articulation and largely stepwise movements are good for developing coordination and the rests give rhythmic variety here.



B4 Lullaby in the Ocean by Edward Lun (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. A gentle lullaby with a calm feel that suits the descant recorder. The pedalled piano part gives atmosphere and there is an opportunity to use legato tonguing for the detached notes, to illustrate the undulating phrases.



B5 Catching Snowflakes on my tongue by Ailie Robertson (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. A gentle piece where the pure descant recorder tone suits the image of the snow. The finger patterns are comfortable for the elementary learner and some slurs encourage precise coordination.



C10 New Shoes by Alexandra Skevington (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme, this playful piece depicts a trip to the shoe shop—from excited clomping to a nostalgic moment, tiptoeing, and finally walking out in new shoes. It's great for developing staccato playing with elementary students, and off-beat chords in the accompaniment add character. The composer suggests the fun trick of 'sniffing' a rest on the first beat to keep time.



Grade 2

A7 Splish Splosh Splat by Alexandra Skevington (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme, this joyful piece captures the fun of jumping in puddles—whether in anticipation or fond memory. Rests and off-beat entries offer useful teaching points, with crisp tonguing needed for quaver rhythms. A mid-piece tempo change adds interest.



B5 Mustard Fields by Zana Clarke (Descant, also Treble Grade 2 B6)

From Dawn and Dusk Book 1 (1996–98), this unaccompanied piece has a folk-like style. With no printed dynamics, players can shape phrases freely. It aids development of phrasing, breath control, and gentle tonguing, and is available for both descant and treble.



B7 Dream Song by Thomas Metcalf (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The gentle legato and mainly soft dynamic feel give a lullaby quality to this piece and the key change in the middle adds interest. The slurred phrases require precise finger coordination and the gentle staccato adds to the light ending, with an atmospheric piano part.



C5 Sly Fox and Boasting Baboon by Elizabeth Cooper (Treble)

Sly Fox, in triple time, features the F major scale with chromatic touches in the middle section. Boasting Baboon has a dance-like 4/4 feel and nimble passage work.



C8 Polka Dot Polka by Ailie Robertson (Descant)

This uses the Polka style and has some dotted quaver rhythms, as well as some slurs and tenuto. The semiquavers are useful for teaching finger control and the G major tonality is bright.



Grade 3

A6 Cheeky sparrow by Elizabeth Cooper (Descant)

This piece has a playful character and rhythmic variety. It can be unaccompanied, though there is an optional piano part.



B7 Tranquillo by H. Genzmer (Duet) (Treble)

Genzmer was a student of Hindemith and writes in a neoclassical style. This provides an introduction to the modern duet repertoire for the Grade 3 student.



B10 Air by Walter Leigh (Treble)

This short piece uses the alto recorder with a legato tone and there are smooth phrases, with a mainly ABA form and some dynamic contrasts in the middle section which follow the natural strengths of the instrument. It is useful for teaching slurs, finger control and breath control.



B10 Nakshatrn (A Star's Light) by Vishak Ramaprasad (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The thoughtful character is illustrated with some slurs and gently undulating phrases. A small trill adds to the variety of techniques and the lower range of the descant is also used atmospherically.



C3 Inquisitive Puppy and Hopping Rabbit by Elizabeth Cooper (Treble)

Inquisitive Puppy, in 4/4, features slurs, dotted crotchet rhythms, and a final trill as a teaching point. Hopping Rabbit, in 6/8, has a dance-like character with a mid-piece tempo change.



Grade 4

B3 Blues (from Jolly Joker) by Viktor Fortin (Treble)

Austrian composer Viktor Fortin wrote this as part of a set of seven catchy pieces in popular styles for alto or bass recorder with piano or guitar. It showcases swing style, stays mostly in the alto's middle range, includes a rubato-friendly cadenza, and ends with a multiphonic effect.



B6 Columba Palumbis by A. Davis (Descant)

From a 1998 collection of technical studies, each depicting a bird character. Rather than imitating birdsong, the composer notes that 'external musical and other references' may be found. Columba Palumbus (the Wood Pigeon) uses legato quaver phrases to evoke its cooing call.



B7 Turquoise Turtle by T. Dehnhard (Descant)

This accompanied piece, in a blues style, reflects Dehnhard's jazz influences. Grace notes enhance the style, while low register chromatic notes offer opportunities to teach half holding.



B8 A little piece by En Shao (Treble)

This Andantino features changing time signatures, beginning in 5/4 and changing to 6/4 and 3/4 later on. There is also slurred and tenuto articulation. It is useful for working on shaping and the slurred leap up to high D at the end is a good teaching point for thumb technique.



B10 Waterlily by Barbara Heller (Descant)

Originally written for flute or clarinet, this piece has been adapted for recorder in the book 'My Favourite Melodies' by Sarah Jeffrey. It was composed in 2008 and has long legato lines and a beautiful sound world with the piano part. Keeping the pitch steady is a good challenge here, as well as shaping the phrases and finding a musical rubato feel in combination with the piano.



Grade 5

B7 Moment Musical by Hans Gal (Treble)

This short piece has a variety of articulation and a moderate tempo, with lyrical phrases and a slow section at the end. It references the short poetic 'moment musical' piano pieces that were written by composers such as Schubert. Hans Gal was an Austrian composer who emigrated to the UK in 1938.



B8 Andantino semplice by Gordon Jacob (Treble)

This gentle Sonata movement written in the 1960s and dedicated to Anthony Pringsheim, has a lyrical legato feel with long phrases that invite subtle vibrato. It aids breath control and consistency across the range, showcasing Jacob's neoclassical style and understanding of wind instruments.



B8 Prelude The Sea Front by Althea Talbot-Howard (Descant) (also Treble B11)

Folk-influenced in style, this piece features lyrical phrases that suit the recorder, with room for rubato in the opening and strong drive in the faster section. It includes slurring, legato tonguing, and opportunities for folk-style ornamentation.



C1 Akrobatik by Hans Günther Allers (Descant)

From a suite of five character pieces for intermediate players, this educational and engaging work features time changes, accents, and a leggiero feel that suits the descant recorder. Slurred semiquavers help develop finger coordination.



Grade 6

A4 Gabrielle Maditelle by van Eyck (Descant)

This is in triple time and it segues straight into the variations, which become more complex as the piece continues. This is a more technically accessible piece than some of the longer Van Eyck variations and could also be played on a tenor.



B10 Immortelle by Staeps (Treble)

This lyrical piece has some beautiful interplay for recorder and piano and is also playable on bass. It is an opportunity for advanced players to explore different textures with the piano accompaniment and phrase shapes.



C8 Butterflie by Haverkaate (Treble)

Haverkaate is a pioneer of jazz style works for the recorder and this piece is a fun evocation of a butterfly, with a swung style. Some dexterity is needed for the finger patterns, which are rewarding to play.



Grade 7

A2 Adagio and Allegro from Sonata in G minor by Barsanti (Treble)

A stylish slow movement where added ornamentation is possible, paired with a lively Allegro. Composed in 1724 while Barsanti was in London, the Op. 1 Sonatas reflect his Italianate style. An oboist and recorder player, he performed at the Haymarket Theatre during Handel's opera productions.



A5 Malle Symen by van Eyck (Descant)

This well-known theme and set of two variations requires strong finger control and dexterity, as well as rhythmic stability. Once again this could also be played on tenor.



C10 The Kid from Venezuela by Pete Rose (Treble)

Rose, known for pioneering jazz-influenced recorder works, wrote this energetic descant piece in 1990 for Aldo Abreu. A technical challenge for advanced players, it's structured as a 12-bar blues inspired by the Jamaican folk song 'Matilda,' blending modern jazz with quotes from Telemann and Bach and including notated solos for recorder and piano.



C6 Quickly and with precision by Hand (Treble)

Hand was a very prolific composer for the recorder and this work has lyrical phrases and a range of articulation effects. It's good for encouraging students to produce focused top notes in order to realise the upper phrases but also requires a rich low register tone. The trills add to the expressive palette.



C7 Abigail's Jig by Richard Lambert (Descant)

With Irish jig rhythms, modal harmony, and modern touches, this piece evokes a folk style. It includes challenging finger coordination throughout and ends with an effective flourish, suiting more advanced students.



Grade 8

A2 Ricercata Quarta by Bassano (Treble)

From Bassano's Op. 17 Ricercari (1585, cited by Hintermeier in a 1712 edition), this piece—likely originally for cornett—is transcribed here for treble recorder. A contrasting unaccompanied early Baroque work, it challenges advanced players with scalar and arpeggiated passages and demands effective phrasing.



A5 Comagain by van Eyck (Descant)

These variations are on the famous John Dowland song *Come Again, sweet love doth now invite* and work really well for descant recorder, although they can also be played on tenor. They are a great technical challenge for an advanced student and good for teaching finger coordination and articulation.



A6 Lento recitativo and Vivate by Glanville-Hicks (Treble)

Composed in 1938, this work by Australian composer Peggy Glanville Hicks features a Lento with long, introspective legato lines—challenging advanced players to maintain intonation and shape phrases with vibrato. The Vivate contrasts with lively, detailed articulation and nimble staccatos.



A11 1st movt from Il Gardellino by Vivaldi (Treble)

This piece uses ornamentation to beautifully illustrate the singing of a goldfinch. It can be played on treble or soprano and originally comes from the famous Op. 10 collection of Flute concertos, though the range and the reference to birdsong suggest that it may originally have been written with the recorder in mind.



B11 Korimako by Gillian Whitehead (Treble)

This evocative piece for the descant from 1996 is written in the style of birdsong and there is a wide range of articulation, with ornamentation and very detailed shaping. It is a great challenge for an advanced student and there is scope for work on rubato and tone as well. Gillian Whitehead is of Maori descent and this has been an important influence on her composing.



KEY

Articulation Female composer Pieces about animals Fast Lyrical 20th/21st Century A new commission Scenic Music about Birds Slow and expressive Extended techniques Folk Influences Jazz Influences Legato

ABRSM Pathways through the Flute Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A8 Zig Zag by Cecilia McDowall

Light and bright staccato patterns are found here in McDowall's lively piece. She gives the player plenty to work on with running quaver patterns and smoother ends to phrases to create effective contrast.



B2 Wise Old Star by Oosthuizen

This is a new commission for the 2026 Flute Syllabus and is a magical and descriptive piece, with the gentle melody using a range of articulation and rhythms to characterise the starlight and the great expanse of the skies.



B6 Donna Donna by Sholom Secunda, arr. Lawrence

Using lots of the lower range of the flute this haunting melody comes from a traditional Jewish folk tune. Good for working on a smooth legato line and to explore a sincere and reflective character.



C1 Jazz Waltz by Iles

If you enjoy jazzy music, exploring Nikki Iles' Jazz Waltz is a great place to start. With swung quavers, some off beat and tied patterns, and articulation contrast too, there is a lot to work on to let the swinging style come through.



C9 Linstead Market, Trad., arr. Hellen (Duet)

A lovely introduction to Jamaican rhythms and flowing, lilting syncopation. There are plenty of repeated ideas to get hold of, and the duet part follows lots of the same patterns underneath the melodic line.



Grade 2

A7 Papageno's Bell Tune by Mozart

Needing crisp and light articulation to convey the precise rhythmic patterns, this piece uses a mixture of scalic and arpeggiated figures in the delicate, graceful melody.



A10 The Thistle of Scotland Trad, arr. Morrison

Played at a steady march tempo, the duet arrangement of *Thistle of Scotland* features the "scotch snap" rhythm patterns as well as exploring articulation and tenuto emphasis to capture the Scottish flavour of the music.



B2 The Thistle Fairy by Lillie Harris

Lillie Harris is a British composer and wrote this piece for the new flute syllabus. It is a characterful piece with a range of expressive dynamic changes to explore. The quaver accompaniment on the piano flows gently under the flowing flute melody.



C4 I feel pretty by L. Bernstein

West Side Story premiered in 1957 on Broadway in New York. "I Feel Pretty" is sung by Maria in the story and it describes how fabulous she feels being in love. The repeated syncopated and tied rhythms help bring the music to life, and your playing wants to capture the fun she is having in this song!



C9 Ghosts in the Hall by Raybould

Written in a minor key and using lots of musical detail through changing dynamics and articulation, you can enjoy exploring the ghostly character here. The accents and swells of dynamics as you get higher in pitch can help bring the spooky story to life.



Grade 3

A5 Stop & Guiro by Dave Gale

Solid, even quavers are needed here to showcase the rhythmic feel of Dave Gale's music. There are off beat and tied patterns requiring a firm sense of pulse, as well as contrasting dynamics in the running quaver figures.



A6 Andante quasi Allegretto by Haydn, arr. Drouet (Duet)

Haydn's *Military Symphony* was written at the end of the 1700's and the duet arrangement of the second movement gives players a repeated figure of running quavers which often have an introductory grace note. Elegant in style and with lots of interest in the duet ensemble.



A8 Study in D minor by Lepus

Lepus was composing in the 1800's and this solo piece is fast moving with running quavers and triplets requiring precise articulation and quick fingers. Great for D minor scale and arpeggio practise too!



A9 Papegeno's Aria by Mozart, arr. Tambling

From *The Magic Flute*, this beautiful aria has been arranged for duet and uses the brightness of the flute sound to capture the singing line of the melody. Light articulation alongside smooth legato phrases help to bring this to life.



B2 Song of the Swan by Reena Esmail

Reena Esmail's piece is based on a Hindustani raga (a type of scale used in Indian music) and the flowing lines allow players to enjoy a blend of Western & Indian influences through the expressive melody.



Grade 4

A2 Menuet by Danglas, arr. A. & J. Oosthuizen

A dancing Menuet from a Romantic composer writing in a Baroque style, there are trills and grace notes throughout this lively piece. With many rallentandos and pauses at the ends of sections there are also tempo variations to manage and explore.



A3 Pula Pula by Rachel Hayter

Rachel Hayter is a British composer heavily influenced by the music of Brazil and South America, having spent lots of her time there working, playing and composing. Pula Pula is a lively dancing melody which is full of syncopated rhythms and a range of expressive dynamic changes. The bounce of the patterns is echoed in the title that translates as Bouncy Castle!



A5 Chromatic Polka by Kohler

Kohler was composing in the 1800's and he wrote a whole host of pieces which focus on technique and fingerwork. This study gives the player a great chromatic scale workout, as well as developing other quick moving finger patterns.



B5 Elegie by Chaminade, arr. North

Chaminade's works for flute are lyrical and expressive and these qualities are both found within the solo Elegie. There are gentle, flowing grace notes here that decorate the melodic line and a small "ad lib" section where players can enjoy the fluidity of the running semiquaver patterns.



C8 Jacaranda Blue by Jolin Jiang

Slow and expressive, this uses triplets in quaver and semiquaver form alongside flowing quaver patterns. Written in 2020, the composer says she was inspired by the blue flowers of the Jacaranda tree and that the falling triplets towards the end capture the imagery of the blossoms falling to the ground.



Grade 5

A10 Violetta's Aria by Verdi, arr. McDowall

From Verdi's opera *La Traviata*, this lively and vibrant piece needs a bright tone throughout but especially in the third octave figures from the very start. Scalic runs mid way through are expressive and flowing, and there is an opportunity to explore the changes of tempo here too.



B1 Andante Staccato by A. Bon

Anna Bon was an early Classical Italian composer and her flute Sonatas published in 1756 helped her gain respect in a mostly male dominated world of music in Venice. Andante Staccato brings a great mix of dotted rhythms, ornamentation and a mix of appoggiaturas and acciaccaturas in a graceful but strong musical character.



B2 Green Shade by Peter Thorne

Another characterful piece, with the lyrical melody evoking the shade of a tree and sunlight streaming through the leaves. Triplet figures and tied rhythms create some good challenge here, alongside flowing semiquaver scalic runs.



C2 Fantazja z Kalatowek by Katarzyna Krajka

Katarzyna Krajka is a Polish composer and she has written this brilliant unaccompanied piece for flute players to enjoy, exploring different characters and images of the pastoral countryside in Poland. There are mordents, pauses, and a wide range of dynamic colour to show off, and the time signature and tempi change through the piece so that each section has its own unique identity.



C5 Whistling Song by Bryan Kelly

Lively and dancing in style, and in 5/8, this piece has a playful energy and Latin inspired accents and rhythm patterns. Bryan Kelly is a British composer but has picked up influences from around the world.



Grade 6

A1 Badinerie by J. S. Bach

Movements from Bach's Suite in B minor appear several times through the flute syllabus, and this playful Badinerie is the technical and energetic final movement in that Suite. Trills are fast and require clean fingerwork. A fun and challenging piece for all flautists to learn.



B7 Madrigal by Yuri Povolotsky

Written in 2020, Povolotsky's Sonata Amoroso is a gentle and romantic work that explores the expressive side of the flute. Delicate but with room to build colour and depth, there are passages which are based around scale and arpeggio patterns requiring dexterity and fluidity from the performer.



C4 Comical Flute by Alan Bullard

A fast and exciting unaccompanied piece, Comical Flute has been written with plenty of detail to focus on. Crisp articulation and attack is needed to really let the music sing out with the character and vitality it needs.



C5 Git on Board (The "A" Train) by Adolphus Hailstork

Strong rhythmic energy and a whole variety of accents and syncopation await you in this exciting solo piece from Adolphus Hailstork, written in 1980. It's from a suite of 3 pieces called "The Pied Piper of Harlem" and it draws on African-American styles and influences.



C6 Reclining Figure by Rob Hall

With a tempo marking of "Languid, with rubato", Rob Hall's unaccompanied piece gives the flautist some smooth legato phrases to characterise the relaxed figure of the title. Grace notes range from step wise to leaping patterns, and the tempo changes and varied rhythms provide much interest.



Grade 7

C10 Drunken Sailor by Christopher Norton

Based on the famous sea shanty, this arrangement by Christopher Norton needs confident projection and bold use of accents and rhythmic drive. There are syncopated, off beat rhythms which need clean and confident ensemble with the piano part, and with some optional flutter tonguing too.



A2 Cocek by Jovana Damjanovic

Influenced by Damjanovic's Serbian roots, this lively and rhythmic dance written in the 2020's is a brilliant unaccompanied piece to work on. With a 9/8 time signature but a feeling of 2/2/2/3 in the patterns, it challenges you to keep a firm pulse and real momentum. Work on your trills and scalic runs, as well as having a go at some extended techniques.



A8 Allegro by Quantz

Quantz was composing at the end of the Baroque period and the Allegro from his Sonata in F major is lively and appealing, with challenges of semiquaver patterns and trills used at ends of phrases but also within the rhythmic bounce of the melody. A great finger workout.



B3 Prelude by U. Kay

Unaccompanied and full of improvisatory expression, Ulysses Kay has given us an atmospheric solo which explores all three octaves of the flute with leaping grace notes and chromatic runs. With lots of use of the bottom end of the flute range to create a rich and warm tone, there are also fortissimo top octave passages to project.



B5 Nocturne by L. Boulanger

A sustained and reflective mood with plenty of room for exploring expression and colour, there is a build up mid way through the piece which uses fast and flowing ascending runs which require good scalic control. Boulanger wrote this in 1911 and her music is Romantic and passionate.



Grade 8

A4 Study in D minor by E. Kohler

Kohler's studies for flute are a rich source to build technique and fast, precise finger work. This study in D Minor is no exception, with three distinct sections to enjoy. The arpeggiated rising figures of the first and last passages will need good support and direction, with the middle section requiring tidy articulation and rhythmic accuracy in the repeated triplet patterns.



B6 Elegy by Jake Heggie

Jake Heggie is an American composer and wrote *Fury of Light* (from which the Elegy comes) in 2009. Expressive, haunting and sustained, this beautiful piece builds in expression using colours and dynamics. Moving through a range of keys, the ensemble with the piano accompaniment helps create a lovely mix of dissonance and resolution in the harmonic language.



B13 Gently blows the wind across the bay by Lynne Williams

An atmospheric piece to develop storytelling through playing, Williams' music is inspired by the island of Raasay off the West coast of Scotland. The music is improvisatory in feel and players can explore tone colour, rubato and enjoy the folk influences through the piece. This piece is for Alto Flute only.



C2 Sevilla by Albeniz, arr. Hedges

Enjoy a trip to sunny Spain and discover dancing rhythms, sudden changes of dynamic colour, improvisatory melodic lines and some challenging third octave figures. A brilliant piece to have in your concert repertoire.



C5 Chardonnay by Reena Esmail

Writing this piece, Esmail says she was inspired by two things - Debussy's *Syrinx* and the designs on a glass of wine! Her music here is characterful, descriptive and full of nuance. There is room to indulge in elegant phrase shaping, tonal colour and dynamic variation to really explore the full potential of this piece. Some flutter tonguing is included as an extended option too.



KEY

- Artistic focus
- New Commissions
- Folk Influences
- Exploring character
- Grace notes
- Syncopation
- Latin Rhythm and Style
- Scales and Arpeggios
- Triplets
- Ornamentation
- Triplet patterns
- Extended Techniques

ABRSM Pathways through the Oboe Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A2 The Happy Hippo by Rachel Broadbent

A lively con moto tempo and plenty of contrast in the articulation and phrasing characterise the cheerful hippo in the title. It features the F major scale, and there is some detail in the dynamics to practise.



A3 Pavan: The Earle of Salisbury by Byrd

The Pavan was a stately dance popular in the sixteenth century. It was often accompanied by an ostinato rhythm on the tabor (drum) in a minim-crotchet-crotchet pattern. It was originally composed for the harpsichord or virginals (the early keyboard instrument heard in this recording).



A6 Maggots on your Toes by Jemima Oosthuizen

This vibrant piece has contrasting forte and piano dynamics. Accented notes depict the foot stamping (to shake off the maggots!) in the middle of the piece, and the detached notes throughout offer the opportunity to teach tongue control. The rests need to be counted carefully!



B7 Elizabethan Lament by Robert Hinchliffe

In music, a Lament expresses grief or sadness. Laments were common in the Renaissance period, particularly in Elizabethan England, which this gentle piece evokes.



B10 Feather Theme by Alan Silvestri

Focus on creating a beautiful tone to communicate the nostalgic sound quality of this film theme.



B13 Takeda no Komoriuta, Trad. Japanese, arr. Oosthuizen

Takeda no Komoriuta is a Japanese folk song with a beautiful lyrical melody. It comes from the Kyoto region and tells the sad story of a young girl sent away to work, looking towards her home village beyond the mountains. Really controlled quiet playing is needed to capture the melancholy mood of this gentle lullaby.



Grade 2

A1 Marching Mongoose by Rachel Broadbent

This short piece has lots of rhythmic character. It's useful for teaching crisp tonguing and dexterity in the left hand thumb when moving to the first octave key, with clean articulation required up to a top G.



A8 The Birdcatcher's Song by Mozart, arr. Lawrence

This aria comes from one of Mozart's most famous operas, *The Magic Flute*. It is sung in the opera by the character Papageno, a birdcatcher who dresses in a costume of feathers and plays the panpipes to attract the birds. The sound of Papageno's pipes is evoked in the fast rising scales in the accompaniment.



B10 Oh my beloved Papa by Puccini, arr. Denley

This is a famous soprano aria from Puccini's comic opera, *Gianni Schicchi*. Its lyrical beauty makes it one of the best-loved pieces in the opera repertoire, and it lends itself well to the range and expressive character of the oboe.



C9 Quirky Quails by Mike Mower

Quirky Quails is a humorous piece with a playful character. The repeated notes and interval leaps need careful tuning. It's useful to practise these sections slowly and listen to each note to encourage precise intonation.



C10 Bregeiro by Nazareth, arr. Oosthuizen

Ernesto Nazareth was a celebrated Brazilian composer. This duet arrangement of his well-known piece, *Bregeiro*, is full of Latin American energy. The staccato articulation needs to be crisp to capture the lively mood, and there is also some syncopation to tackle, which will bring this piece to life.



Grade 3

A4 Tower Hill by G. Farnaby, arr. Craxton

The English Renaissance composer Giles Farnaby (c. 1563-1640) is best known for the works for early keyboard instruments that he contributed to the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. *Tower Hill* was originally written for the harpsichord, and in one manuscript, Farnaby gives it the title "Gigue", which suggests a lively dance-like style.



B5 Una Furtiva Lagrima by Donizetti

This lyrical aria has a lilting waltz-like character. In the opera, the aria is sung by a tenor, Nemorino, who believes a love potion has worked. The phrases need to be expansively shaped to create the romantic mood, and the slurred pairs help to develop finger dexterity. The bassoon plays this melody in Donizetti's original scoring.



B12 Serenade by Schubert

This is an arrangement of the fourth of fourteen songs (usually called *Lieder* - the word for songs in German) from Schubert's song cycle *Schwanengesang* (swansong). This poignant collection was written at the end of the composer's life, and their musical character is particularly heartfelt.



C7 In the Owl's Turret by Lehmann

Liza Lehmann is well-known for taking inspiration from birds in her compositions. In the Owl's Turret is fun to learn, with several shifts in pace and dynamics to create contrast and variety. The hooting of the owl is depicted by separated long notes approached by a chromatic grace note.



Grade 4

A5 Sarabanda and Gavotta by Corelli, arr. Barbarolli

These two movements are a perfect introduction to the concerto genre for intermediate oboe learners. Like many Baroque concertos, this work by Corelli draws on dance styles. The Sarabande is typically a slow movement in triple time, with its emphasis on the second beat of the bar. The Gavotte is a more agile dance with lively semiquavers and a brisk tempo.



A9 Waltz by Grieg, arr. Francis & Grant

This lilting waltz by Grieg is also a grade 4 piano piece! Edvard Grieg was inspired by folk music from his native Norway, and these influences are evident in the chromatic notes and triplet rhythms in the melody line.



B2 Habanera by Bizet, arr. Lawrence

This is probably the most famous aria from Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, sung by the title character when she first enters the stage in Act 1. The characteristic habanera rhythm, originating from Cuba and influenced by older Spanish traditional music, is heard as an ostinato in the accompaniment. It is less well known that Bizet also borrowed the melody line from a cabaret song called *El Arreglito* by the Basque composer Sebastián Yradier (1809-65).



B7 Sea Anemone by Gipps

Ruth Gipps captures the rippling movement of a sea anemone underwater in both the oboe and piano parts. The gentle swells of the tide are represented in the ebb and flow of the hairpin dynamics. If you enjoy learning this, look out for another movement from the *Sea-Shore Suite* on the Grade 5 syllabus!



C9 Drum Kitten by Joan Swift & Marjorie Smale

Drum Kitten is full of rhythmic character and hugely rewarding to learn. It is useful for teaching agility and precision in playing semiquavers with varied articulation, and there are one or two tricky finger patterns to navigate. Accidentals and a tempo change add interest.



Grade 5

A7 Giga by N. Chédeville

If you're looking for something a bit different from the oboe sonatas written by Italian Baroque composers such as Besozzi and Geminiani, try this elegant Giga by the French composer Nicolas Chédeville (1705-82). Chédeville was an oboist himself, so this movement sits nicely under the fingers.



B4 Nemorino's Romance by Donizetti, arr. Kolman

This arrangement of one of Donizetti's most famous operatic arias is more challenging in key and register than the version set for Grade 3. It also includes more decorative ornamentation of the melody line.



B8 Prairie Song by Cecilia McDowall

When describing what this piece means to her, Cecilia McDowall said, "a piece filled with blue sky and open air". She achieves this spacious atmosphere with graceful legato phrases and scalic figuration in 6/8 time.



C4 Gulls by Gipps

The sound of seagulls is characterfully recreated in the oboe in this movement!



C6 Red Hot Polka - Richard Kershaw

The polka originated in nineteenth-century Bohemia, now part of Czechia. It is a steady but rhythmic dance in 2/4 time, characterised by crisp syncopation in the melody over an um-cha accompaniment in the piano. The Red Hot Polka is in Bb major, the Eb indicating the use of forked F fingering. The rests in the middle need careful counting to ensure all the oboe entries are precise.



C7 Latin Dance by Douglas Mason

Douglas Mason's stylish Latin Dance combines broad cantabile phrases in the oboe melody with lively syncopated rhythms and colourful harmonies in the piano accompaniment. There is plenty of contrast and detail to bring out in the music, as well as some cross-rhythms within the duo writing.



Grade 6

A9 Allegretto by Krenek

The Austrian composer Ernst Krenek (1900-1991) composed in a variety of styles, representing many important twentieth-century ideas. He visited Paris in the 1920s and was influenced by hearing the work of Stravinsky and Les Six. This reworking of themes by the Baroque composer Handel comes from Krenek's neoclassical period.



B7 Gabriel's Oboe by Ennio Morricone

In the 1986 film, *The Mission*, this was originally scored for oboe and orchestra. It has a soaring melody that has made it a favourite concert piece among oboists and audiences alike.



C2 Sparkle by Cheri Baster

This is a terrific showpiece is written in a jazzy style not always associated with the oboe. Cheri Baster is a contemporary female composer whose writing for wind instruments is always full of colour and excitement.



Grade 6 C8 Wise Owl by Eddie McGuire

The composer explains that this atmospheric piece was inspired by a night trek led by a National Trust Ranger in Scotland, where his calls enticed the owls in the wood. Eddie McGuire writes, "The memory of this inspired Wise Owl, with music suggesting the quiet footsteps, the calling, the swooping of the owl and the return of the magical near-silence of the forest at night".



Grade 7

A6 Dawn Chorus by John Frith

Are you looking for a contemporary alternative to a concerto or sonata movement in list A at Grade 7? If so, John Frith's playful evocation of the birdsong that marks daybreak is a great option. The distinctive calls of different birds are woven into this characterful summer sketch. The varied articulation needs dexterity, and the trills need neat execution to bring the world of the dawn chorus to life.



A8 Affettuoso and Allemanda by Loeillet

Although not explicitly given a title from the Baroque dance suite, the lilting 12/8 *Affettuoso* of Loeillet's sonata is in the style of a Sicilienne, with characteristic dotted rhythms. The semiquaver passagework and ornamentation of the lively *Allemanda* require precise finger dexterity and neatly articulated tonguing.



C3 Italian Dance by Dring

The spirited rhythms of the southern Italian tarantella inspired this lively showpiece. Full of bounce and elegance, it showcases the oboe's agility and flair.



C10 Midnight Blue by Julia Usher

This expressive piece features some lovely interplay between the oboe and piano, characterised by rich harmonies rural setting at dusk, the composer writing that she wanted, "to capture the atmosphere of hiding among the bluebells, listening to the nightingales singing their strange arias as evening falls". The nightingale call is depicted by repeated tenuto high pitches several times during the piece.



Grade 8

A11 1st Movt by Joby Talbot

This is one of 200 new works commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2022 to celebrate its bicentenary. *Porphyry* is a type of hard rock that contains shimmering crystal deposits, and these contrasting qualities are evoked by the fast-paced 12/8 metre with constant tempo changes and robust momentum, but also its delicate ornamentation. Joby Talbot uses the full range of the instrument and dynamic colour.



B7 Oblivion by Piazzolla

Be whisked away to the streets of Argentina by this hauntingly beautiful piece. Originally written for bandoneon, piano, and bass, *Oblivion* has lent itself to multiple adaptations for different instruments and ensembles, such as this version for oboe with a tango septet.



C3 A Rag for Niamh by Annabel Connellan

A Rag for Niamh has a warm and lyrical opening, lots of rubato, and the opportunity to capture a beautiful tone. It relaxes in a lilting ragtime-inspired waltz with gentle syncopation and characteristic melodic inflection. Faster and more virtuosic towards the end, there is engaging dialogue with the piano accompaniment throughout.



C5 Showpiece by Dring

If you're looking for a showstopper to learn from list C, look no further than the aptly named *Showpiece* by Madeleine Dring (1923-77). Dring was a pianist and composer, but she married an oboist, Roger Lord, who was principal oboe of the London Symphony Orchestra for over 30 years, and wrote several oboe pieces for him, including this *Showpiece* from a longer Suite. Look out for Dring's spirited Italian Dance on the Grade 7 list.



C6 The Piper of Dreams by Gipps

This piece is an evocative piece, capturing a pastoral mood with flowing melody lines. It is based on a painting of the same name by Estella Canziani.



KEY

- Music about Animals
- Dance Music
- Music about Birds
- Renaissance Music
- Film and TV Music
- Opera Arias
- Lyrical and Atmospheric Music
- Showpieces
- Latin American Music

ABRSM Pathways through the Clarinet Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A6 Mazurka by Carreño
A mazurka is a dance in three originating from Poland. Unlike a waltz, it is often the second beat of the bar that is accented and not the first.



B4 Moonlight by Roma Cafolla
Roma is from Northern Ireland. This is an expressive piece with a slurred melody that needs careful counting above an arpeggiated accompaniment. It depicts a peaceful mood.



B6 Moon River by H. Mancini
This piece was originally written as a song in the film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, sung by Audrey Hepburn. It needs to be played very smoothly to show the cantabile style, with some rise and fall to mimic the movement of the water.



B9 Hatikvah, Trad., arr. Davies & Reade
This charming melody has been a popular choice as a Grade 1 piece over the years. It is an excellent link to the Klezmer style of clarinet playing, which features in higher grades. There are some rests to count carefully as the piece progresses.



Grade 2

A2 Pigwig Jig by Mike Mower
An example of Choro music, a tango-like style with strong connections to ballroom dancing. This arrangement includes moments where the clarinet plays an accompanying role, so allow the piano's melody to come through.



A7 Night Sky by Roma Cafolla
Although this piece is all below the break, it demands careful finger placement to jump down to the low Fs. Use a suitably dark tone to depict the night sky, and crisp staccato notes to portray some twinkling stars.



B6 Unter einer Wolke by Rudolf Mauz
This is at a relatively slow tempo for a Klezmer-style piece, and the rising and falling phrases could be seen to portray the title, which means Under a Cloud.



B7 Sarah-Jane by Roger Purcell & Nicholas Cox
In this piece by composer, Roger Purcell and virtuoso clarinet player, Nicholas Cox, it is not clear if Sarah-Jane is real or imagined. The melody sits well on the clarinet, making it a good early example to teach how to cross the break smoothly.



Grade 3

B8 Morning Song by Toivo Kuula, arr. North
Toivo Kuula was a Finnish composer who lived from 1883-1918. It is a charming folk melody in ternary form, with the middle section modulating to the minor key. A good exercise in thinking in two different keys during one piece.



B10 The Music of the Night by Lloyd Webber, arr. Lawrence
A famous melody from *Phantom of the Opera*. The opening is relatively easy to play, but there is some smooth crossing between registers needed later on, and the melody reaches some high notes in the middle section.



C1 Fly me to the moon by Bart Howard, arr. Iles
This tune was originally written in 3 time, but Quincy Jones changed it to 4 time for the Frank Sinatra recording. Look out for the fun and jazzy slow trill at the end. It uses staccato and a lightly articulated sound to capture the buoyant nature of this style of music.



C5 Tightrope Walker by Alan Bullard
This short piece by one of the ABRSM examiners demands some clean articulation up to Bb in the upper register. There is some syncopation to tackle early on as well.



C12 Hedwig's Theme by John Williams arr. Galliford, Neuburg & Edmonson
Everyone will know this famous theme from the Harry Potter films. It is fun to learn, but the chromaticism means that it requires some careful swapping between right and left little finger keys.



Grade 4

A8 Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Pike by Mike Nightingale
The main theme for this humorous piece has been taken from Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf, a song from the 1933 Disney cartoon of *The Three Little Pigs*. The composer has reimagined it in a lively march style.



A9 Soldier Soldier by Jim Parker
Teachers and parents may remember the TV series more than young learners. Jim Parker composed many successful TV themes, and this one is great fun, as it incorporates the British folk song, *Soldier, Soldier, won't you marry me?*



B10 Cairo Cradle Song by Ros Stephen
This piece combines a gentle lullaby style with a melody based on Egyptian scale patterns.



B11 Princess Leia's Theme by John Williams, arr. Galliford, Neuburg & Edmonson
This theme could not be more different from Cantina Band also from Star Wars, which features in the Grade 4 book. It needs lyrical playing to depict one of the main characters from the films.



C12 Sir Duke by Stevie Wonder, arr. Ramskill
This was a hit for Stevie Wonder in 1976, written as a homage to Duke Ellington, one of the great jazz composers and band leaders from the 1920s. The piece is perfect for lovers of swing style.



Grade 5

A5 Menuetto and Trio by Crusell arr. King
Crusell was a Finnish clarinetist who lived from 1775-1838. This piece is in a style used by many Classical composers, based on a dance style in triple time. The clarinet accompanies the melody in the Trio section with some rising and falling arpeggio figures.



B7 Theme from Ladies in Lavender by Nigel Hess
This famous film theme works well on the clarinet. There are some fast runs to tackle at the end of the middle section, and the main theme needs good breath control.



C1 Corta-jaca: Gaucho, arr. Hayter
An example of Choro music, a tango-like style with strong connections to ballroom dancing. This arrangement includes moments where the clarinet plays an accompanying role, so allow the piano's melody to come through.



C7 In a Sentimental Mood by Duke Ellington, arr. Wastall
Duke's pieces often swing along joyfully, but here is one of his more reflective numbers. The melody needs some sensitive contouring, and there is scope to add some flexibility to the pulse.



C10 Small Talk by Roger Purcell & Nicholas Cox
This piece is a homage to the famous composer, Gershwin. It is in a lively swing style, and it will appeal to any clarinet player who loves jazz music.



Grade 6

A5 Schon Rosmarin by Kreisler, arr. Langenus
Kreisler was a famous violinist and composer, who wrote many educational and virtuosic pieces. This arrangement works well for the clarinet, and it is in a lively waltz style. The opening requires some fluent playing of arpeggio figures with mixed articulation.



B4 Misty by Garner
The song was famously recorded by Ella Fitzgerald. This arrangement is a great choice for clarinet players who love slow jazz music.



C6 Swinging Shepherd Blues by Koffman
This is lively piece in swing style. Both registers of the clarinet are used, and look out for the humorous quotation of *Baa Baa Black Sheep*.



C8 March of the Malevolent Elephants by Mark Tanner
The elephants are depicted by some strong accents at the beginning, but the opening tempo needs careful thought, as there are semiquavers and quintuplets later on. It is a good piece for practising quick changes of articulation.



C11 Khosid and Khosid Wedding Dance, Trad., arr. Sayers
This is the most demanding Klezmer arrangement in the new syllabus. It is lively music written for a happy occasion, but it demands some fast fingers. Higher grade clarinet players may enjoy adding some vibrato and slides to make it sound truly idiomatic.



Grade 7

A4 Gigue by J.S. Bach
Bach's solo works have often been arranged for clarinet players, and they are a great way to get to know this great composer's style. As they were often written for string players, breathing will need careful consideration.



A8 The Quick Brown Fox by Graham Lyons
Graham Lyons played many wind instruments, and so all his compositions are idiomatic. This piece needs playing briskly as its title suggests. Although jazzy in style, the slurred quavers should be played evenly.



B9 Calm is the fragrant air by Edwin Roxburgh
This is a solo piece by one of our best-known living British composers. He is also an oboist and, although this piece was written for the clarinet, try to emulate how the smooth phrases would sound on an oboe. There is scope to play it very freely to paint a vivid picture.



B12 Oiseau doux de la nuit by V. Weigl
Vally Weigl was a composer of Czech Jewish origin who lived from 1894-1982. This is an expressive solo piece, which needs rubato, and contains trills and runs to depict the sweet bird of the title.



C11 Khosid and Khosid Wedding Dance, Trad., arr. Sayers
This is the most demanding Klezmer arrangement in the new syllabus. It is lively music written for a happy occasion, but it demands some fast fingers. Higher grade clarinet players may enjoy adding some vibrato and slides to make it sound truly idiomatic.



Grade 8

A5 Air slave by C. de Grandval
Clémence De Grandval was a French female composer of the 19th Century. In this piece she was influenced by the music of the Slavic countries, which include Russia, Ukraine and Poland.



B8 Lullaby by Castelnuovo-Tedesco
This is the slow movement from Italian composer, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's wonderful Sonata for Clarinet Op. 128. It is romantic in style, and it needs some controlled rubato. Dynamics should be varied without losing the gentle mood required for a lullaby.



B11 Cafe, 1930 by Piazzolla, arr. Varelas
Piazzolla was a composer from Argentina, and his expressive tango music has become famous in recent years, leading to some very successful arrangements for wind instruments. This example demands both musicianship and technical control of the faster runs.



C2 Scatty Cat by Cheri Baster
This is an ideal choice for anyone who likes jazz and rock styles, but they will need to enjoy moving around the instrument really quickly as well!



C5 I Got Rhythm by Paul Harvey
Paul Harvey was a fine composer for wind instruments. He wrote the *Three Etudes on Themes of Gershwin* for Solo Clarinet for three of his clarinet-playing friends. This piece alternates from free and rhythmic passages, using motifs from Gershwin's famous song in many imaginative ways.



KEY

- Pieces about animals
- Exploring Style and Influence
- Night music
- Film and TV music
- Music about people
- Scenic Pieces
- A new commission

ABRSM Pathways through the Bassoon Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A6 Straight to the Point by Mike Mower

This solo piece in G major is jazzy and impactful. It features effective but accessible crotchet and quaver rhythms and is written in 4/4 time. The staccato articulation and bold dynamic markings develop lower register tonal confidence whilst a few chromatic notes (F naturals and C sharps) add to the quirky melodic flavour.



B9 Boat on Tai Lake, Trad. Chinese, arr. A. & J. Oosthuizen

Based on a 5 note Chinese folk tune, this duet in 4/4 time is sympathetically written for the bassoon with good choices of slurs and excellent opportunities for breathing.



B12 Water Lillies by Sarah Watts

Based on 6 notes, the modal melody in crotchet rhythms conjures up a peaceful picture of water lilies and is a useful teaching focus for practising sustaining short legato phrases at a quiet dynamic with good opportunities for breathing. The final long note is a worthwhile challenge.



C1 Damkol damkol by Siavash Beizai

This atmospheric, accompanied piece is based on a Persian scale and features catchy rhythms and varied articulation. The quirky mordants are sympathetically placed on longer note values and make a great introduction to playing ornaments.



C4 Another Apple by Karen Gourlay

Karen Gourlay studied jazz and believes that high quality musical experiences are essential for supporting musical development. This duet in F major is effectively crafted to create syncopated rhythms with simple means - the rhythmic repetition within contrasting dynamics builds confidence, and the rousing ending is great fun to play.



Grade 2

A4 Haul the Wagon by Lysenko

Ukrainian composer and ethnomusicologist Mykola Lyenko is credited with founding a national Ukrainian music tradition amongst contemporaries such as Grieg and Dvorak. This energetic tune in A minor encourages characterful playing with vivid musical directions and helpful breath markings.



B5 Llama's Lullaby by Gipps

This original piece for bassoon and piano in triple time encourages expressive playing with the piano's lilting triplet rhythms lulling the bassoon's legato melody into the world of dreams - players will love the ending which evokes the Llama yawning.



C4 The Demon Next Door by Amanda Oosthuizen & Jemima Oosthuizen

This attractively presented solo piece begins softly with the direction "a spooky knock at the door". The staccato notes in catchy syncopated rhythms are fun to play and great for developing tonguing confidence, with the bold dynamic contrasts and impactful ending encouraging expression.



C6 The Elephant by Saint-Saens

This well-known piece, arranged in C major by the bassoonist and teacher, Graham Sheen, plods along in triple time with a dance-like quality and a touch of humour. The slurred couplets, across intervals of 4ths and 5ths need clean finger agility, and the ascending quaver scale up to a middle C is made accessible with its tongued articulation. The "pomposo" direction, varied dynamics and well-placed accents encourage expression.



Grade 3

A5 Street Entertainers by Judyth Knight

The catchiness of this sympathetically written melody in 6/8 time ensures players will quickly build confidence of compound time signatures. It features a good variety of slurs and detached articulation and an effective, playful ending.



B7 If You Should Go by W. G. Still

The mood is lyrical but understated, and the wistful poem that the piece is based on is included below the score. With huge opportunities for individual expression, this gentle rhapsody needs good breath control at quieter dynamic levels to keep the intonation focused and the tone sustained.



B9 The Road to Lallengollen by Sarah Watts

Sarah Watts exploits the more lyrical qualities of the bassoon in this evocative piece. The high G and F sharp at the end need good breath control to keep in tune.



C3 Cat by Lizzie Davis

Lizzie Davies says "There are around 8 million cats in the UK and their hunting and stalking capabilities have been captured by many composers". This characterful solo piece features staccato phrases that mimic the outstretched claws of the "stalking" cat, alternating with more slinky, legato movement. Great for developing agility and confidence in playing chromatic scales!



C6 Secret Agent by Christopher Gunning

This highly accessible piece has an intriguing title that gives more than a hint of the expressive opportunities within it; the pauses and slowing effects are a great introduction to rubato as well as aiding breathing. Sympathetic slurs and tongued articulation give contrast, and the quaver movement supports a wide range of dynamic contrast, all adding to the mystery and drama of the story.



Grade 4

A2 Menuet by Bonis

Elegant and quirky, this concert piece by the late-Romantic French composer Mel Bonis is useful for consolidating work on trills and developing tonal control through the range.



B2 Tropical by P.-M. Dubois

The French composer Dubois was a pupil of Milhaud and favoured interesting harmonies and lighter textures. This evocative piece conjures up a hazy, impressionistic landscape and features long legato phrases and fluid semiquaver runs that demand finger agility and good breath control.



B6 L'apres-midi d'un dinosaur AND Little Waltz by Jacob

Players will enjoy emulating the cumbersome dinosaur in L'Après Midi d'un dinosaur, with its 3/2 metre and plodding, detached longer note values that require tonguing stamina. Lighter articulation and steady intonation across a range of dynamics are needed in A Little Waltz to emphasise the dance-like triple metre.



C1 Rusticana by Arrieu

This cheerful and agile piece featuring playful staccato quaver motion, is full of humorous, rustic charm. The short stretches of tenor clef near to the end make a great introduction into tenor clef reading.



C4 Pure Gold by Keith Ramon Cole

"A driving rock tempo" is the direction for this punchy showstopper. Written in C major in 4/4, with catchy, syncopated rhythms and flattened 3rds and 7ths, the melodies are bold, assertive and infectiously memorable, aiding learning.



Grade 5

B5 Lento e teneramente by Adolphus Hailstork

Adolphus Hailstork's music blends elements of his African American, native American and European heritage. This rhapsodic compound metre movement features an improvisatory middle section that demands breath control at quieter dynamics, and outer sections which require thumb agility to maintain evenness in the legato arpeggio patterns.



B4 Poetic - somewhat sad by Paul Carr

Paul Carr has scored several films and often writes in a lighter style. Poetic is the second, slow movement of his Sonatina for bassoon, and the melodic writing with its decorative elements and descending leaps demands finger agility and tonal control. The faded ending on a mid-range Eb works very well for the instrument.



B9 Song for the Lonely by W. G. Still

Still was a prolific African American composer whose music offers an individual sound world of understated simplicity and lyricism. The challenges are interpretative rather than technical, the fluid legato melodies demanding flexibility and subtle colouring.



C2 Blue Bassoon by Alan Bullard

Blue Bassoon wows the listener with a breadth of moods; the laid back and bluesy outer sections in 4/4 contrast with the lively A major middle section that colours the melodic language with flattened 3rds and 7ths. The decorative semiquaver runs in the final section demand agile finger coordination and a strong rhythmic ensemble with the accompaniment.



C7 Peggy's Minute Rag by Elena Kats-Chernin

This lively and approachable piece by the award-winning Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin, is an unstoppable tour de force of catchy ragtime rhythms, demanding finger dexterity and agile tonguing. Score directions also encourage an effective ensemble with the piano.



Grade 6

A8 Minuet by Schnittke, arr. Denley

This elegant G minor dance by Schnittke, one of the most stylistically diverse composers of the 20th Century, places a more modern twist on the classical form of the Minuet. The unusual rhythmic groupings of the final passages are a useful teaching point, and the high 'pp' B of the ending demands good breath support to stay in tune.



B2 No. 1 (from Three Pieces Blue) by Paul Carr

These aptly named pieces have a "calming and chilled-out nature". No. 1 features fluid, decorative rhythmic patterns in long legato phrases that call for breath control and tonal consistency through the range, with the changes of metre requiring a good stability of pulse.



B11 Miriam, Miriam by Errollyn Wallen

Errollyn Wallen became the first black woman to serve as master of the King's music in 2024, and her music draws on influences that include the Avant-garde and popular song. This solo piece has a strong song-like, improvisatory quality; the wider interval slurs and sustained notes at the height of the range need strong support and breath control.



C1 Capri by Roma Cafolla

Roma Cafolla's music is melodious and accessible, expressing both her Celtic and Italian ancestry. The changes of tempo within Capri require a good ensemble with the piano, and the fluid, legato phrases encourage finger agility and good breath control. The stringendo ending is playful and impactful.



C10 3rd movt from Concertino by A. Ridout

Full of the wow factor, this scherzo-like movement is features quirky, angular rhythms and sudden outbursts of lyricism that diffuse the lively staccato passages. The cadenza exploits a wide range of the instrument and requires finger dexterity and tonal control.



Grade 7

A4 Tarantella by Pivonka

Rhythmic energy and boundless momentum are the focus in this fiery piece from Pivonka's Rhythmical Etudes. It gives the chance to show off finger agility, tonguing control, and tonal consistency through the range and is great fun to play as well as being very well written for the instrument.



A6 Rondo Espagnol by James Rae

Bursting with personality this piece is a great choice for a technically based piece with showstopping qualities and a uniquely Spanish melodic flavour. The driving staccato rhythms across the full range of the instrument within rapid metre changes and dramatic shifts of dynamic demand tonguing stamina and tonal control, whilst the more lyrical outbursts provide opportunities for individual expression.



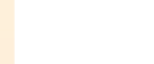
B1 Song by Leila Agolli

Agolli was born in Albania in 1950 and served for several years as director to the national ensemble of folk song and dance. Song, from Song and Dance exploits the upper range of the instrument and is written in tenor clef. It's unusual melodic contours and repetitive rhythmic qualities are reminiscent of Albanian folk music, and there are good breathing opportunities to assist in high register tonal support.



B11 Eo Rossa by John Williams

Each piece from this highly individual set by the legendary film composer John Williams represents a different tree from ancient Celtic mythology. No. 3, the tree of Ross (yew), has spacious phrases and intricate rhythms that demand rhythmic precision and flexibility of pacing, as well as finger dexterity and strong breath control.



B9 Reverie by Vinter

This evocative piece by Vinter, well known for his music for brass bands, provides a useful consolidation of less common rhythmic groupings, including sextuplet semiquavers and septuplet quavers. Agility of thumb and fingers is needed to gain fluidity in the faster moving figurations and the dramatic shifts of register and dynamic demand strong tonal control and breath support.



Grade 8

A11 Tortan by John Williams

Five Sacred Trees was inspired by Celtic mythology as well as the composer's own love of the forest. In Tortan, the tree of witchcraft, the alert articulations create a jig-like, infectious mischief and energy relying upon a precise synchronisation between the tongue and fingers, together with strong breath support to drive momentum.



B1 Girl on a Beach under a Sunshade by Paul Carr

This accessible piece "after a pencil sketch" takes us to a hazy beach scene, with a light, nostalgic jazz quality to the melodic writing. Tone is the focus, with the legato lines demanding focused intonation and a warm, consistent sound through the range.



B4 Summertime by Gershwin, arr. Alley

"Lazy-summer-afternoon-ly" is the direction for this iconic melody, requiring stamina and flexibility. Strong breath support is needed to maintain the long legato lines high in the range with focused pitch and a warm, controlled and consistent sound.



B5 Variation Expressive AND Variation Ostinato by Ida Gotkovsky

This pair of variations by the French protégée of Olivier Messiaen, challenges advanced players with frequent changes of metre and driving staccato arpeggiated passagework. The angular, chromatic melodies of Expressive require tonal consistency across wider legato leaps, and Variation - Ostinato is a rhythmic tour-de-force, calling for finger dexterity and tonal control within rapid changes of dynamic.



B9 Elegy for Innocence by Jeff Scott

Jeff Scott is an American composer and horn player who performs at Broadway. Written in a tonal style, the opening phrases of this expressive elegy have a spacious, hymn-like quality, and the faster episodes an improvisatory feel. The bassoon is taken to the extremes of the high range, with dramatic shifts in dynamics demanding good breath support, tonal control and finger dexterity.



KEY

- A more modern take on a classical idea
- A modern twist
- Female composer
- Drawing on folk influences
- Fast and funky!
- Agile and playful
- Animal magic
- Laid back Jazz vibe
- Leisurely and lyrical playing
- Music that paints a picture
- Showstopping wow factor
- Storytelling through music
- Technically challenging

ABRSM Pathways through the Saxophone Syllabus

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Grade 1

A1 Straight to the Point by Mike Mower

This little march will need some careful work on the articulation of the staccato. There are other pieces to explore on the syllabus where this technique will come in useful!



B1 I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls by M. W. Balfe, arr. Wilson

If you enjoy this beautiful 19th century opera aria by Balfe you can progress with tunes from operetta and modern musicals throughout the first grades in this syllabus. This song is from *The Bohemian Girl*, first performed in 1843. The arrangement found in the Grade 1 syllabus captures the lyrical and ethereal mood of the 1988 recording by Irish singer and musician Enya which was used for the film *The Age of Innocence*. Check out her version for real inspiration and try and emulate the soft tone and legato lines.



B11 Guanabara Bay by Ros Stephen

Once the smooth latin style of this fun Bossa-Nova has been captured there are many latin dances to explore through the syllabus to keep your feet tapping.



C3 Click Here by Mark Nightingale

An easy-swing number that will need some space and poise between the staccato notes. These rhythms might need clapping to ensure the pulse doesn't rush.



C6 Can Can by Offenbach arr. Wedgwood

A fun music-hall dance from Offenbach's operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld*, inspired by the lively 'galop' dance. Try to capture its high-energy character by imagining the high kicks of the chorus line of dancers, with bright articulation.



C10 Truly Scrumptious by R. & R. Sherman, arr. Lawrence

This innocent ballad by the Sherman brothers from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* is a good contrast to the aria in Grade 1 list B, with some dotted rhythmic patterns. A pure sound will convey the style of this song really well.



Grade 2

B2 A Million Dreams by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul, arr. Iles

A very popular song from the hit musical film *The Greatest Showman* by Pasek and Paul. It will need some careful thought about how the tied rhythms work in this new arrangement to get this to sit with the accompaniment and keep the pulse even.



B4 Pure Imagination by Bricusse & Newley

This enchanting song from Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory uses some very expressive large interval jumps, so keep the fingering really clear.



B10 A Whole New World by Alan Menken, arr. Lawrence

A Disney duet between Aladdin and Jasmine, this is another piece that will need a sustained legato line to communicate the character of the music.



C3 Moondance by Van Morrison

A classic from the 1970s, with a soft jazz swing feel and a walking bass-line. In this new arrangement you can use a clear articulation to bring out the emphasised notes in each phrase.



C10 Take the 'A' Train by Strayhorn, arr. Lawrence

Another swing classic, this one was the signature tune of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. You can find some additional learning materials for this piece on Classroom 200. This is a great standard to use as a foundation to explore some improvisation and call and response.



Grade 3

B3 Hushabye Mountain by R. & R. Sherman

Taken from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, this new arrangement by Alan Bullard is a real treat for musicals fans and is a great way to introduce chromatic fingerings for A sharp and for the F sharp that follows the E sharp. Additional learning activities for this piece are available on Classroom 200.



B4 Tonight by L. Bernstein arr. Glover & Stratford (Eb)

Any younger players who have not encountered Bernstein's music from the classic musical *West Side Story* are in for a treat with this one. Some control will be needed over the growing dynamic range to build up to a suitable climax. Explore other movements and songs from this musical, it includes Latin rhythms in "Mambo" and the Huapango in the song "America".



B8 The Music of the Night by Andrew Lloyd Webber, arr. Lawrence

This tune from the musical *The Phantom of the Opera* is very suited to powerful sound of the saxophone. Keep the air flow strong to negotiate the large interval leaps. More resources are available for this piece on Classroom 200.



C1 Playground Swings by Luiza Lale & Adam Wilson

Triplets and swing quavers capture the lilting rhythmic character of this exciting new piece. A blues character needs to be found here so bring out the clashing blue note A flat.



C3 Fly Me to the Moon by Bart Howard, arr. Iles

This tune was originally written in 3 time, but Quincy Jones changed it to 4 time for the Frank Sinatra recording. This new arrangement ends with a fun and jazzy slow trill to look out for. It uses staccato and a lightly articulated sound to capture the buoyant nature of this style of music.



Grade 4

A2 Drinking Song by Verdi, arr. Bullard

"Let's drink from the joyful cups". This is one of the best-known opera melodies of all time from Verdi's 1853 *La Traviata*. Work for some very neat fingering over the ornamented semiquaver patterns. Some crisp staccato tonguing will also be needed.



B3 Hollywood Stars by Andrew Wilson

This new tune looks back to the golden age of Hollywood music and dance. Its high register will need plenty of support and air, and the chromatic moments will need some careful fingering, using the correct side-keys.



B4 End of a Perfect Day by Richard Kershaw (Eb)

A slow Bossa-Nova that captures the mood of a latin sunset. You will need to take care of the slowly fading dynamics and lengthening notes towards the end!



B7 On My Own by Claude-Michel Schonberg, arr. Lawrence

A solo from the 1980 musical *Les Misérables* which has become one of its most famous songs. Treat this like you were singing a musical theatre song and express the meaning of the words as much as you can in your playing.



C1 Priceless by Helen Madden

Work on a relaxed swing feel with this saxophone study. Don't let the low C take you by surprise, open up the sound as you descend down to it.



C2 Seguidilla by Bizet, arr. Blackwell

In this music form the 1875 Opera *Carmen* by Bizet the fast staccato sounds capture the Spanish character like clicking castanets. Like may pieces with staccato a clear contrast with the legato moments is also needed here. This piece and other music from *Carmen* also capture the Spanish origins of many Latin Dances.



Grade 5

A3 Summer Samba by Andrew Wilson

This tune captures the shifting grooves of a Brazilian Samba. The expressive rising arpeggio patterns will need some careful work, especially those that end on a high E!



A7 Study in A by Ferling (Eb and Bb)

Ferling was an oboist and composer and his famous studies have become part of the staple diet for players wishing to improve aspects of their technique. They are attractive to play and are also suitable as short concert pieces or audition repertoire. Study in A has a grand majestic feel with a bold confident approach required. Much of the range is covered and careful subdivision will help navigate the rhythmically complex lines. Light staccato articulation features throughout so make sure there is plenty of air support.



B1 Sail Away by Cheri Baster

This piece, written in a rock style, begins with a slow and flexible introduction before settling into the main groove. The attractive melodies lie in a pleasing register allowing the saxophone to soar over the steady rhythmic piano accompaniment. There is plenty of detail to observe to help with the phrasing and opportunities to explore the dynamics to give the piece direction. Some fifty finger work is required so worth practising the relevant scales at the tempo of the semiquaver runs in the piece.



C1 Corta-jaca by Gonzaga, arr. Hayter

An example of Choro music, a tango-like style with strong connections to ballroom dancing. This arrangement includes moments where the saxophone plays an accompanying role, so allow the piano's melody to come through.



Grade 6

A12 Adagio and Allegro by Vaughan Williams, arr. Stanton (Eb)

These two contrasting studies work beautifully as a pair. Vaughan Williams was a collector of English folk song which were usually passed on by aural tradition. Looking at the lyrics is a good way to help understand the character. The Adagio ('Lovely on the water') is melancholic and the saxophone often plays unaccompanied with piano only offering support on occasion. Allegro Vivace ('As I walked over London Bridge') is a complete contrast requiring crisp articulation and a sense of drive in the music. Both lie nicely under the fingers but the intonation needs careful attention.



B1 Autumn Song by Katy Abbott (Bb)

An excellent choice for budding tenor saxophonists is this expressive slow ballad that explores the full range of saxophone with well directed phrases and characterful use of dynamics. The beautiful melodies should sound effortless and yet are rhythmically complicated. Sub dividing or taking out ties as practice methods would be a good idea. This would be a great piece to develop and explore vibrato.



C8/11 Folk Dance by Karen Street (Bb and Eb)

One of the challenges in this unaccompanied folk dance is the mixed metre switching from 5/8 to 3/4 and occasionally 2/4, whilst keeping a steady pulse. There are also some double density fingerings to tackle which add to the folk sound world created here. The tempo is lively and there is plenty of important detail to note in the dynamic and articulation to inform the mood. Finding space to breathe needs some thought, as does the amount of air taken in each time.



C7 Balada nocturna by Robert Pintos (Eb)

This offers some authentic modern Argentine music, perhaps as an alternative for those who love Piazzolla. The second half needs a clear contrast into a cantabile and very expressive mood.



Grade 7

A6 Farandoulo di chatouno by P. Maurice (Eb)

One of the most well loved works in the saxophone repertoire, *Tableaux de Provence* is a set of descriptive movements about life in the south of France. Each movement has a title giving a helpful clue when exploring the character and mood. This charming and mischievous movement dances along at a pace and needs to sound effortless despite the tricky key and double sharps. Finger fluency and rhythmic security are key combined with clear and light articulation.



B10 Villa-Lobos Lent (2nd movt from Fantasia for Saxophone) (Bb)

This middle movement of the concerto is dramatic and atmospheric with much potential to paint a musical picture or tell a story. The long meandering melodies, which sound somewhat improvisatory, float over a more rhythmic accompaniment and consistency of tone across the range is crucial. As the movement progresses, there are some runs to navigate which need to sound powerful, effortless and confident. There is plenty of opportunity to explore tone colour using dynamics and vibrato as a starting point.



B11 Slowly by P. Woods (Eb)

Although the majority of the score is written out, jazz saxophonist Phil Woods invites the player to take part in the creation and development of this work and to have fun with it. It is an fusion of classical and jazz elements with scope for many interpretations. The attractive melody which could be approached as a jazz ballad builds to a virtuosic cadenza and ends with three chords offering the chance for a short improvisation. This piece gives possibilities to add your own ideas and character for a truly personalised performance.



C11 Not Strictly Tango by Karen Street

A solo tango for those who want to come dancing! You can bring out the off-beat accented notes in this one to fully communicate the character. Some clear dynamic contrasts and passionate expression will keep the listener engaged.



Grade 8

A10 Scherzo by Phyllis Tate

If a crisp staccato has been established early it will come in use for this very playful piece at Grade 8. Like playing some spirited Mozart, the light staccato help emphasise the notes that are slurred and therefore have a little more prominence.



B9 Ballade by Reed (Eb)

This beautiful piece, written in an attractive register for the saxophone, requires a well controlled tone, excellent breath support and long expressive phrasing. Consistency of tone quality across the range is important particularly when playing the high palm key notes. Use of vibrato will help the melody truly sing through the lyrical lines. There are changes of mood and colour, so consider using words, colours, and imagery to help tell the story.



C2 Obsession and Bahama Rhumba by John Carmichael

One a Habanera from Havana and the other a lazy Rumba that suggests the easy-going character of life in the Caribbean. John Carmichael's music frequently shows Spanish and French influences.



C3 Mambo, Baião and Merengue by Francaix

A selection from these five miniature dances where all the latin style that has been developed can come to fruition. Like many Latin dances you'll need to keep these strictly in time to keep with the nimble accompaniment.



C5 2nd movt (from October Dances) by Mick Foster (Eb)

This exciting piece is based on a dancing rhythmic idea, attractive melodic lines and virtuosic passagework. The dramatic opening is in rhythmic unison with the piano so requires careful counting and excellent communication between players. The impressive runs are fast and need to sound effortless so slow practice is required to build up muscle memory. Throughout there is much detail to explore to inform the character and mood of this powerful work.



KEY

- From Opera to Musicals
- Swing Rhythms
- Latin Dances
- Staccato Articulation
- Lyrical
- Fusion of styles
- Folk Influence
- Technically challenging
- Paints a Picture

*All pieces for Bb and Eb unless specified