

ORNAMENTATION

Ornaments, decorations, embellishments, 'twiddly bits' – whatever you call them, can cause problems in an otherwise promising performance, especially in low grades. Fashions change in accepted experts disagree on whether sometimes even the historical performers disagree on whether to start on the upper note, how many notes in a trill, etc., but the Associated Board takes a practical line on these matters.

In every grade, the highest priority should be rhythmic continuity. Ornaments are less important than a reliable pulse in the music and this is the area which can cause lower marks when the attempted decorations upset the beat. Much better to either simplify or omit if the difficulty doesn't respond to practice. The very highest marks in an A list piece are likely to be awarded to a suitably ornamented, stylish and musically fluent performance but an undecorated, musically-shaped and reliable version could still be in the high Merit category. As the grades go up, aspects of style play an increasing part in the overall impression but in the low grades, examiners frequently hear and accept unornamented pieces. Think of decorations as luxury extras at this stage and ensure that whatever is played stays firmly inside the basic beat.

The Associated Board exam publications provide helpful suggestions about the possible realisation of ornaments, along with metronome marks and other background information. Some of this can be found in those small print paragraphs at the bottom of the page. It's easy to overlook these hints and you may find that the printed mordents, turns or trills are a bit too stable rhythm, simplified no matter. Just apply the same stable rhythm, simplified ornaments tactics, knowing that many others will be doing the same. Editorial suggestions will be in brackets, by the way, which gives you the freedom to adapt them for your own convenience.

A final word on this emotive subject and how many of us have thought or said aloud 'Oh, if only the ornaments weren't there?' Keep in mind that the icing on the cake certainly adds to the initial appeal but it's still the substance that matters most.

Clara Taylor

Clara Taylor
Chief Examiner

Poem

The Theory of Millicent's Music

When theory came round again,
Young Millicent threw down her pen!
This theory is bunk –
What I'm writing is junk –
I shall never do it again!

Her teacher said, 'Mop up those tears!
You've been making music for years –
It's time that you know
How the things that you do
Are written – so banish those fears!'

She worked for the first time – 'tis true,
And found there were things that she
knew –
And her playing improved,
Those who listened were moved;
She found scales she also could dot

The moral of this tale is quite clear:
In theory there's nothing to fear,
And if you persist
What you learn will assist
Music's route from your eye to my ear!

Kristin Steele

Kristin Steele is composer/arranger in residence at Priory School, Lewes, lecturer in harmony at East Sussex Academy of Music, and a teacher of piano, recorder and music theory. We are grateful to Kristin for permission to publish her delightful poem.



MESSAGE FROM THE OXFORD FAJAR MANAGING DIRECTOR

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To this end, I am proud to say that Oxford Fajar has been operating in Malaysia for the last 50 years, since the country's independence. The company was established in Malaysia in 1957, by the late Mr Raymond E. Brammah. This year, Oxford Fajar (and Malaysia) will celebrate our Jubilee anniversary. In the last 50 years, we have published diverse educational materials ranging from textbooks and guidebooks, to reference works and dictionaries.

In conjunction with our Jubilee anniversary, Oxford Fajar will be publishing several special Jubilee publications this year. The first one, *The Oxford Compact Advanced Learners English-Malay Dictionary*, was recently launched at the residence of the British High Commissioner to Malaysia. This dictionary, which has been in the making for over 6 years, originated from the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary - which has sold over 30 million copies worldwide.

Today, Oxford Fajar is one of the oldest publishing houses in the country, and has also grown to be one of the largest. The branch in Malaysia has benefited greatly from the marriage of local knowledge and OUP's expertise in educational publishing. This has resulted in books of the highest quality and we truly believe that we have been instrumental (in some small way) towards the building of this nation.

As a fairly new Managing Director of this company, I am proud to have inherited a company that has been built on such strong foundations and look forward to taking Oxford Fajar into its next 50 years in Malaysia.

Sharmini Nagulan
Managing Director
Oxford Fajar Sdn. Bhd.