

Jane Werry is a Specialist Leader in Education, and Director of Music at Hayes School in Bromley. She is a moderator for OCR, a Musical Futures Champion Teacher, and a regular contributor to *Music Teacher* online resources.

by Jane Werry

INTRODUCTION

The AQA A level exam requires candidates to have a good understanding of the context and musical features of Baroque solo concertos, with special focus on three set works by Purcell, Vivaldi and JS Bach. The exam questions encompass identification of features in recordings of unfamiliar concertos, some simple dictation using music from the area of study, description of musical features from a score excerpt from a set work, and describing how a chosen excerpt relates to the movement as a whole.

There are excellent bar-by-bar analyses of all three set works in both the Rhinegold study guide and the teaching guide published on the AQA website. I do not intend to duplicate these here: rather, this resource aims to provide resources and strategies for how to approach the Area of Study with your classes. These will include ideas for where to start with tackling the context of the Baroque concerto, performing Baroque concertos in class, teaching the musical features of the set works, and ways to approach analysis without necessarily resorting to a bar-by-bar description.

GETTING STARTED ON THE BAROQUE PERIOD

Giving students an overview of the period, and where solo concertos fit into Baroque music as a whole, is a good place to start. Rather than working from the specific to the generic, going the other way will enable students to put the set works into a wider context from the start.

Baroque music is rich and varied, and the history of the late 17th and early 18th centuries is full of interesting detail. Having a sense of the bigger picture will enable students to make links between their prior knowledge (particularly anything they've already learnt about the periods of musical history in their music GCSE) and what they are about to tackle.

Perhaps the best documentary to start with is the second episode of *Howard Goodall's Story of Music*, which is available on YouTube. This gives an introduction to Baroque music, putting it in the context of historical events, cultural developments and technological advances, all in an authoritative yet immensely watchable style. At an hour long, this could take up an entire lesson, or be set as a meaty introductory homework task. However, you'll want to ensure that students are not merely passive viewers, but that they watch actively and make some useful notes on the key points. You might set some questions for them to answer in preparation for a discussion next lesson. These could include:

1. Where did the orchestra come into existence? Who decided to put groups of violins together, and who was the main composer involved in this at the start?
2. Which Italian composer established the concerto grosso as a popular format? What is a concerto grosso?
3. Which composer was at the forefront of the development of the solo concerto?
4. How does Baroque music achieve its sense of forward momentum?
5. Where did Henry Purcell work?
6. What was the most popular chord sequence?
7. Italy was the dominant country in music in the 17th century. To which country did this shift in the 18th century?
8. What type of Lutheran music underpins almost everything that JS Bach composed?
9. Of what musical feature is Bach considered the undisputed master?
10. What is 'equal temperament' and why was it so important?
11. When was the piano invented? What was it able to do that the harpsichord was not?

12. In the late 17th century, most music was written for the church or the royal court. By 1750, who were many composers writing for?
13. How are oratorios different from operas?
14. What is Handel's most famous oratorio?

Ask students to divide their page into two columns, one slightly wider than the other. The wider one is for students' answers to the questions. The narrower one is for them to make a note of any questions that they have regarding what they have seen in the video – references they don't understand, terminology that they'd like explained, and so on. These can be added to the discussion in the next lesson.

Be prepared to think on your feet during this discussion, and don't hesitate to look things up if required. It's likely that your 'information literacy' is more advanced than your students, and modelling how you go about finding something out could be very beneficial for them, especially if you articulate your choices as you go. Where you look for information, the choices that you make regarding search terms, how you decide which answers in a Google search are worth looking at – these are products of your experience, which might influence the way that students approach their own research in the future.

Presenting the 'big picture' and the bare facts using a knowledge organiser

Now that students have a very broad overview of the Baroque period as a whole, the next thing to do is to clarify the scope of the area of study. What, exactly, does it cover? What do students need to know?

A knowledge organiser is a very effective way of communicating this to students. It presents the basic facts and terminology that students need to know in one place, and while it's certainly not exhaustive, it covers the essentials and gives a structure to their thinking.

On a more practical level, it can also be used for regular quizzing and retrieval practice that will consolidate students' knowledge. Simply by blanking out one of the columns, you can provide easy low-stakes tests to help embed the most important facts. Ideally, quizzes of this kind need to take place frequently, throughout the course: this kind of revisiting of factual information imprints it on students' long-term memories. This minimises the need for revision at the end of the course and enables students to concentrate on applying their knowledge in exam-type situations.

Students will need to get to know their set works very well, so make sure they have access to audio files of the set works. As time goes by, you can add alternative recordings of the set works (perhaps contrasting modern and period recordings), or other wider repertoire that will help students' understanding of the area of study.

Finding some good examples for wider listening could be a task that you delegate to students: once the area of study is underway, and students have some good basic knowledge about it, they will be in a position to find other pieces that either demonstrate similar features, or are interestingly different. Lessons could begin with a wider listening example chosen by a student, with a couple of questions that they have devised for the class to discuss.

Here is a knowledge organiser for AoS1:

Area of Study 1: the Baroque solo concerto		
Set work	Composed	Musical features
Purcell: Sonata in D for trumpet and strings	Published 1694 . Written for the court of William and Mary, where Purcell worked as 'composer for the King's violins'.	Use of natural trumpet ; three movements (fast-slow-fast); basso continuo ; contrasts of texture ; clear tonal structures .
Vivaldi: Flute Concerto in D, Op. 10 No. 3 (Il gardellino)	Published 1728 as part of a set of six flute concertos.	Ritornello form; three movements (fast-slow-fast); basso continuo ; imitation of birdsong ('gardellino' means 'goldfinch'); much harmony based on tonic and dominant .
JS Bach: Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041	Probably written during Bach's time as Kapellmeister at Prince Leopold's court in Köthen, 1717-23 .	Ritornello form; three movements (fast-slow-fast); basso continuo ; more complex contrapuntal textures ; a wider variety of harmony.
Key concepts		
Solo and orchestra	A concerto involves a solo instrument with an orchestral accompaniment .	
Three movements	Most concertos are in three movements : 1. Fast 2. Slow 3. Fast	
Virtuosity	One of the main ideas of a concerto is to show off the capabilities of the solo instrument and/or the solo performer.	
Interplay between solo and orchestra	How the solo instrument interacts with the orchestra is very important. The orchestra may play the main melody or have an accompanying role.	
Key musical terms		
Adjunct	Moving by leap .	
Affect/affection	The mood of the music. Calling this the 'affection' is more archaic. Not to be confused with effect .	
Antiphony	Texture where two groups of instruments alternate.	
Appoggiatura	A grace note, but also a harmonic feature: an unprepared dissonance, usually on the beat.	
Bariolage	String technique featuring rapid alternation between a fixed note (played on an open string) and changing melody notes.	
Baroque trumpet	Adaptation of a natural trumpet with fingerholes to aid better tuning. Often used in 'period' performances, but not used in the Baroque period.	
Binary form	In two sections: AB.	
Chromatic harmony	Harmony that uses more complex chords, with notes from outside of the major/minor scale, ie secondary dominants and Neapolitan 6ths .	
Conjunct	Moving by step .	
Continuo	Continuous bass line , played by a bass instrument (often cello) and a chord instrument (often harpsichord).	
Contrapuntal	Polyphonic. Independent lines of music combined together.	
Cycle of 5ths	A chord progression where the root notes are a 5th apart, ie E-A-D-G-C.	
Diatonic harmony	In a major or minor key . Based on chords I, IV and V .	
Disjunct	Moving by leap .	
Episode	In ritornello form , the varied sections between the recurring ritornello .	
Hemiola	A change in metrical emphasis between 3s and 2s.	
Imitative counterpoint	Polyphonic texture where the different parts play similar motifs.	
Melody-dominated homophony	A texture where there is a melody and an accompaniment .	
Motif	A short musical idea , ie the rising 4th in the Bach Concerto.	
Natural trumpet	Trumpet with no valves .	

Ornament	Decorative notes, ie mordents, appoggiaturas, trills.
Register	The pitch of a collection of notes, and how they fit in with the overall range of an instrument: high-, low-, mid-range.
Ritornello	A recurring section.
Sequence	Where a motif is repeated higher or lower each time.
Terraced dynamics	Either loud or soft. No crescendos or diminuendos.
Tierce de Picardie	Ending a minor key piece or phrase with a major chord I.
Trill	Alternating quickly between two adjacent notes.
Tutti	A section in which everybody plays.
Valves	On brass instruments, they allow playing of every chromatic note.
Virtuosic	Difficult to play.

Historically informed performance (sometimes abbreviated to HIP, or referred to as 'period performance') became popular during the 20th century, and involves trying to recreate the sound of the music as it would have been in the composer's lifetime. It applies particularly to Baroque music, although music from other eras is also treated to 'period' performances.

It involves playing on reproductions of Baroque instruments (or perhaps even original instruments) and using research into the playing techniques and performance practices in use at the time of composition. Pitch was not standardised until the 19th century, and tuning forks were not invented until 1711. There was considerable difference in pitch from place to place in the Baroque period, but most historically informed performances tune to a 'Baroque pitch' roughly a semitone lower than modern concert pitch: A=415Hz rather than A=440Hz.

Stringed instruments use gut strings and shorter bows with weaker tension, which produces a softer, less penetrating tone. They may also be played with less vibrato, although there is debate as to the authenticity of this idea. Baroque flutes are wooden and do not have the keywork of modern metal flutes.

Be aware that there is a difference between Baroque trumpets and natural trumpets. In Purcell's time, his Trumpet Sonata would have been played on a natural trumpet, which can only produce notes from the harmonic series, requiring the trumpeter to 'lip' some notes into tune. However, modern trumpeters often use a 'Baroque trumpet' for a historically informed performance. These have fingerholes to aid tuning, which make playing easier, but cannot be said to be entirely authentic.

The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment has some excellent YouTube videos introducing its instruments. These include the Baroque flute, the Baroque trumpet and the Baroque violin.

TEACHING THE SET WORKS

In order for students to feel as if they know their set works 'from the inside', it's beneficial to try to avoid a dry, bar-by-bar 'going-through' of the pieces. Although producing a well-annotated score will be an important part of their work in this Area of Study, this should not be the sole outcome of lessons. Using performing as a starting point will bring musical features to life much more vividly than listening, and enables unpicking of compositional techniques in a more direct way.

It helps enormously to be thinking about the set works under certain headings right from the start. Students may already be used to breaking music down into its various dimensions in their GCSE work, but the most important ones to focus on in their Baroque set works will be these:

- Structure
- Harmony and tonality
- Texture
- Orchestration
- Rhythm
- Affect
- Melody

For ease of remembering these, when considered in this order, they create the mnemonic SHTORAM. When you get to annotating scores, there could be colour-coding for the different SHTORAM elements, which will help when revising and doing practice exam questions.

A good place to start thinking about SHTORAM is this excellent animated graphic score of the first movement of the Bach Concerto. It is brilliant for getting students to spot textures and sequences. You could ask them to find the answer to a question, such as: how does Bach make the solo part stand out from the orchestra? Or they could count the number of sequences used in the movement.

Because the scores on IMSLP are PDF files, you can import them into Sibelius using PhotoScore, and then provide transpositions and tablature, add chord symbols, or simplify parts for your class ensemble.

Playing Baroque concertos

Of course, you're extremely unlikely to have the perfect combination of instrumentalists in your A level class to form a Baroque orchestra with a soloist. An extremely cavalier approach to instrumentation is required here, although the results will almost certainly prove to be interesting!

Depending on your students' level of instrumental skill – and what instruments they play – organising a performance may take some input from you in terms of providing them with playable parts. However, there are some arrangements available online that may save you some time:

- There are arrangements of the Purcell Sonata for trumpet and organ and recorder ensemble available free through IMSLP. All staves for both arrangements are in C. With the recorder arrangement, there are four treble staves and one bass staff, which could be played by a variety of different instruments.
- The first movement of the Vivaldi Concerto is available from IMSLP in a full orchestral score. The viola part is simple enough to be sight-read on another instrument by a good musician practising reading alto clef. Alternatively, it would be a simple and not too arduous theory task to write in the note names before performing.
- The full score of the Bach Concerto is available through IMSLP. Useful arrangements that might be adapted for classroom use include one for violin and piano and one for recorders written on three treble and two bass staves.
- Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* violin concertos make excellent comparative works, and might even be a good place to start, before the set works are tackled. However, the virtuosity of the solo violin part limits which movements are feasible to perform in class (unless you are lucky enough to have a very gifted violinist among your students). The second movement from *Winter* and the third movement from *Autumn* are the most accessible, presented here in an arrangement for piano duet and strings, which gives plenty of useable parts.

As you play the set works, identify what is happening with the SHTORAM elements as you go. Particular things to spot might include:

- Where ideas recur: are the repetitions exact, or altered in some way?
- New ideas: does a new musical idea bring with it a change of affect, a change of key, a change of texture, or any combination of these?
- Modulations: are these transient, or is there a whole section in the new key?
- Cadences: what proportion of these are perfect or imperfect?
- Harmony and tonality: to what extent do dominant-tonic relationships dominate the harmony? Are there any cycles of 5ths? Are perfect cadences used to establish a key?
- Harmonic rhythm: how often do the chords change? Does the harmonic rhythm change in the run-up to a cadence?
- Textures: where are there points of imitation? When is the texture contrapuntal, and when is it melody-and-accompaniment?
- Melodies: just how much melodic content is constructed from sequences? Are scalic or broken-chord patterns used to create melodies? Is there distinctive use of particular intervals?

This discussion can take place while you're rehearsing the performance with your class. Involve isolation of specific features in the practical work – unpick the voice-leading at a cadence-point, for example, or the way a descending sequence fits over a cycle of 5ths. Try changing different aspects of the music to see what effect it has: for example, taking out the leaps at the start of the Vivaldi Flute Concerto, or playing the Bach Concerto in A major instead of A minor. Play all the rising 4th motifs in the Bach fortissimo with everything else pianissimo. A live, workshoped deconstruction of the music will not only help students to understand and remember its compositional features, but also inform their own compositions and harmony exercises.

Make a record of every feature identified through the performing activity, which students can access later (perhaps as a homework task) and add to their score, remembering to use their SHTORAM colour-coding, if that's something that you and they feel will be useful.

Teaching the context of the piece

If you started your work on the Area of Study by giving a general overview of the Baroque period (perhaps by watching the Howard Goodall documentary), and have then investigated musical specifics through performing each set work, you could then do some work on the context of each piece. It may seem odd not to do this first, before the musical features are considered. However, to have an understanding of the musical characteristics will give the context of the music's creation more meaning: students will be better able to understand *why* some of the features are as they are.

Documentary videos are often more useful than a presentation with teacher talk. They can effectively combine musical examples with a sense of time and place. They can be accessed by students at any time, and of course have the added advantage that someone else has already created them.

There is an excellent documentary introducing Henry Purcell, presented by Charles Hazelwood, which gives the background to Purcell's life and music in just under seven minutes. It is an abridged version of a one-hour documentary which might also be useful.

A short introduction to Vivaldi can be provided with this three-minute 'ten facts' video. A more thorough introduction, which focuses mostly on the *Four Seasons*, but which still contains much useful information, is this one-hour documentary, again presented by Charles Hazelwood. There is also an analysis of the first movement of the Flute Concerto which could be used for revision or flipped learning.

To introduce Bach in general, there's also a '10 facts' video which provides an effective overview. This video introduces Bach's time in Köthen, while its sequel explains why Bach wrote mainly secular, instrumental music in his time there.

CONSOLIDATING KNOWLEDGE: THE LAZY APPROACH

It's the students who need to be working the hardest in the classroom. They are the ones who need to be recalling a bulk of information regularly, so that it can become embedded in their long-term memories. The lazy approach is a way of ensuring that students are actively engaged in thinking in your lessons, and preferably working harder than you are. What follows is a selection of ideas for facilitating, rather than delivering, the learning for this Area of Study.

Generalising about the features of the Baroque solo concerto

Once each of the set works has been considered, it would be beneficial to give some attention to creating a definitive list of characteristic features of the Baroque solo concerto. It's extremely likely that there will be a question in the exam requiring candidates to identify which features of a particular concerto (which may be one of the set works, or an unfamiliar piece) are characteristic of the genre.

Rather than providing students with a list that you've prepared, hand over responsibility for creating it to your class. One of the reasons for including the Purcell Sonata in the set works for this topic is to start students off on their understanding of what is usual in a Baroque concerto, by providing an example of a precursor. Because it is *not* typical, it helps us to define what *is* typical.

Ask students to consider each set work, and, under the SHTORAM headings, suggest features that are either characteristic (usual) or uncharacteristic (unusual). This could be done using sticky notes (perhaps with a colour for each of the set works), or on a whiteboard using different coloured pens. If using sticky notes, you

could ask students to consider a particular set work, or all three: this may depend on how many students you have in your class. Get them to write one point on each sticky note, and work on their own first, before collating their ideas with the others.

Encourage debate. It may be that there is a lot of agreement. However, where there are points of disagreement, facilitate a discussion by drawing all students in, and asking for opinions to be justified. Only step in to correct incorrect statements if no other student does, and provide a casting vote only once the debate has run its course. You will end up with a useful list, and along the way students will have revisited their knowledge about the set works and the SHTORAM headings.

The definitive list of characteristics can be referred to when listening to unfamiliar concertos, and could also be used for low-stakes testing, perhaps as a lesson starter. The key here is frequent recall of the information, rather than the results of the testing: it's only through recall that the facts will become embedded in students' long-term memories.

I say texture, you say...

It's easy to neglect the connection between the musical elements or dimensions (which are often found in questions) and the words that describe them (which are used in answers). Yet so often this is a source of misconception – and incorrect answers – for students. Therefore it's another area that benefits from frequent revisiting, in order to practise the recall of information that will result in thorough learning.

This is another area that could benefit from a definitive list: in fact, one for each of the SHTORAM headings (with the exception of affect). It could be approached in a very similar way to the Baroque characteristics list, as a student-driven activity done using sticky notes or marker pens. Keep a close eye on what they're including, however, and be ready to throw in anything they've missed, or bust any misconceptions that arise.

You will need to have a very clear idea of what each heading should encompass, in order to be able to flag up any omissions. Here's a list to get you started:

Structure	Harmony and tonality	Texture	Orchestration	Rhythm	Melody
Introduction	Diatonic	Monophonic	Solo	Metre	Scalic/conjunct
Coda	Consonant	Unison	Tutti	Hemiola	Triadic/disjunct
Binary	Chromatic	Octaves	Continuo	Dotted rhythms	Arpeggio
Ternary	Dissonant	Homophonic	Accompaniment	Syncopation	Broken chord
Ritornello	Pedal	Polyphonic/ contrapuntal		Cross-rhythm	Ostinato
Episode	Drone	Imitative		Augmentation	Diatonic
	Ground bass	Fugal		Diminution	Chromatic
	Primary chords	Antiphonal			Ornament (trill, mordent, appoggiatura)
	Cadences	Melody-and- accompaniment			Sequence
	Harmonic rhythm	Sparse			
	Suspension	Dense			
	Appoggiatura				
	Tierce de Picardie				
	Cycle of 5ths				

Related listening

Students need to listen to Baroque solo concertos other than their set works, and a regular related listening session is a good idea in preparation for the exam. Again, students could be given responsibility for choosing the repertoire for this on a rota, with the chosen pieces being collected together to make a revision playlist.

When each student chooses a piece, they need to consider it from the point of view of its characteristic or uncharacteristic Baroque features, and be able to analyse it themselves using the SHTORAM headings, so that they can give feedback on their peers' answers in class. You could require each student to submit their analysis to you for checking in advance, if you feel that this would be helpful. You might find that the need for this decreases as time and practice goes by.

Writing multiple-choice questions

Another useful 'flipping' tactic is to get students to write multiple choice questions on the area of study. These could be on the individual set works, Baroque characteristics, or the SHTORAM elements. Encourage students to think of 'plausible distractors' for the incorrect options – these are a much better test of knowledge than if the incorrect answers are completely implausible. Students could type these up, or write them by hand onto pre-prepared grids, with the answer shown in a different colour, something like this:

Question	What are the features of a Baroque trumpet?
Answer 1	A Baroque trumpet has no valves or fingerholes, and requires 'lipping' to keep all notes in tune.
Answer 2	A Baroque trumpet has no valves, but has fingerholes to make tuning easier.
Answer 3	A Baroque trumpet has keys, which are a primitive version of valves.
Answer 4	A Baroque trumpet has valves, but plays in the key of D.

These answers are also good examples of plausible distractors, as all of them are actual types of trumpet that might be used in historically informed performances.

Writing multiple-choice questions highlights misconceptions, and again requires students to recall their knowledge about every aspect of the Area of Study. They might even need to do a bit of research in order to find appropriate plausible distractors. You will need to check each question before it's administered to the rest of the class.

There are many methods for using technology to help with the administering of multiple-choice tests:

- **Plickers** are pre-printed, reusable cards with QR codes on them, which work in conjunction with a free Plickers online account and app. Questions are displayed on the whiteboard, with students indicating their answers simply by holding their card a particular way up. You scan the cards using your phone or tablet, getting instant feedback on students' answers. This works particularly well if students are not allowed to use their phones in school.
- **Kahoot** is very similar, except students use their own devices to respond. The setting-up of the task, and the data that you receive about students' answers, are very similar, but quizzes can be done 'live' in class or set for homework.
- **Show My Homework** (if your school has this), **Google Forms** and **Office 365 Forms** all have easy ways to set up multiple-choice questions that mark themselves.
- **QuickKey** works on paper, with downloadable bubble sheets for student responses. You can display the questions on the whiteboard or on paper, and students mark their answer by colouring in the relevant bubble on the sheet. The teacher sets up the correct pattern of answers on the website using their free account, and then scans the answer sheets using an iOS/Android app. This is a bit more fiddly to set up at the outset, but is easy to use once you're up and running, particularly if you have large numbers of questions or students