

A-Level Music – Pearson Edexcel

Overview

This is an exciting and in-depth course which provides plenty of opportunity to progress as a musician in a variety of areas. The course explores a range of disciplines including: Performance, musical history and theory and compositional practices. The course can lead you on to higher education at both university or conservatoire level. It is a varied course which will complement many level 3 courses and is a well-regarded and accepted A-Level into university and industry.

Component 1: Performing (30%)	A public performance of one or more pieces, played as solo or ensemble, totalling a minimum of 8 minutes.
Component 2: Composing (30%)	Two compositions. The first is free choice, or to a chosen brief, the second is a technical composition set to a brief provided by Pearson.
Component 3: Appraising (40%)	A written exam exploring the musical language, context and elements of 18 set works from 6 areas of study.

Specification link:

https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Music/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/Pearson_Edexcel_Level_3_Advanced_GCE_in_Music_9MU0_specification.pdf

Reading list

- To support you in the transition from KS4 to KS5 here is a list of helpful material to read, watch and listen to prior to the course starting. These are suggestions and certainly not an exhaustive list. Please let us know if you find any resources which have been particularly useful to you. **Ones in bold are particularly useful.**

Reading		
Edexcel AS and A Level Music Study Guide	ISBN 9781785581694	A guide for all components, including an analysis of each set work
Writing About Music Workbook	ISBN 9781906178383	A guide about analysing and discussing music in depth.
History of Music (Cambridge Assignments in Music)	ISBN-10: 0521336813	A guide to the periods of music and recognition of styles and characteristics.
ABRSM: THE AB GUIDE TO MUSIC THEORY, PART I	ISBN 9781854724465	A useful book containing detailed information on different theoretical

		elements of music. Perfect of you are working towards grade 5 theory.
Heinemann Advanced Music Student Book	ISBN-10: 0435812580	An excellent book covering all aspects of the course including appraising, composing and performance.
Harmony in Practice (ABRSM), Anna Butterworth	ISBN-10: 1854728334	A thorough explanation of harmonic practices. Perfect to support composing and chorale writing.
Aural Matters - A Student's Guide to Aural Perception at Advanced Level	ISBN-10: 0946535221	A guide to aural training. Recognising and identifying musical elements in a variety of styles.
How music works by John Powell	ISBN-10: 1846143152	A book to help you understand how music is put together, without needing all of the technical vocab.
The story of Music – Howard Goodall. He also did Howard Goodall’s Big bangs	ISBN-10: 0099587173	Books linked to a really good series – links to the videos are below.
Music: A Very Short Introduction by Nicholas Cook	ISBN-10: 0192853821	A short, clear and concise intro to music and the periods.
A History of Film Music – M.Cooke	ISBN-10: 0521010489	A comprehensive guide to film music from the start.
Understanding Popular Music - R.Shuker	ISBN-10: 1138907855	A comprehensive guide to pop music and its place in society.
The Rest is Noise - A.Ross	ISBN-10: 1841154768	A fascinating book about music in the 21 st Century.

Useful websites

Ones in bold are particularly useful.

Useful Websites and Online tools	
http://www.choraleguide.com/	An excellent tool explaining all the aspects of Bach chorales.
https://www.classicfm.com/	Lots of information on different composers, periods and styles of music.
www.youtube.com	There are lots of tutorials on theory and composers here.
https://www.royalalberthall.com/tickets/series/royal-albert-home/	The albert hall is streaming various sessions throughout the current pandemic. This

	is just one of many platforms offering virtual concerts, masterclasses and workshops.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tnxf	Composer of the week.
www.good-ear.com	Fantastic website to try and develop your aural skills and you can test yourself.
www.teoria.com	Another good aural skills site but also has some theory work to go alongside.
https://www.ted.com/playlists/browse?topics=music	Ted talks on many different areas of music.
https://www.sfsymphony.org/Discover-the-Music/Listen-to-Podcasts/Program-Notes-Series	Series by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTUtqcDkzw7bisadh6AOx5w	A useful website for music theory and analysing pop music.
https://www.youtube.com/user/the1564studios	Loads of music theory topics broken down into two minute chunks
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8yI8P7Zi3yYTsypere-IQg	Another channel with lots of music theory.

Films and documentaries to watch

The story of Music – Howard Goodall.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVgPm-Kji5g all 6 available on youtube
Howard Goodall's Big bang	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOuHklpkOmE Also, each episode currently available on youtube
Wynton Marsalis music lectures	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2_OG1YK_GOuBwOT8Pe3IVHSD1hwCTKvs I used to go home from sixth form in my study period to watch these on BBC2 – I loved the way he spoke about modern music.
A playlist of all the set works	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5y6XDFHU4m5xRZYd4Ib7ciK1JLfr5NPe
LSO Discovery series – overview of medieval to Baroque	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WH1kAvS_9BQ
LSO discovery series – Classical to Romantic	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ft5Z08BTbiY
LSO discovery series – 20 th Century	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnvf0R9ye9U

Transition tasks

There are quite a few here, so the key ones are highlighted.

Performance

1. Finesse a piece you know how to play well. Focus on **expression and interpretation**
2. Start to learn a new piece with an emphasis on **accuracy and fluency**
3. Perform a piece you know well and see how **stylistic** you can make it; know the features of the style in which you are playing
4. **Record yourself** performing a piece you are familiar with. **Analyse** it critically with what you did well and what you need to improve
5. Listen to a performance online. What makes a successful performance other than accuracy and fluency?

Composition

1. Write a composition using one pitch. For example, only use B but you are permitted to use different octaves.
2. Take the following chord progression. Make the triads more complex by adding notes (e.g. sus4, 7th) and create a rhythm to play the chords to. Am G C F
3. Create a 4 bar leitmotif on any instrument to represent a character from Greek / Roman mythology (Zeus, Hera, Hephaestus etc). Write a short paragraph explaining the musical features used to depict that character
4. Explore various ranges, techniques, and characteristics of your first instrument. Can you create something interesting and unusual to exploit these characteristics of your instrument?
5. Read the following blog: <https://manwaringmusic.blog/2020/04/02/composing-at-home-1/>

Appraisal

1. Create a timeline for the periods of music including composers and dates. Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century
Example: <https://edu.glogster.com/glog/music-history-timeline/2bk3brdh6pu?=&glogpedia-source>
2. Choose a composer, a piece by that composer and listen to it. Why do you enjoy this piece? What musical features make it so satisfying? Give the composer, title of the piece, era of music e.g. Baroque.
3. Argue the following question: **“What’s the point of having music in a film?”** Provide relevant musical examples of film music and come to some conclusion at the end of your writing. Aim to write a side of A4.
4. Stockhausen said all music which is tonal (i.e. in a particular major or minor key) has already been written and that he would end up merely repeating music which had already been composed. To what extent do you think all tonal music has already been composed and we are merely repeating what already exists?
5. ‘Popular music deserves more recognition and is equal to Classical music’. Discuss and provide relevant musical examples.

6. Complete a grade 5 theory paper <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/theory2018/free-practice-materials/> use the ABRSM guide to music theory to support this.

7. Below is a list of our set works. I would like you to choose **one from each area of study**, and complete a DR SMITH analysis of on the page below.

Area of study	Set works
Vocal Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. S. Bach, Cantata, Ein feste Burg • Mozart, The Magic Flute • Vaughan Williams, On Wenlock Edge
Instrumental Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vivaldi, Concerto in D minor, Op. 3 No. 11 • Clara Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17: movement 1 • Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique
Music for Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danny Elfman, Batman Returns • Rachel Portman, The Duchess • Bernard Herrmann, Psycho
Popular Music and Jazz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courtney Pine, Back in the Day • Kate Bush, Hounds of Love • Beatles, Revolver
Fusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debussy, Estampes • Familia Valera Miranda, Caña Quema • Anoushka Shankar, Breathing Under Water
New Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cage, Three Dances for Two Prepared Pianos • Kaija Saariaho, Petals for Violoncello and Live Electronics • Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring

Musical Listening Exercise

Title:

Composer:

<p>Melody Phrasing & articulation, intervals, conjunct, disjunct, fragmentation, augmentation, diminution, use of a particular scale, ornamentation, scalar, triadic.</p>	<p>All about shape!</p>
<p>Harmony/Tonality Tonal, atonal, bitonal, modal, diatonic, chromatic, dissonant, consonant, suspension, drone, pedal, cadences, chords.</p>	<p>Functional / Complex</p>
<p>Rhythm Pulse, regular, irregular, ostinato, augmentation, diminution, polyrhythms, syncopation, dotted rhythms, hemiola.</p>	
<p>Texture Homophonic, heterophonic, polyphonic, monophonic, fugal, canon, unison, octaves.</p>	<p>How many parts?</p>
<p>Instrumentation Instruments, techniques, technology, timbre.</p>	<p>Compare the sounds, upper / lower strings, how do they sound?</p>
<p>Form Binary, ternary, rondo, sonata, large-scale forms, blues, variations, strophic, through composed.</p>	
<p>Tempo & Dynamics</p>	
<p>Setting of text (if applicable) Syllabic, melismatic, word painting, use of harmony, comment on vocal parts, sprechgesang, other techniques.</p>	