

Welcome to A Level Music at Bishop Vesey's

I am really looking forward to welcoming you onto the A level Music course in September at BVGS. If you have any questions, thoughts, issues or worries, please do get in touch. My email is A.Buxton@bishopveseys.bham.sch.uk

Regards,

Mr Buxton

What topics will I learn in Music?

The A Level Music requires you to practically apply knowledge and understanding, including musical vocabulary and notation as appropriate to the context, through the skills of Performing, Composing and Listening and appraising.

The topics we will study are:

- Grade 6+ ABRSM theory
- AO1 Instrumental Music of Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn
- AO2 Popular song – blue, jazz, swing and big band
- AO3 Developments in Instrumental Jazz, 1910 to the present day
- AO4 Religious Music of the Baroque Period
- AO5 Programme Music 1820-1910
- AO6 Innovations in Music, 1900 to the present day.

How will we study?

We study through theory lessons, history lessons, visits, masterclasses, concert tours, concerts, music technology, sound design and recording, listening to music and through the creation and performance of music.

How will my work be assessed?

A level music requires learners to practically apply knowledge and understanding, including musical vocabulary and notation as appropriate to the context, through the skills of:

Performing 35% or 25% at least 8 minutes.

Composing 35% or 25% 2 compositions or 3 compositions 6+ or 8+ minutes.

Listening and appraising 40% written

To Do List

Basic Music Theory (Use the links provided later to check your understanding/recap)	
Basic:	
Rhythm and metre	
Scales and key signatures	
Modes	
Intervals	
Listening and Describing Work	
Read through and listen to the examples in the glossary	
Exercise 1	
Music History Tasks	
Reading through the Short History of Music	
Watch the documentary about the History of Music https://youtu.be/I0Y6NPahIDE (6 parts)	
Fill in the worksheet	
Performance	
Task	
During the summer break fill in the Initial Performance Proposals	
Make sure you have signed up for instrumental/vocal lessons or if you have arranged weekly lessons with a private teacher please provide us with contact information for your teacher.	
Make sure your instruments are in full working order	
Extension tasks: (Fill in what you have completed)	

Basic Theory

When we start the A level course we begin with a module called Starting Points in which we review basic theory through some simple composition tasks. We will go over keys, triads, dissonance etc. but I do presume some basic knowledge. One option is to have a go at the free [Open Uni](#) approx. grade 1-3) course, for which you can print out a certificate of completion.

A quicker alternative if you are a bit more confident is the following page on which you should make yourself familiar with the topics in the following sections:

Musictheory.net

- *The Basics* – all sections
- *Rhythm and Metre* – all sections
- *Scales and Key Signatures* – all sections
- *Intervals* – all sections
- The first two lessons from *Chords*, *Diatonic Chords* and the first from *Chord Progressions* would be a bonus

Music History

- Read through and listen to the material on the [Short History of Music](#) pages and then complete the worksheet below. You can either print it off and complete by hand or fill it in as a word documents and then print them off:

Short History of Music Task 1 (deadline first music lesson in Sept.)

Listen to the Short History of Music tracks on www.alevelmusic.com (click on 4-Short History of Music) and answer the following questions:

What is your favourite piece and why?
Choose something about one of the other tracks that interests you (e.g. instrumentation, harmony, rhythm). Describe this aspect of the music and why you find it interesting.

What is your least favourite track?

Describe two aspects of this track that you think contribute to your opinion:

If you had to compose a piece that took inspiration from one of these tracks, which one would you choose and why.

Listen to and read about the Baroque and Classical eras on the Short History of Music on www.alevelmusic.com. Identify THREE features of music that are different at the beginning of the Classical era compared to the Baroque.

Listen to and read about the Romantic period on the Short History of Music on www.alevelmusic.com. Then do some of your own research on a Romantic composer of your choice. Write a short biographical paragraph about the composer, explaining how they are typically Romantic.

Listening and describing

As in GCSE we will need to get really good at describing music using appropriate technical terms.

I would like you to review all the terms in the [GCSE Glossary](#), which should be familiar from GCSE. Make sure you understand them, follow all the links and listen to the examples before completing the two listening exercises.

Exercise 1 – Western Classical

Listen to this Beethoven String Quartet extract and answer the questions in the worksheet. You will need to print out the worksheet and then listen play the video so you can see to which parts of the music the questions refer. You can watch the video as many times as you wish and pause it where you need to do so. You should also refer back to the [GCSE Glossary](#) to make sure you are talking about the right things and using correct language.

[Track is here](#)

Question 1 Describe the texture at the opening of this extract

Question 2: Describe the texture in this section

Question 3: Is the piece up to (and including) this point major or minor?

Question 4: Describe the metre and tempo in this piece (not just at this point but in general!)

Question 5: Describe how the melody that starts in this bar in the viola is used in the next few bars

Question 6: Describe the texture at this point (i.e. what different melodic and accompanying ideas can you describe)

Question 7: Describe the melody in the violin in this section (i.e. the melody itself and what melodic devices are used)

Question 8 Describe the texture in this segment

Question 9: Describe the a) the melody and b) the harmony and tonality in this section

Question 10: Describe the melody in this segment

Question 11: What instrument is playing on its own here?

Question 12: (labelled also question 11 in the video!): Describe this passage in as much detail as possible this passage (i.e. melody, texture, rhythm. harmony etc.)

Question 13a: What type of chord is played here?

Question 13b: And what type of chord is played here?

Exercise 2: Music History- Popular song: Blues, Jazz, Swing and Big Band. The course will cover a wide range of early popular music styles. You should research and become familiar with the four genres of popular song listed above, including:

- Key dates and events of the time including technological developments in music.
- Context. Especially race relations in the USA during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Fingerprints of the musical style; i.e. what do they sound like? Listen to a wide range of songs from different relevant years; including early blues artists such as Blind Lemon Jefferson and Robert Johnson, early Jazz artists such as Scott Joplin and Louis Armstrong, Jazz “Queens” such as Bessie Smith and Ella Fitzgerald, and Swing and Big Band artists and crooners such as Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby

Listening. You will need to be familiar with the elements of music and what they sound like. Use your GCSE knowledge as a starting point and work on any areas of weakness. We use MAD T SHIRT – Melody, Articulation, Dynamics, Texture, Structure, Harmony & Tonality, Instrumentation, Rhythm, Tempo.

Focus on Sound is the best place to start, as it explains terms and allows you to listen to examples and test yourself.

Performance

Make sure you don't neglect your playing during this break. If you are having online lessons with your teacher, then that will obviously keep you going. If you are not, I suggest you do at least some of the tasks below to keep yourself in practice.

- polish up a piece you are already working on and video it. You could then share it with your friends and family. In due course, I will ask you to email me a video of you playing a short extract. If you want to get ahead of the game send it to me at a.buxton@bishopveseys.bham.sch.uk You might find a recorded accompaniment on Youtube for pieces that are very regularly played for grades etc.
- resurrect an older piece that you really enjoyed. You should be able to play it better now you are a little more advanced. Listen to some performances of the piece on Apple Music/Spotify/Youtube. What do you like about these performances? Is there anything you can incorporate. Again, you could video your performance.
- look at the graded lists for the level at which you are currently playing. Listen to the pieces and choose one to learn from scratch. You can use recorded performances to help you learn the piece and decide how to play it.

Extension Tasks

If you are looking for other things to keep you busy, pick a selection from the following tasks.

Reading

- Winterson and Harris (2014) *Music Theory: The Essential Guide* London: Faber ([Amazon link](#)) [if your basic theory is a bit dodgy then this is good for making sure you know up to Grade 5 theory stuff]
- There are lots of resources out there. Scribd is an excellent resource with access to lots of books and music.

Websites:

- [My Music Theory](#) - a web site with exercises based on the ABRSM theory grades. You can print exercises off as well as do them on line. A great place to start is [What Music Theory Grade Am I](#) to work out your starting point and areas of strength and weakness.
- [Chorale Guide](#) - an excellent series of lessons and exercises taking you through all the crucial stages of harmonising Bach chorales, and the basics of standard musical harmony and part writing.
- https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/203143-composition-ks4-ks5-transition-guide.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0_hQ9hdKJFK25BFKFOhrLvLsxz5A3RNFj44rmo3sqSLI0w4Gi8CoOCMc

Videos to watch on Youtube

- Some really simple explanations of basic music theory building blocks at [12tone](#), Starts with some ludicrously basic stuff but moves on to go over basics that you might be rusty on.
- Good basic introduction to [the symphony by Howard Goodall](#) from the BBC
- [Unwrap the music from the Auckland Philharmonia](#) – sessions on a range of pieces, including Mendelssohn 4, which is a wider listening work at A level.
- An [introduction to Debussy](#), again from Howard Goodall at the BBC
- Anything on the [LSO Youtube Playlist](#)
- During the COVID 19 lockdown you can access [archived Berlin Philharmonic concerts](#) – amazing!
- Lloyd Webber is streaming his musicals free on Friday nights on [theshowsmustgoon](#)
- For each period, pick at least one work which you feel is a good representative of the typical features. Use the [Petrucchi Music Library](#) to find a score, and listen to the work whilst following the score. Try and label the score as you're going, pointing out features which make the piece representative of the period. Be prepared to share this work with the class when you start in September.
- For the Classical period, make Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven your key starting points, as these three composers will form the backbone of your study for A01.

Composition 1

Can you write an eight-bar melody in the Classical style that is like the extract below. Either write it for string quartet in Musescore, Sibelius or on paper or write it for a melody instrument with piano chords. Notice that the harmony is quite simple, the melody sticks closely to the chords with just simple decorations, bar 3-4 and 7-8 are cadences. You can look at the [notes here](#) if you want some technical tips:



Composition 2

Can you write a pentatonic piece using just notes from the pentatonic scale? You can read the [notes here](#) to help you if you wish. Write for any combination of instruments.

Research Tasks

- Research the life and music Franz Josef Haydn. You can use the [Oxford Music Online Haydn](#), [Haydn Wikipedia article](#), [Classic FM](#), [Philharmonia Haydn introduction](#), [Naxos](#), [BBC Composer of the Week](#) and [Howard Goodall on Haydn](#). You can then present your work in any way you like. Online, as a poster, a booklet or a leaflet.
- Research the biographies and key works of any of the following musical theatre composers: Richard Rodgers, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Claude-Michel Schonberg, Andrew Lloyd-Webber or Stephen Schwartz.