



Hartismere College



Music

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE A LEVEL IN MUSIC

What do I need to know or be able to do before taking this course?

In order to study this subject, it is usual to have achieved GCSE music with at least a grade 6. However, it is possible to take A level Music without having studied GCSE music, provided that you can read music competently and have good practical skills on an instrument or voice (to around Associated Board / Rock School grade 5 standard or equivalent at the start of the course).

What will I learn on this A level course?

The course will enable you to:

- develop your **performing** skills to a high level through preparing and presenting recitals
- develop your creative skills through **composing** to briefs and in styles of your own choice
- develop your **theoretical** and **listening** skills
- understand how diverse pieces of music have been created, through learning about **areas of study** and **set works**
- acquire the skills and experience to establish a lifelong passion for music

What kind of student is this course suitable for?

This course will appeal to students who:

- are passionate about music and want to extend their study and experiences further
- enjoy all aspects of playing, creating and analysing music
- want to keep their options open for further study

The music department at Hartismere is very active, putting on a wide range of concerts, productions and arts events each year. There is a busy programme of extra-curricular activities, alongside the many instrumental and vocal lessons that take place every week. A level Music students take a leading role in such activities.

What examinations will I have to take to get my qualification?

AS is short for Advanced Subsidiary and you will take the exam at the end of year 12 to gain an AS qualification. The A level is a separate qualification, although the content studied in year 12 will also be assessed in the A level exam.

AS Music (Eduqas)

Component 1 Performing 30% **Externally assessed by a visiting examiner**

In this unit, you will perform solo or ensemble pieces in a performance lasting at least 6 minutes.

The choice of pieces is up to you but grade 5 is regarded as 'standard' level of difficulty, with more difficult pieces gaining additional credit.

Component 2 Composing 30% **Externally assessed**

In this unit, you will produce two compositions. One must reflect the musical techniques and conventions of the Western Classical Tradition (ie. Baroque, Classical or Romantic music) and be in response to a choice of briefs set by the exam board. The second is a free composition.

Component 3 Appraising 40% **Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes**

For this unit, you will cover two areas of study:

1. The Development of the Symphony 1750 – 1830

This area of study focuses on the development of the symphony through the Classical era to the early Romantic era.

2. Musical Theatre

This area of study focuses on the work of five musical theatre composers: Richard Rogers, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Claude-Michel Schönberg and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

You will also study one set work:

Haydn, Symphony No. 104, 'London', movements 1 and 2

The examination includes set work analysis, extended responses on wider context, and unprepared listening questions relating to the areas of study.

A Level Music (Eduqas)

A Level Music allows you to specialise in either performing (option A) or composing (option B).

**Component 1 Performing 35% (option A) / 25% (option B)
Externally assessed by a visiting examiner**

Option A: you will perform as a soloist (plus as part of an ensemble if desired) in a performance lasting at least 10 minutes.

Option B: you will perform solo or ensemble pieces in a performance lasting at least 6 minutes.

The choice of pieces is up to you but grade 6 is regarded as 'standard' level of difficulty, with more difficult pieces gaining additional credit.

**Component 2 Composing 35% (option B) / 25% (option A)
Externally assessed**

Option A: you will produce two compositions. One must reflect the musical techniques and conventions of the Western Classical Tradition (ie. Baroque, Classical or Romantic music) and be in response to a choice of briefs set by the exam board. The second is a free composition.

Option B: you will produce three compositions. One must reflect the musical techniques and conventions of the Western Classical Tradition (ie. Baroque, Classical or Romantic music) and be in response to a choice of briefs set by the exam board. The second must reflect the musical characteristics of a different area of study (Rock and Pop / Musical Theatre / Jazz / Into the Twentieth Century / Into the Twenty-First Century). The third is a free composition.

**Component 3 Appraising 40%
Written examination: 2 hours 15 minutes**

For this unit, you will cover three areas of study:

1. The Development of the Symphony 1750 – 1900

This area of study focuses on the development of the symphony through the Classical and Romantic eras.

2. Musical Theatre

This area of study focuses on the work of six musical theatre composers: Richard Rogers, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Claude-Michel Schönberg, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Stephen Schwartz.

3. Into the Twentieth Century

This area of study focuses on the musical styles of the early twentieth century, which was a time of radical change and experimentation in music. You will examine styles such as Impressionism, Expressionism and Neo-classicism, and the work of composers including Debussy, Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

You will also study four set works:

Haydn, Symphony No. 104, 'London'

Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 4 'Italian'

Poulenc, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, movement 2

Debussy, Three Nocturnes, Number 1: Nuages

The examination includes set work analysis, extended responses on wider context, and unprepared listening questions relating to the areas of study.

What could I go on to do at the end of my course?

The AS and A Level music courses open up a wide range of post-16 opportunities. For those planning on continuing to higher education, A level Music is very highly regarded as an academic qualification by all universities.

Some students will use their qualification to go straight into employment rather than higher education. A wide variety of music and non-music related occupations are open to students with AS or A Level music.

Music is unusual in developing a wide range of highly desirable and transferable skills. These include written and analytical skills, the ability to express informed and independent opinions, creativity developed through composing, and the logical approach required to study music theory. Your performing skills demonstrate confidence, whilst ensemble skills reflect the ability to work as part of a team. A good musician also shows considerable independence and an ability to manage their time efficiently. All of these skills are in demand from employers, universities and colleges, and are also valuable in their own right.

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