

MUSIC

Music is compulsory for the first three years. It is taught for two lessons a week. In the Fourth Year it becomes an optional subject to GCSE, and it is taught for 5 lessons a week. In the Sixth Form, music is taught to A-level for 8 periods a week. Teaching focuses on Listening, Performing and Composing. We aim to teach the girls to listen with depth and with a breadth of knowledge, to compose fluently and to perform with musicianship and understanding. The School is very well equipped for music, and students have every opportunity to use their musical talents to the full.

MUSIC IN THE LOWER & MIDDLE SCHOOL (First, Second & Third Years)

Although the National Curriculum has interesting features, the majority of our students have individual lessons, and we do not find that the National curriculum uses their talents and abilities to the full. We have therefore devised our own syllabus which emphasises aural understanding of music, breadth of listening and a systematic and musical approach to composition.

First Year The girls concentrate on Listening. They are given a firm grounding in the instruments of the Orchestra and The History of Western Music. This is followed by more detailed listening with the study of British Folk Songs and their use in Orchestral Music. Performing includes group performance of folk song arrangements and traditional class singing ending in a whole year performance at the Lower School Concert. Composition in the First Year is confined to the basics of harmony by learning and playing chord sequences.

Second Year The focus moves to Composition. The girls are given a thorough grounding in improvisations and harmony. Through using the techniques of Jazz improvisation, they learn to make up a tune of some length, and construct it using correct phrase lengths and cadences. Harmony is then introduced, and the girls learn to improvise to a given chord sequence. This is followed by song-writing, with girls learning the importance of stress in correct word setting. Performance is fully integrated into this module. The girls learn how to perform Jazz in groups, including improvisation and all compositions are performed by their composers. Listening is also integral to the course, particularly in understanding harmony, and we briefly examine the background to Blues and Jazz music.

Third Year There is more Listening in the Third Year, and the girls are expected to apply the skills of composition learnt in the Second Year and to develop them further. We focus on three topics:

- The Musical – Girls study West Side Story and then write and perform their own musical
- Programme music – Several works are studied and students then write their own piece of programme music, which they then perform.
- Film – Girls study the techniques of Film-Music Writers, drawing together listening skills acquired in all three years' study.

MUSIC IN THE UPPER SCHOOL (Fourth & Fifth Years)

GCSE Music is offered as an optional subject. The course is based upon the same elements as the National Curriculum; Listening, Performing and Composing. These are dealt with through music from areas of study and students will Listen to, Perform and Compose music inspired by these. By connecting Listening, Performing and Composing, it is possible to get a really clear sense of the breadth and beauty of music.

Syllabus

CCEA GCSE Music

Assessment pattern

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Listening (examined) | 25% |
| Performing (examined) | 35% |
| Composing (coursework) | 40% |

Syllabus Content

The content is divided into three areas of study:

- Music for Celebration
- Music in Arrangement
- The music and traditions of Ireland

Listening Students will sit one written examination lasting one hour, which will test their ability to listen to a number of pieces of music carefully and to respond to music that is played. There are nine works set by the board which means that some of the extracts will be familiar because they will have studied them.

Performing Students will perform throughout the course but at the end of it they perform one solo piece and one ensemble piece, both of which will be related to the areas of study. They are given one lesson a week with Mr Ings and can therefore expect to play frequently. They are given every opportunity to play in informal concerts

Composing Students will write music throughout the course, but at the end of it they will submit two specific compositions. They are given a free choice as to the style of the music, but they should be connected to the areas of study.

Music is an exciting and varied course that allows students to exploit their musical talents to the full. It allows them to find out what they most enjoy about music, and then to use that knowledge to discover more.

MUSIC IN THE SIXTH FORM

Syllabus

OCR Music 3872 (AS) and 7872 (A2)

Assessment Pattern

The full A level course consists of six modules. All girls take three modules in the Lower Sixth and three in the Upper Sixth. The Modules are:

AS level

Performing (Examined)
Composing 1 (Coursework)
Introduction to Historical Study (Examined)

A2 level

Performing: Interpretation (Examined/Coursework)
Composing 2 (Coursework)
Historical and Analytical Studies (Examined)

Syllabus Content

At AS level there are two Areas of Study

- The Expressive use of Instrumental Techniques
- Tonality

The content of the syllabus is based around these topics.

Performing:

Students give A solo recital on their first instrument and either an ensemble performance or a recital on their second instrument

Composing 1

Students write either an original composition or an arrangement for an ensemble of between 4 and 10 instruments (The Expressive use of Instrumental Techniques). They also complete a portfolio of composition exercises in one particular style. (Tonality)

Introduction to Historical Study

- a) There are six set works which allow students to focus on both Areas of Study. Three are taken from the Classical and Early Romantic Period of Music History, and three from Jazz of the Early to Mid Twentieth Century.
- b) There is also a listening paper, which develops listening skill and is based on Variation forms of the Baroque and Classical Period

At A2 the two Areas of Study are

- Words and Music
- Tonality

Performance Investigation

This consists of a 12-15 minute recital complemented by an extended essay which examines comparative performances of one of the pieces played.

Composing

There are four options and students must choose two of these. At least one of them must be a commissioned assignment, chosen from:

- Vocal composition. Two contrasted verses are set by the board and students must choose one of them. The voices and instruments to be used are determined by the board.
- Film Storyboard. The music must accompany a story determined by the board and act as the background to a film.
- Harmony. This consists of a set of harmony exercises which will be developed from further work on Romantic Piano writing. (sense??)
- Free choice. This is a piece of the candidate's own choice, lasting not more than 5 minutes

Historical and Analytical Studies

The listening paper is structured in the same way as that of that of AS. It consists of :

- Aural Extracts 45%
- Historical Topics 35%
- Synoptic Essay 20%

Aural extracts

There are two of these. The first (30%) are taken from a piece of vocal music written between 1900 and 1955 The second (15%) extract is taken from any period genre or tradition. There is no score and general aural questions will be asked. (This is rather like an extended and more difficult GCSE question)

Historical topics.

The chosen Historical Period is Aspects of Romanticism 1815 – 1885, concentrating on Words and Music This involves studying works in which the combination of words and music is important. Opera is the most significant art form studied; students also examine song cycle and religious choral music. There are no specific set works for this course but the syllabus recommends that various composers are studied.

Synoptic Essay.

This essay is to check that students have

- Remembered everything that they studied at AS level
- Are acquiring a wide and developing general knowledge of music.
- Have the ability to see connections between musical ideas across a wide range of music.

This is a challenging yet inspirational task, both for students and their teacher, and encourages students to gain a good general knowledge of music and to listen to a wide range of music from many different styles as possible.