

Music A Level

Preparation work: Pre-course Reading, Research and Tasks

Pre-reading, research and developing skills, will help you to become more familiar with the topics you are going to study in Music A level. If you complete the tasks below they will also help you to become more confident when you start your course. Remember it is also a good idea to make sure you recap and consolidate topics from GCSE Music (if you took it) and ABRSM Grade 5 Music Theory.

Specification:

Edexcel Music A level Specification:

[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](https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Music/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/Pearson%20Edexcel%20Level%203%20Advanced%20GCE%20in%20Music%209MU0%20specification.pdf)

Task 1:

Listening & Appraising (Area of Study: Film Music)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_L04BPYxYo

This video clip is taken from the opening of the 1992 film 'Batman Returns'. The storyline surrounds the Cobblepot family at Christmas time. Mrs Cobblepot gives birth to a 'monster' baby whose aggressive behaviour leads the parents to keep him in a cage. Eventually, out of desperation, the parents throw him over a bridge into a sewer. In at least 200 words, describe how the music (written by Danny Elfman) reflects and enhances the storyline. You might like to consider tonality, harmony, melody, rhythm, texture and instrumentation.

Task 2:

Performing

PART 1: Prepare a solo performance on an instrument of your choice (including voice) to give to your Music A level class. The performance should be approximately 3-5 minutes in length and ideally of at least grade 6 standard. You are welcome to perform a piece from any genre, it does not have to be Classical. You can check the difficulty level of pieces by using the below link. You can also ask your instrumental/vocal teacher to help estimate the level of the piece. The piece does not need to come from a specific book of exam pieces.

PART 2: Once you have chosen the piece to perform, please research the context of it. In approx. 100 words, provide a written report including information on who wrote it, when it was written, where it was written, and why it was written.

PART 3: Find two different performances of this piece on YouTube. How do these performances differ? Which aspects of each do you prefer and why? Has listening to these performances changed the way in which you now perform the piece? In approx. 100 words, please write a report answering the above questions. Remember to include the YouTube links to the performances.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Music/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/GCSE-AS-and-A-level-Music-Difficulty-Levels-Booklet.pdf>

Websites for Further Research and Reading:

www.classicfm.com – look at the ‘discover music’ and ‘composers’ sections

www.classical-music.com – lots of interesting articles

www.filmmusicnotes.com – analyses of famous film scores

<http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/music.html> - history of music over the last 100 years

Books to Read:

- **Edexcel AS/A level Anthology of Music (2016)** by Winterson (please buy before Sept 2020)
- **Edexcel AS and A level Music Study Guide** by Benham and Wightman
- **Edexcel A level Music Revision Guide** by Alastair Wightman
- **ABRSM Music Theory in Practice Grade 5** by Eric Taylor
- **Harmony in Practice (ABRSM)** by Anna Butterworth
- **The Story of Music** by Howard Goodall
- **How Music Works** by John Powell
- **Music: The Definitive Visual History** by DK

Podcasts:

Classical Classroom – learning to appreciate Classical music

Switched on Pop – spotting the links between today’s chart music and the Classical era

BBC Radio 3: Composer of the Week – a detailed look at a wide variety of composers from all styles of music

BBC Radio 3: Classical Fix – the presenter creates a Classical mix for guests

Decomposed – breaks down the stories that have shaped Classical music

Task 3:

Composition

Compose a 32 bar melody, reflecting four contrasting emotions. You can write for any melodic instrument, but beware of its range. You can submit a handwritten score using manuscript paper and a pencil, or a typed score by downloading Sibelius First for free here:

<https://my.avid.com/get/sibelius-first>

To help you, have a look at these websites:

LPO - This resources gives you practical steps to start composing a melody from scratch

<https://www.lpo.org.uk/education/resources/1004-lpo-the-studio-resource-melody-123/file.html>

Libretto Magazine – This article outlines the key features of a melody and how to achieve a high grade in an ABRSM theory exam

https://gb.abrsm.org/media/63491/libretto_0114.pdf



Films to Watch:

We will be studying the scores to these films: Batman Returns, The Duchess & Psycho

- **BBC's Howard Goodall's Story of Music** (6 episodes) available on YouTube
- **BBC3 How Pop Songs Work** available on iPlayer
- **BBC 3 Score: Cinema's Greatest Soundtracks** available on iPlayer
- **BBC 3 Holst & Vaughan Williams: Making English Music** available of iPlayer

Progression Opportunities

Why choose Music A Level:

- <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/creative-arts-and-design/careers-in-music>
- <https://www.ukmusic.org/skills-academy/careers-advice>
- <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/uk-creative-overview/facts-and-figures>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britains-creative-industries-break-the-100-billion-barrier>

We hope you enjoy completing these tasks and look forward to you joining the course.

