



St Mary Redcliffe
and Temple School

Music



Music

Exam board: WJEC

Specification no.: B660 (AS) / A660 (A Level)

This is a two year linear A level course - The AS content forms the first half of the A level content and can be assessed at the end of Year 12 to provide an AS Level qualification if the student is dropping the subject and believes they can get a strong grade, although the emphasis on composing in the AS would require independent work in this area early in the course to be able to meet this requirement. Otherwise the two years of content are assessed at the end of Year 13 to give the A level grade.

AS level

Module	Assessment	%
Performing Music	Two pieces (solos or ensembles) or more lasting 6-8 mins in total	30%
Composing	Two pieces (one set brief, one free choice) lasting 7 mins in total	30%
Developing Musical Understanding	Study of Music in a variety of styles including the Western Classical Symphonic Tradition and Musical Theatre assessed by a written exam including listening tests.	40%

A level

Module	Assessment	%
Option A		
Extended Performance	Recital consisting of at least three pieces (including at least one solo) of 10-12 mins in total	35%
Composition	Two pieces (one set brief, one free choice) lasting 6-8 mins in total	25%
Option B		
Performance	Two pieces (solos or ensembles) or more lasting 4-6 mins in total	25%
Extended Composition	Three compositions, two to set briefs, one free choice lasting 8-10 mins in total	35%
Compulsory Unit		
Further Musical Understanding	Further study of Music in a variety of styles including the Western Classical Symphonic Tradition, Musical Theatre and Music in the 21 st Century assessed by a written exam including listening tests.	40%

Course Delivery:

You will be taught both in small groups and individually. There is a strong emphasis on collaborating with and learning from others in the group through discussion and joint research and performance activities. Much of the coursework content (Composing and Performing) is individual and students are expected to use their initiative to enable their learning in these areas while receiving frequent feedback from other students, staff and visiting experts. Since 2008 we have worked with composers Richard Barnard, Mark Lawrence, Elizabeth Purnell & Professors of Composition John Pickard & Raymond Warren, as well as professional performers including, the BBC Singers and staff from the Royal Welsh College of Music. Specialists in contemporary music The Ligeti String Quartet have had an annual residency with us since 2016.

Course Content:

Performing: Performance on one (or more if you wish) instruments (including voice). During the course students receive specialist performance coaching from an ABRSM examiner on top of their personal instrumental or voice lessons. They perform to the class in a series of masterclasses and are given supportive and constructive feedback. Students must join one or more of the school's extra-curricular groups and perform at school events in order to develop their ensemble abilities. As a guide a piece of Grade 5/6 standard is taken as the normal standard with extra credit given for more difficult pieces.

Composing: You will compose two or three pieces (depending on the option you take), one in more or less any style, the other related to the mainstream classical tradition (and a third to a set brief if taking Option B). Both should show intelligent use and creative development of memorable original material. Before composing your pieces, you will receive tuition in a variety of musical techniques and be trained in using music specialist software. You will research examples in similar styles or genres to those you will be composing in. Once completed you will write an appraisal of your pieces.

Listening & Understanding: A written paper on set works which also tests listening skills. Students must study a wide variety of Music and will listen to, analyse, read about and in some cases perform these works. Tuition includes historical and social context of the music as well as analysis of the music itself.

Entry requirements:

You do not need to have a GCSE in Music to take this course but if you have not taken GCSE Music you must either have passed Grade 5 music theory or be working towards it. Please note that the ability to read written music to at least a basic level is essential. In addition, you must have the ability to perform to at least Grade 5 standard on one instrument. If you have taken Music at GCSE it should be passed with at least grade 5. At least a grade 5 in GCSE English (Language or Literature) is required as part of the normal entry requirements

Skills & personal qualities required / developed by course:

As a Music Student you will need to be open-minded about music from styles and traditions that you are not yet familiar with. You must be prepared to share with and learn from one another. You must love playing and/or composing and be prepared to spend hours of your own time every week immersed in practising and exploring new sounds. You will enhance your general intelligence by developing your right/left brain coordination in ways unique to Music. You will have increased physical and mental coordination and be able to present yourself more confidently and professionally in a variety of public situations. You will also learn discussion, time management and independent study skills.

Resources / facilities / opportunities:

Brand new Music IT Centre (with Cubase and Sibelius music software packages) and Recording Studio (with 16 channel mixing desk), dedicated recital room, six pianos, four electric pianos, a pipe organ, a harpsichord, two full sets of the New Grove Dictionary, 'excellent' (Ofsted) extra curricular opportunities (Chamber Choir, Gospel Choir, Orchestra, String, Flute, Clarinet, Brass and Guitar Ensembles, annual Musicals including recently Les Miserables, West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Beauty & the Beast and Hairspray). Many performances take place in St Mary Redcliffe Church and recent large scale works performed include Mozart's Requiem and Bach's St John Passion. There are annual opportunities to have your compositions and arrangements performed to a professional standard. There are at least thirty public performing opportunities (concerts or services) a year as well as daily opportunities within the school, expert staff and extra tuition from visiting top professionals, conservatoire teachers and university staff from Bristol and London.

For further information: Contact Mr Edward Davies (Head of Music)

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to be able to read music?

Yes, this is essential to enable you to analyse and discuss pieces from written scores, something the exam requires. We ask you to have at least a basic ability at the start of the course (treble clef notes, rhythm notation, major and minor chords). If you can't do that currently you need to learn before the start of the course. We will also provide some resources for this at your induction session. The better you are at reading music the easier you will find the course.

What does a typical lesson consist of?

This depends on whether we are focusing on performance, composition or discussing and analysing music. In a performance based lesson we might be giving and listening to live or recorded example performances and then discussing and evaluating them or marking them against the exam board mark scheme.

In a composition based lesson we might be learning about a specific compositional (e.g. enharmonic modulation) or instrumental playing (e.g. string harmonics) technique and then applying that to a composing exercise using live instruments or software.

In an analysis lesson we might start by trying to write out a melody by ear or identify some chords played by the teacher. We would then move on to listen to and discuss a song or piece of symphonic music, analyse the written score, identify particular features of interest such as the structure of the music, the tonality, the harmonic range etc. We would relate this to other pieces written at the same time or later pieces influenced by this music.

How big are the classes?

Class size averages in the range between six and ten. This means students are able to receive lots of individual attention and support from staff but also have others they can collaborate with and learn from.

Can I have instrument/singing lessons at Redcliffe?

Yes, you can. We offer lessons on most string, wind, brass and percussion instruments as well as piano, organ, guitars as well as singing. Our teachers are all highly rated and experienced professional musicians who work at other state and independent schools. Everyone taking A Level Music needs to be having individual instrument/voice lessons either privately or through the Music Department.

What extra-curricular groups are running?

As mentioned above there are ensembles for most instruments as well as two choirs and annual musical productions. These groups are all run by expert teachers and it is recommended you get involved in order to improve your ensemble and performing skills. We also run a biennial week long music tour, recent locations include Belfast, Glasgow, Budapest, Krakow, Regensburg and Bordeaux.

What practice facilities are available?

The Music department is located in the main school and has five practice rooms each equipped with a piano, a recital room with a baby grand piano and harpsichord, two acoustic drum kits, vibraphone and guitars, a rock suite with electric kit, electric piano and guitars, a recording studio, a hall with a baby grand piano, electric piano and pipe organ and the church which has a grand piano and internationally famous pipe organ.







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