

A Level Music Preparation

Much like GCSE Music the A level Music course is divided into 'listening' and 'appraising' (including set works), 'composition' and 'performance'. You can choose to weight slightly more to composition or performance - but we can discuss this at a later date.

The exam board we use is OCR - <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/music-h143-h543-from-2016/>

If you email me – mgrogan@birchwoodhigh.org.uk - I can send you anything that you require for preparation (including pdfs and scores needed).

Things that you can do in preparation for September ...

For the Exam Paper (40%)

1. Having a good basic grasp of musical theory is very important, the essentials are -

- Reading treble, bass and alto clefs
- Key signatures – sharps and flats - circle of 5ths
- Time signatures
- Tempo, dynamic, articulation – Italian terms
- Transposing
- Understanding chords – Tonic, subdominant, dominant, inversions, 7ths, diminished and augmented.
- Different types of textures

Please don't be overwhelmed by all of this, but if you can go over the bullet points above, this will give you an excellent grounding for September. If you want something to work through please email me and I can send you Alfreds Essentials work book. This is a theory work book and takes you from the very basics of reading notes, through to chords - **have a look at this and attempt to work through a couple of pages a day**. All the information is in the book and is well explained.

Also, you can find lots of music theory videos on Youtube with people explaining all the above, so please look online as well.

2. Understanding the orchestra and the instruments – you have done a lot of this for GCSE Music., There are lots of things online about the orchestra e.g. - <https://www.youtube.com/user/symphony>

3. Areas of study - As part of the exam you will study **4 Areas of music history**, and you have 2 set works. Having a broad knowledge of these before you start in September is really crucial to developing your understanding.

- **Area of study 1 – Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.**

Getting some understanding of these 3 composers (Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven) is a good place to start. Research when they lived, what type of music did they compose (and listen to their music – note it's instrumental music so you don't have to listen to opera or any vocal)? what types of ensembles did they write for? did they perform? what types of occasions would they write music for? You just need an overview. ***You can keep this research on a word document or powerpoint and online.***

Watch these documentaries to give you a feel for the composers, their music and times they lived in -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDc2APzwT2w>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DDxsrZ6_0&t=1519s

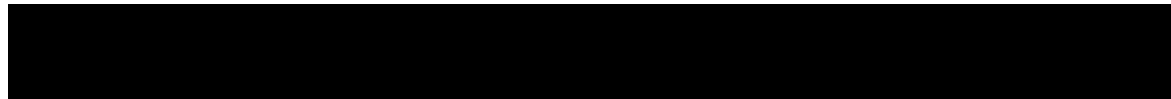
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YueD9vB51hk> (and part 2+3)

Your set work for Area of Study 1 is -

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, first movement

Make sure you listen to it with the score pdf (I can email this to you).

[Beethoven: Piano Concerto No.4 in G, Op.58 \(Lewis\)](#)



CONCERTO IV.

L. van Beethoven, Op. 58.

Allegro moderato.

Solostimme
(Original).

p dolce *f*

Orchester-
Bearbeitung.

Allegro moderato.



- **Area of Study 2 - Popular Song: Blues, Jazz and Big Band**

This is a very big area with lots of artists and music. Listening and researching the following styles of Blues and Jazz, and artists, is a good place to start -

- Rag time – Scott Joplin
- Dixieland Jazz – Original Dixieland Jazz Band
- Early Swing – Louis Armstrong and his hot Five
- Big Band Swing – Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Glen Miller
- Bebop – Dizzie Gillespie, Charlie Parker
- Cool Jazz – Miles Davis

- Solo singers – Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Nat 'king' Cole

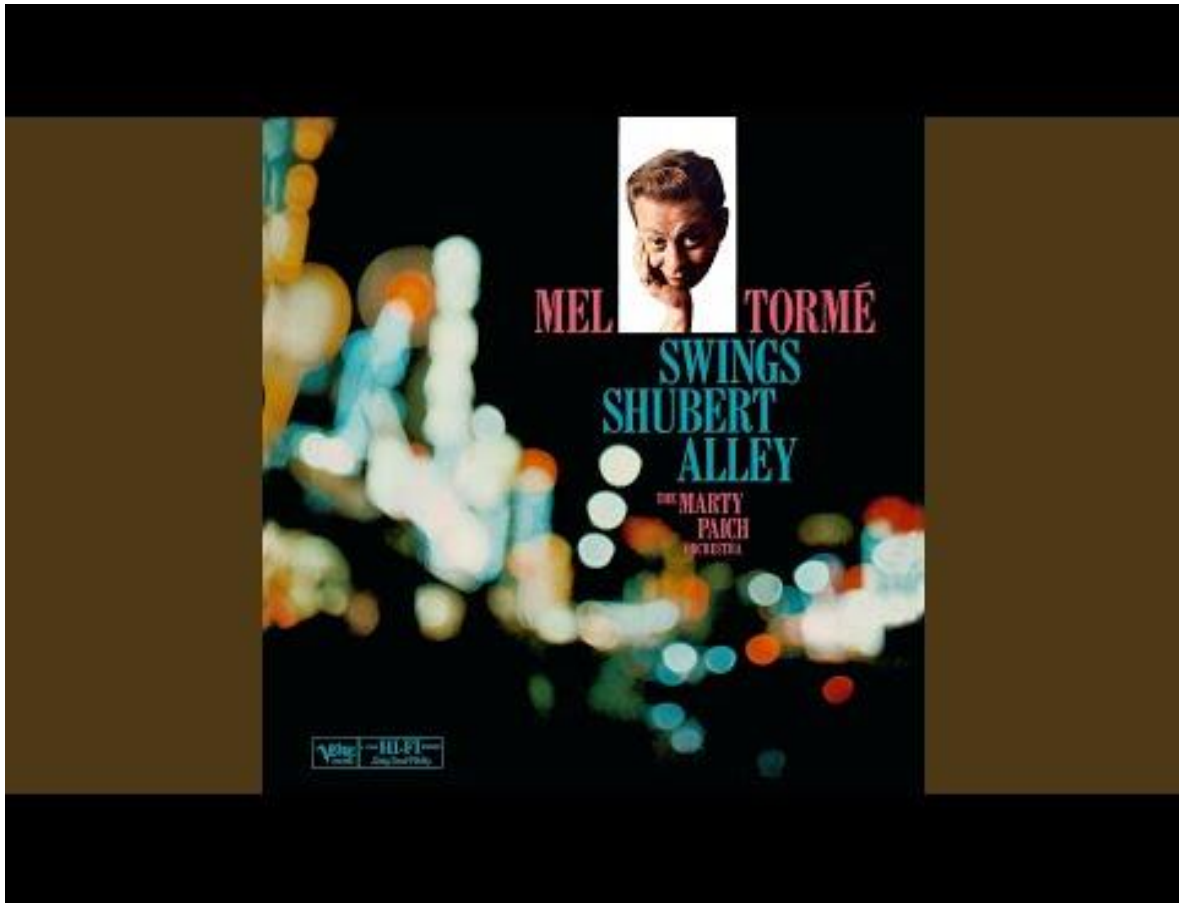
- Blues Artists – Son House, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson

Again, research the internet, there are some excellent documentaries on Youtube and BBC IPlayer. Just watching and listening will 'set the tone' so you really understand the eras and music being created.

Your set work for area of study 2 is -

Mel Tormé: Mel Tormé Swings Schubert Alley (1960): (i) 'Too Close For Comfort', (ii) 'On The Street Where You Live', (iii) 'Too Darn Hot', (iv) 'Lonely Town'

Listen to it here - [Too Close For Comfort](#)



The next 2 areas of study may change but we are likely to look at

- Area of Study 3: Developments in Instrumental Jazz 1910 to the present day
- Area of Study 5: Programme Music 1820–1910

As with area of study's 1 and 2, you should look in the specification at areas of study 3 and 5 and listen to some of the music styles that is in the specification (area of study 3 crosses over with area of study 2). Even just a very broad overview of the style of music would be good to come back in September with.

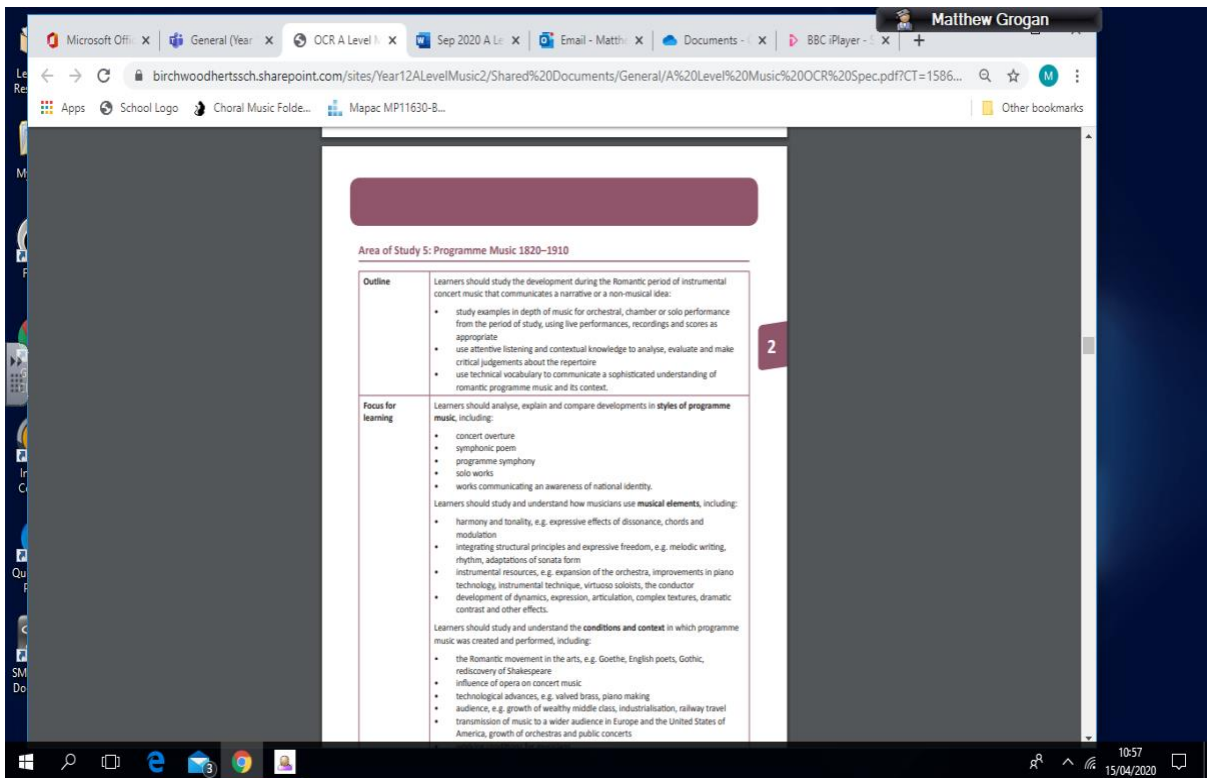
Matthew Grogan

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Area of Study 3: Developments in Instrumental Jazz 1910 to the present day

Outline	<p>Learners should study the development of instrumental jazz music from 1910 to the present day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> study examples in depth of recorded jazz performances from the period of study using live performances, recordings and scores as appropriate use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of jazz music and its context.
Focus for learning	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in styles of jazz, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> early jazz swing bebop cool jazz hard bop avant garde and free jazz jazz-rock fusion contemporary approaches to jazz. <p>Learners should study and understand how jazz musicians use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improvisation swing syncopation polyrhythms harmony and tonality blues blue notes and decoration of notes (vibrato, pitch bend, smear etc.) timbre organisation of pitch, melodically and harmonically devices, e.g. chorus, call and response, riff or ostinato roles of solo and ensemble, rhythm section (drums, bass etc.). <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which jazz music was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> its origins in New Orleans and elsewhere its dissemination to a wider audience in the United States of America and Europe changes in the popularity and commercial viability of jazz

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Study guides

I highly recommend you get a copy of this book – this is excellent and a lot of what we use as teachers comes from it!

<http://www.rhinegoldeducation.co.uk/product/ocr-as-and-a-level-music-study-guide/>

The only thing is that your set works will be different – Rhinegold will bring out a separate (supplement for 2022)

Performance (30%)

At the end of year 13 you will give a recital to a small audience, I suggest you should be starting to think about what pieces you are going to play. ABRSM or Rock School grade 6+ is the standard and you will probably need at least 3 pieces. Make sure you are regularly practising at least 30 mins a day. **Keep a diary of what you are practising and when, look at the specification for details on the assessment criteria (fluency, expression and communication, demand).**

Composition (30%)

By the end of year 13 you are required to create 2 pieces of music, one of them has an exam board brief. I suggest, if you are able to, start to create some ideas at home, on your instrument or on a music sequencer, then we can build on them in school for your compositions. Aim to spend 1 hour a week composing and creating. Being good at composition is something you can develop through regular practice. ***Research a style of music you'd like to compose in, what are the main elements – instruments, structure, chords, melody, texture, tempo? Keep your research in the files section of teams.***