

# Music

## A level

### What will I study and learn?

The A level Music syllabus offers a varied and academically rigorous course of study, allowing musical development in the three core areas: performing, composing and listening/analysis. This approach offers a smooth transition from the GCSE course. There is one compulsory area of study – The Western Classical Tradition – and, as a class, you will then choose two others from: Pop Music, Music for Media, Music for Theatre, Jazz, Contemporary, Traditional Music, and Art Music since 1910.

Lessons vary in style and include: analysing music by ear or from a score; exploring its effect on the listener; composing on a computer, keyboard

or your instrument and undertaking independent research; and exploring music performance, both practically and analytically.

### How will I be assessed?

#### Paper 1 Appraising music (40%)

Exam (2 hours 30 minutes) – listening exercises, written questions using excerpts of music, and an essay.

#### Paper 2 Performance (30%)

10 minutes minimum – instrumental/vocal solo or ensemble, via music technology or a combination of the above.

#### Paper 3 Composition (30%)

Two pieces – either instrumental/vocal composition or music production. One free and one to a brief.

### What skills should I have and what will be developed?

The Music A level encompasses all genres, skills and instruments, catering for different learning styles and musical tastes. You will have the opportunity to build on your musical knowledge and experience gained from the GCSE course and from your musical activities outside of the curriculum. You will take a multidisciplinary approach, developing creativity and self-expression as well as analytical and critical thinking. You will need sound music theory and notation skills or be prepared to develop these. Please let us know if you need support with this.

## A level/IB

Your musical activities outside of your formal studies will undoubtedly help you to succeed, and you will be expected to take advantage of the many opportunities that BGS and the local area has to offer.

There are currently over 25 musical ensembles, clubs and activities running before and after school and at lunchtimes. A large number of Sixth-form students take part in these, and frequently take on roles as 'student

leaders' within the ensembles. There are also many smaller student- and staff-led groups including chamber groups and rock bands. Students benefit from regular formal and informal performance opportunities in the School's recital room and theatre, at prestigious venues in Bristol, further afield, on tours abroad and in the biennial School musical. There are also regular concert trips and workshops led by professional musicians covering a variety of genres.

### Entry requirements

Students normally have a grade 7 in Music GCSE or equivalent. For A level Music and IB, an audition or performing exam certificates may be required to ascertain suitability for the course if this is not the case. You will need to be an advanced performer on an instrument, voice or via music technology.



## IB

### What will I study and learn?

The Music strand for the IB Diploma allows you to study a broad range of musical styles from a variety of musical cultures around the world. This will focus around four main areas of musical enquiry: Stage Music (music for listening and performance); Songs of War, Protest, and Celebration (music of sociocultural and political expression); Music in Entertainment (film, dance, media, advertising); and Music Technology (20th century modern techniques and dance music). It is an academically rigorous course through which you will hone your composition skills through a series of miniatures (achieved through music technology, traditional notation, and improvisation). Much of the course is personalised entirely around your musical interests and skills, building from a personal, local and global knowledge of music, with varying degrees of familiarity. You will develop your performing skills and ability to communicate through musical

expression, as well as developing independent research skills through an investigation into musical styles of your own choosing.

### How will I be assessed?

**Exploring Music in Context (SL 30%, HL 20%)**

Looking at music which is:

Personal: known to you

Local: unfamiliar to you

Global: unfamiliar to you.

You will submit samples of written work and practical exercises (including creating and performing), along with supporting audio material. The audio material is not assessed.

**Experimenting with Music (SL 30%, HL 20%)**

You will experiment with music from two of the following styles:

- Music for sociocultural and political expression
- Music for listening and performance
- Music for dramatic impact, movement and entertainment

- Music technology in the electronic and digital age.

You will be required to submit an experimentation report with evidence of your musical processes in creating and performing in two areas of inquiry in a local and/or global context.

**Presenting Music (SL 40%, HL 30%):**

You will experiment with music from all four of the above areas of enquiry and submit a collection of works demonstrating your engagement with diverse musical material. Your submission will contain evidence of you presenting as a researcher, as a creator, and as a performer.

**Contemporary Music Maker (HL only, 30%)**

In this assessment component, you will prepare a multimedia presentation evidencing the effective planning and development of a real-life music project (based on the practices of a 21st century professional in the music industry).

### Want to know more?

**A level:** Mrs Elizabeth Rees  
Head of Curricular Music  
[erees@bgs.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:erees@bgs.bristol.sch.uk)

**IB:** Mr Charlie Morris  
Teacher of Music  
[cmorris@bgs.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:cmorris@bgs.bristol.sch.uk)

Exam Board:  
[www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)  
[www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)

### What skills should I have and what will be developed?

The IB course offers a satisfying level of demand for the advanced musician, allowing the development of a range of skills from creativity, communication and expression through to independent investigation and critical thinking.