

A LEVEL A LEVEL MUSIC: CREATING OUTSTANDING COMPOSITIONS

CODE 8446

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Lead by an A level examiner and former Head of Music, this course, first delivered in the Autumn of 2020 and described by one delegate as 'truly inspiring', is designed for all teachers of A level Music, regardless of exam board.

The course includes a detailed examination of what students need to demonstrate to examiners at A level, including looking at the definitions of key assessment terms used in the highest criteria, and exactly why they are used, and how these can be integrated into the composition process. This also provides valid and accurate data for tracking and assessing within the department

Alternative approaches to composition briefs will be examined that allow students to maximise efficiency, yet write with greater technical skill for the highest marks. The need to balance creative freedom with academic rigour will be discussed, and three examples of free briefs will be dissected.

Proven strategies for weaker or under-confident students will be suggested, along with ways of developing compositional skills across A Level with the aim of encouraging a love of composition, while at the same time maximising potential to access the best possible marks.

The final sessions focuses in details on ways of making a composition outstanding, final presentations, communicating to the examiner, exploring immediate and practical suggestions for composition planning, final steps for more completed compositions, including ways of achieving idiomatic writing, and alternative ideas for creating good recordings. Three outstanding composition examples will then be discussed.

PROGRAMME

TIME

Beginning at the End - summarised feedback, common issues raised by examiners

10.00 - 10.45am

- Comparison of marking criteria across the exam boards for A level
- Common assessment criteria; Super-Criteria and a SuperGrid?
- What students ultimately have to demonstrate to an examiner at A level
- Summarised feedback from all of the exam boards
- Common issues raised by examiners
- Immediate priorities

Unpacking Composition Briefs

10.45 - 11.30am

- Unpacking composition briefs; three examples
- Own-choice briefs; three examples
- Types of composition briefs
- Researching briefs
- Strategies for the weaker or underconfident student
- Balancing creative freedom and academic rigour
- A level without having taken GCSE
- Analysis vs. composition

Discussion: coffee break

11.30 - 11.45am

Moving to Advanced Compositional Skills: writing idiomatically, hidden aspects to the mark schemes

11.45 - 1.00pm

- Hidden aspects to the mark schemes
- Questions, questions, and more questions - getting students thinking
- Key terms and more considerations
- The philosophy behind composition and understanding the creative process
- Writing idiomatically
- Graphical methods and alternative ideas for the planning stage
- Developing student skills - integrating listening, analysis, performance and composition

Lunch and informal discussion

1.00 - 1.30pm

Maximising Monitoring and Feedback Value

1.30 - 2.00pm

- Verbal feedback vs. written feedback
- Minimising time for teachers but maximising feedback value
- Marking an incomplete composition with validity
- Monitoring processes
- Daring to write up later
- The power of assessment scales

The refining process

2.00 - 2.30pm

- Making a composition outstanding
- Pedantry - notation, typesetting, formatting and annotating
- Final presentation of the score and alternative formats; communicating to the examiner
- Producing a good quality recording - alternative ideas to Sibelius exports

Discussion of Four Outstanding Examples

2.30 - 3.30pm

LOCATION/DATE

London

Tuesday 09 November 2021

COURSE LEADER

Alexander Aitken was Head of Academic Music and Choirmaster at Stowe School until December 2017, and is an A level examiner with Edexcel. He was on the review team for Edexcel's GCSE Music textbook, having also written the analysis of Defying Gravity.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Head of Music
- Teachers of Music, both new and experience

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING

- Take away proven strategies, approaches and monitoring processes for composition at A Level
- Find out more about assessment criteria and what what students ultimately have to demonstrate to an examiner for GCSE and A Level
- Gain new techniques, approaches and strategies for composition briefs
- Take away strategies for the weaker of under-confident composition student
- Take away strategies to support students taking A level without having taken GCSE
- Questions, questions and more questions - getting students thinking
- Find out more about how to maximise feedback value
- Take away top practical advice on making a composition outstanding