University of Birmingham

MA Music: Mixed Composition pathway

Music as a creative art form in the 21st century can combine both tradition and innovation, bringing together instruments (some new, some with centuries of history) and the latest in high technology. As a composer today all of these resources are available to you, and the Mixed Composition pathway aims to foster your skills as you navigate this exciting new world. By studying this pathway you can create works which combine electroacoustics and computer technology with more traditional instrumental and vocal composition, or explore each of those elements separately. Works for interactive systems, multimedia, and sound installations are also welcome.

Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham was awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx)

Course fact file

Type of Course: Taught

Study Options: Full time, part time

Duration: 1 year full-time; 2 years part-time

Start date: September

Contact

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School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music (/schools/lcahm/index.aspx)

Department of Music (/schools/lcahm/departments/music/index.aspx)

Details

You will study two core modules:

- Music Research Colloquium
- Composition Tutorials

You will also choose two optional modules and produce a composition portfolio of new musical works.

Why study this course

We have a wide range of resources and facilities to support your learning and ensure you receive the maximum benefit from studying this programme.

You have access to outstanding facilities in the new £16 million Bramall Music building, including five electroacoustic studios (all of them multichannel; the largest 24 channel), an isolation room for recording, a dedicated control room which can record sound from around the building, and an 18 seat computer cluster. The Dome room is home to the 32 channel Mini-BEAST system, regularly used for listening sessions, rehearsals, and concerts. The Elgar Concert Hall – which has extremely flexible acoustics and technologically advanced AV systems designed by renowned acoustician and architect Nicolas Edwards (Symphony Hall Birmingham, Symphony Centre Dallas, Royal Shakespeare Theatre) – is arguably the best and most adaptable space of its kind in any University in the UK. Like the entire building it is wired for audio over Ethernet, and multi-projector video presentation.

The internationally recognised BEAST system (Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre; arguably the best system of its type in the world) regularly presents student works in concerts with up to 100 loudspeakers in Birmingham and abroad (e.g. Berlin, Copenhagen, Basel). Our postgraduate laptop ensemble, the Birmingham Ensemble for Electroacoustic Research (BEER) provides opportunities to explore advanced aspects of live electroacoustic performance such as controller integration, network music, and live coding.

You also have the opportunity to write works for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (our 'Ensemble in Association') the Department's New Music Ensemble, and for other workshops with visiting performers (e.g. the Hermes Ensemble, Darragh Morgan, Carla Rees, and Joby Burgess in recent years). Excellent equipment (computers, microphones, recorders) and library resources, and the opportunity to interact with distinguished guest artists in our COMPASS Forum seminar series fill out a first class offering.

Modules

You will study two core modules:

Music Research Colloquium

You will attend approximately 14 research seminars, most delivered by invited speakers in the Music Department's research seminar series. Department staff will lead several review sessions. There will be approximately six seminars on library research skills, information retrieval and music-related software.

Composition Tutorials

Over two semesters, you will receive regular one-to-one tutorial teaching, enabling you to develop your compositional technique and a self-reflexive critique of your own work. Composition techniques appropriate to individual needs will be taught and discussed during tutorials. In so doing, you will also be encouraged to broaden your range of compositional practice, and move toward the development of a personal 'voice'.

You will also choose two optional modules as follows:

At least one of -

Advanced Studies in Electroacoustic Composition

This module builds on your previous experience at Birmingham or elsewhere. It aims to expand your thinking and musical horizons through theoretical and practical work. The module includes listening, reading, programming, performance training and the use of a large range of audio software and hardware. The module contains six areas of study: sound generating, editing, mixing and processing techniques; source sound recording techniques (studio and field); approaches to spatialisation; diffusion techniques and the MiniBEAST and BEAST sound systems; advanced topics in programming for electroacoustics and digital signal processing; software critique; and repertoire studies.

Advanced Studies in Instrumental/Vocal Composition

The module contains four main areas of study: musical form (micro and macro); advanced studies in notation; repertoire studies; and relevant strands of advanced music theory. Topics covered will include proper editing and preparation of materials at a professional level, recent stylistic developments in contemporary music (e.g. post-spectralism, post-minimalism), and computer assisted composition techniques.

Plus, if you only choose to study one of the above modules, one of -

Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art

This module consists of a critical examination of topics in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. It considers subjects such as: art and the nature of aesthetic experience; beauty, ugliness and the sublime; symbolism and allegory; the aesthetics of modernism. At its core is an overview of the German aesthetic tradition, involving a close reading of foundational texts by Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel and their contemporaries in the early 19th century. It will also consider work by a range of subsequent authors, such as, for example, Walter Benjamin, John Dewey, Ernst Bloch, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Theodor Adorno and Martin Heidegger. Attention will be paid not only to the conceptual arguments put forward by the thinkers in question, but also to the ways in which their theoretical tenets have underpinned the interpretation and criticism of works of art, music and literature.

Contemporary Music Studies

This module studies the explosion of musical expression that characterises 20th-century and contemporary music, focusing on key movements (serialism, minimalism, etc) and concerns (tonality/atonality, aleatoric principles, etc). Starting from the musical 'crisis' of the early years of the 20th century, the course will address issues such as the separation of 'art' and 'popular' music, the impact of technology and the presumption of postmodernism at the start of the 21st century. The marked shift in aesthetics and music's 'function' will also be discussed.

Sound in Society

This module provides an introduction to the field of Sound Studies, including both the conceptual framework as well as practical techniques. We will begin with an overview of the field and its formation in 2004 through a consideration of the work of Trevor Pinch, Karin Bijsterveld and R Murray Schafer. Subsequent weeks will cover topics such as: soundscapes; sound and the animal world; noise and silence in philosophy; the engineering of sound; sound and radio art; and synaesthesia research in cognitive psychology.

Laptop Ensemble

This module explores the rapidly developing field of laptop ensemble performance. The class will function as an ensemble group, working to develop and prepare repertoire for public concerts. Topics covered will include: techniques for improvisation; networked music performance; live coding; and composition for live electroacoustic ensemble. Works presented in concert will include student and group developed pieces, as well as 'classics' from the field. Students should have at least a rudimentary background in a computer music programming environment such as SuperCollider or Max/MSP, but the projects pursued will be selected according to the ensemble's makeup each year.

Special Study in Music

You will undertake a special study of a particular field of your choice under the direction of the leader of your pathway, which will typically require attendance at an appropriate series of lectures or tutorials as well as independent reading and research. Topics for study might include: vocalists in the Baroque era; topics in music analysis; or topics in critical musicology.

Music, Place and Identity

This module is concerned with understanding the relation of music to concepts of place and identity. In addition to a broad theoretical overview of topics related to place (including theories of locality, nationalism, transnationalism, diasporas, and indigeneity) as developed in fields as diverse as history, cultural geography and anthropology, the module will cover seminal ethno/musicological works on how musics inscribe place-based senses of cultural belonging. Topics and examples may include: occupation and cross-cultural collaborations in Palestine/Israel; transnationalism and cultural diplomacy in the Eurovision Song Contest; music and governmentality in the Caribbean; contemporary Native American and First Nations indigenous musics; European art music and colonialism; diasporic South Asian music in the UK; the role of music in the Arab Spring; and music in Birmingham.

Introduction to Programming for Electroacoustics

This module will explore the use of computers for the realtime and non-realtime creation of music and/ or sound installations, within a lecture/workshop environment. This will make use of the free and open source DSP and music language SuperCollider. Topics may include sound synthesis, realtime processing, interaction, the development of graphical interfaces, etc. Knowledge of computer programming and advanced maths is not a prerequisite.

Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2015/16 are as follows:

- Home / EU: £6,210 full-time; £3,105 part-time
- Overseas: £14,140 full-time

For part-time students, the above fee quoted is for year one only and tuition fees will also be payable in year two of your programme.

Eligibility for Home/EU or Overseas fees can be verified with Admissions. Learn more about **fees for international students (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx)**

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments. Learn more about **postgraduate tuition fees and funding (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx)** .

Alumni Bursary

The University of Birmingham is offering awards of ?2,000 to outstanding alumni wishing to undertake Masters study at the University during 2015. There are 50 awards available and applications for the bursary must be submitted by 17:00 on 31 March 2015. Full details and how to apply can be found on the **Distinguished Alumni Scholarship page (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/Distinguished-Alumni-Scholarship-scheme.aspx)** .

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's **Postgraduate Funding Database (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx)** .

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

Entry requirements

Learn more about **entry requirements (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx)**

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our **country pages (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx)** show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx)** to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx)**

How to apply

Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us (https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate)** to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx)**

Apply now (https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL095.htm)

Learning and teaching

Your learning will be enhanced by our extensive facilities, including the new **Bramall Music Building (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/bramall/index.aspx)** and the **Electroacoustic Music Studios and Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre (BEAST) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/BEAST/index.aspx)** .

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx)** which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU) (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/insessional/index.aspx)** .

Related staff

Dr Scott Wilson (/staff/profiles/music/wilson-scott.aspx)

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

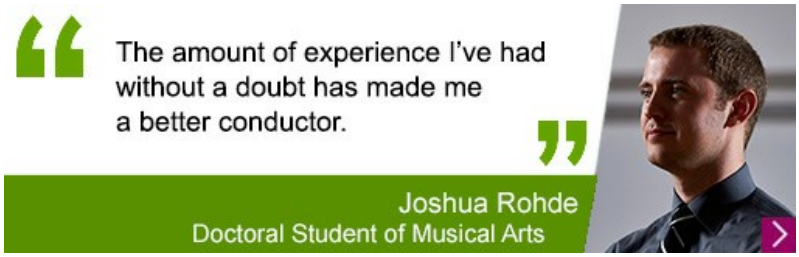
Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. Get the latest Flash Player Get the latest version of QuickTime

Birmingham's Music postgraduates work in a wide range of careers within and beyond the music world. A postgraduate degree in Music develops a broad base of skills including general skills such as communication, problem solving and research, and also specific skills developed by practice and performance such as self-management, team work and presentation.

Over the past five years, 96% of Music postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation. Whilst some graduates pursue music-related careers, others choose to use their transferable skills to follow career paths in fields including finance, the media and the public sector. Employers that graduates have gone on to work for include: Arts Council England; BBC; Birmingham Conservatoire; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group; Coventry City Council Performing Arts Service; Lancaster University; National Opera Studio; National Orchestra; Raffles Institution; and Royal Northern College of Music.

Music postgraduate alumni profiles



(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/music/postgraduate/music-alumni-pg.aspx)

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