University of Birmingham

MA Music: Open Pathway with Performance

Music as a discipline is more diverse than ever, and musicians and scholars in the 21st century must be prepared to navigate amongst numerous streams of practice and research. The open pathway offers you the opportunity to chart your own route within this exciting world. In consultation with the programme convenor you will design a unique course of study, drawing upon our extensive offerings in Musicology, Composition, and Performance. Modules from outside the discipline (e.g. a language) may also be available if relevant to your individual pursuits.

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

Dr Eliot Bates
Email: **e.bates@bham.ac.uk (mailto:e.bates@bham.ac.uk)**

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:

- Advanced Performance
- Music Research Colloquium

You will also choose two optional modules and complete a final project in the form of a composition portfolio, 15,000-word musicology dissertation, recital, recital with commentary or edition with commentary. You will choose your modules and the format of your final project in consultation with the programme convenor.

Why study this course

You will have the opportunity to draw upon the wide range of interests and knowledge held by the Department's expert academic staff, and will benefit from our extensive library holdings.

The new, £16 million Bramall Music building offers outstanding facilities, including climate controlled rooms for the Centre for Early Music Performance and Research, multichannel electroacoustic music studios and BEAST (the department's huge loudspeaker system for electroacoustic music; arguably the best system of its kind in Europe). It is also home to the acoustically flexible and technologically advanced 450 seat Elgar Concert Hall, with acoustics designed by renowned acoustician and architect Nicolas Edwards (Symphony Hall Birmingham, Symphony Centre Dallas, Royal Shakespeare Theatre).

Modules

You will study two core modules:

Advanced Performance

This is a module for advanced performers who are approaching a professional standard. Your skills will be honed through individual tuition with experts on your instrument/voice. You will present a lecture-recital involving a performance and a lecture presentation, and submit an extended essay version of the lecture.

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.

You will also choose two optional modules from the following:

Introduction to Musicology

This module examines issues that are exercising musicologists in the modern discipline, with a view to preparing you to conduct original research and ultimately prepare you for the profession. It is taught as a series of seminars by various members of staff, each introducing a topic related to their own research expertise.

Introduction to Electroacoustic Composition

This module covers editing and mixing techniques using proprietary digital audio workstation software as well as sound processing techniques using plug-ins. You will also learn source sound recording techniques, an understanding of diffusion and the MiniBEAST system and listening to repertoire, with a particular emphasis on the studio techniques employed.

Introduction to Instrumental/Vocal Composition

This module will provide an opportunity to study instrumental/vocal composition for students whose main focus of postgraduate studies lies within another related area, for example electroacoustic composition.

During the autumn semester, three topics related to various compositional techniques are presented in the form of the lectures, followed by related compositional exercises and workshops. During the spring semester, you will focus on development of your own ideas through the creation of a longer composition (or a number of compositions), with the individual guidance from the tutor.

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.

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.

Advanced Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music

This module will provide the technical and theoretical background for working in this period and equip you with the skills necessary to proceed to a PhD in Medieval or Renaissance Music. Through a series of case studies, you will be shown a variety of analytical models to provide you with different ways of engaging with the music as well as of talking and thinking about it. You will also examine complex and controversial issues of performance practice.

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.

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.

British Music Studies

This module takes the broadest perspective on modern British art music, offering case studies in the work of the ‘great composers’ of the tonal idiom such as Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Britten, evaluation of the Anglican choral tradition and the British symphonic tradition, examination of the problematic status of modernism in British music before 1960, and criticism of modernist and postmodernist composition since World War II. Approaches are critical, analytical and sociological, with some reception history as well. The repertory under study is mainly choral, orchestral and chamber music.

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.

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.

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.

Gender and Music

The field of gender studies is a very important area of focus in musicological and ethnomusicological research. This module is divided into two parts: a ten-week seminar on gender studies in general followed by an independent study during which you will apply learned information from the seminar to a chosen essay topic in the discipline of music. The seminar will focus on the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural aspects of gender studies and feminist theories. You will be introduced to a range of theoretical and methodological issues and debates that have characterised the development of gender studies in the twentieth century. You will also be introduced to the ontological, epistemological and methodological issues that arise in feminist scholarship. You will engage with the study of these issues both as analytical categories and approaches within the social sciences. During your independent study, you will meet with an advisor to create an appropriate project that will enable you to apply the general knowledge of gender studies and feminist theories specifically to research in the discipline of music.

Analysis of Music 1770–1910

This module explores major compositions of the Classical and Romantic traditions and explains the main analytical techniques that have been developed for

understanding them over the last two decades. These include theories of formal functions (William E. Caplin), 'dialogic' form' (James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy), metrical conflict (Harald Krebs, Richard Cohn), and 'second practice' tonality.

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.

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'.

Fees and funding

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

- Home/EU: £7,560 full-time; £3,780 part-time
- Overseas: £15,490 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.

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments.

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)** .

Learn more about **postgraduate tuition fees and funding (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.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

We usually ask for a bachelors degree (2:1), or equivalent.

In addition to the usual supporting documents, you must submit a video-recorded audition (either a DVD or an internet video link, e.g. YouTube/Vimeo/Youku). The audition programme should be at least 20 minutes in duration, with a varied programme focusing on Western classical repertoire. If possible, the audition video should include a brief spoken introduction to the programme, discussing - in English - the repertoire you performed.

You must also submit a sample of written work - in English - of at least 1,500 words on a musical topic, with academic bibliography and references.

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/CAL142.htm)

Related news and events

Summer Festival of Music 2013 (/news/latest/2013/06/music-festival.aspx)

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 **Barber Music Library (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/libraries/subject/music.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)** .

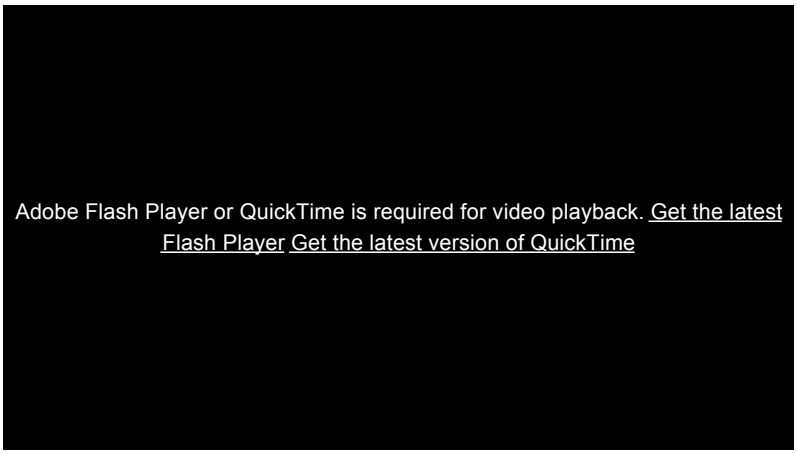
Related staff

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.

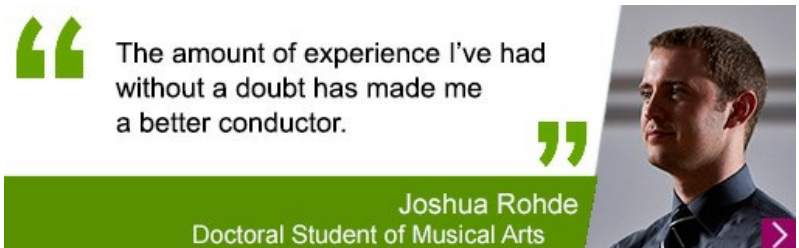
Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.



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)

© University of Birmingham 2015