

Second and final year - Optional modules - Music

Paper Composition

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Personal aesthetic convictions are respected, but a willingness to expand one's awareness and a desire for creative investigation are expected. Presented topics, upon which fortnightly assignments are based, will develop a number of technical aspects of contemporary music. Workshop-style sessions provide the opportunity to review compositional decisions and to monitor progress. Final projects are played through during the Summer Term revision period. Additional seminars, workshops and concert attendance are an integral and quality part of the module. Attendance is required (10% of the final mark), and one mark will be subtracted for each unjustified absence. *Bona fide* membership of NME so as to develop an understanding of twentieth-century performance practice is also recommended.

Studio Composition

This course builds on techniques learned in Studio Composition level 1. Starting from a group recording session to gather source sound material, classes (nominally fortnightly) focus on techniques of digital sound editing, processing and mixing, together with discussion of compositional and aesthetic issues. The learning process is significantly informed by guided reading and listening – attendance at the weekly MiniBEAST listening sessions (11.30-12.30 on Wednesdays throughout Semesters 1 & 2) and at BEAST events in Birmingham are compulsory components of the course, for which students are required to keep a diary containing critical notes on the works presented; they should therefore avoid scheduling instrumental lessons or committing to any other activities at these times. In Semester 2, attention shifts to the composition of individual pieces by each student; scheduled class times provide an opportunity for the tutor to monitor and give feedback on the progress of each student's piece as it develops.

Orchestration

The module aims to provide students with facility in orchestrating Classical and Romantic music; to sharpen the ear and improve command of harmony and counterpoint, musical notation, calligraphy, and the presentation of scores and parts. The module begins with basic techniques of scoring for strings, woodwind and brass, and moves to the scoring of Classical, Romantic, Impressionist music for symphony orchestra, and 20th century music for smaller ensemble. Examples of instrumental scoring by a range of composers will be examined in class and prescribed for private study. As well as 4 main summative assessments, students will also undertake additional formative assessments.

Music in California

This module is concerned with understanding the "audible history" of California through its many musical forms. Three themes central to the module are multiculturalism (and the different forms multiculturalism takes), music in social life (how music serves as the nexus for community building and cultural identity), and cultural geography (how different musical forms articulate specific localities, whether those be neighbourhoods, towns, cities, or regions). Topics and examples may include indigenous communities and their musical forms (and the politics of indigenous territorial claims); pre- and post-statehood Spanish-language musics in relation to the changing demographics of work; the role of experimental popular musics (e.g. punk, heavy metal, surf rock) in local underground scenes; multiculturalism and the pedagogy of "world music" in California; Hollywood film music; the recording industry of Los Angeles; jazz music and community organizing in Los Angeles and San Francisco; and California's avant-garde art musics as a distinctive hybrid between classical, popular, and world musical forms.

Conducting

The course will comprise a combination of theory and practice. The basics of stick technique will be studied as one of the means of communicating with performers. The importance of analysis and the issues involved in learning a score and making decisions about it will also be investigated. Students will conduct ensembles formed by the rest of the group.

Arts Management in Practice

A practical module in Arts Management focusing on the Classical Music industry delivered as a combination of seminars and practical classes. Subjects covered include marketing, stakeholder management, project management, fundraising and finance, and 'creating a project with impact'. Classes include group tasks and students are expected to present their findings to their peers. Assessment will be report and presentation based.

An Introduction to Sound Recording Techniques

An introduction to the skills required in contemporary recording. The course covers aspects of microphone use and placement; mixing and balancing; monitoring; production and engineering techniques; track compilation and post-production and CD-R Mastering. The course is primarily practice based, and takes a musical, as opposed to a technical, approach to recording.

Eighteenth-Century Counterpoint

This course will familiarize students with 18th-century counterpoint techniques through the study of major repertoire and the writing of a variety of small forms such as canons, preludes, and inventions. The course will also include the introduction to the fugue, in form of exercises and writing of an exposition. An emphasis will be placed on practical skills. This course is suitable for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of counterpoint as well as developing their practical writing skills, and is particularly suitable for composers.

Verdi

This module will focus on a number of Verdi's major theatrical and sacred works, including *Nabucco*, *La traviata*, *Aida*, the *Messa da Requiem* and *Falstaff*. Although we will pay close attention to Verdi's stylistic development, we will also study many of the aesthetic and political debates that have clustered around the composer. Key themes will include: Verdi's shifting relationship with the Italian state; interactions between Italian opera, French grand opera, and Wagnerian music drama; the impact of urbanisation, internationalisation, and imperialism on Verdi's output; and the challenge of realism and modernism.

The Symphony: Sammartini to Sibelius

The symphony was the high-prestige mode of instrumental composition in nineteenth-century Europe and it retained its status in professional orchestral concerts and in the era of recording. The symphonic repertory of this era is one of the glories of western civilization. The module examines the symphony from its origins to World War I, exploring famous canonic compositions and lesser-known byways, and composers such as Sammartini, Dittersdorf, Vaňhal, Haydn, Mozart, Kraus, Beethoven, Schubert, Gade, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Bruckner, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Sibelius, Elgar and Mahler.

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.

British Musical Renaissance

The 'British Music Renaissance' has been commonly dated to the first performance of Parry's *Prometheus Unbound* in 1880. From that date, it has been argued, Britain gradually shed its status as 'das Land ohne Musik' (the land without music), with the work of such composers as Stanford, Parry, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Holst and many others all encouraging the development of a musical culture which Britain had previously lacked. This course examines the work of these and other composers active in Britain between 1880 and 1914, the relative importance of different musical genres (opera, operetta, art song, oratorio, secular cantata, symphony, orchestral music etc.), and British cultural and social attitudes to music and musicians, via a mixture of case studies and historical research.

Tonality: An Introduction

This course is intended to consolidate and enhance technical knowledge and expertise gained by students in the first-year harmony and counterpoint course. Skills relating both to the harmonic analysis of tonal music and the composition of eighteenth-century-style counterpoint will be brought together in the context of an introduction to Schenkerian analysis. A knowledge of Heinrich Schenker's (1868–1935) immensely influential theory and an ability to understand and deploy his complex notational system remain prerequisites for any student wishing to read recent analytical literature on tonal music. The repertoire to be discussed in the course will range from Monteverdi to Schubert, but the primary focus will be on work by Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) and J.S. Bach (1685–1750).

Late Beethoven

Beethoven's strange new style of composition after 1815 puzzled his contemporaries, who thought he must have passed his best. After his death, by contrast, the late works acquired an aura of profundity and transcendence, and in the estimation of connoisseurs surpassed even Beethoven's 'heroic style'. In the twentieth century these works have appeared in philosophical writings and novels, as though music criticism was insufficient to deal with them. Today the music still divides critical opinion. Does Beethoven's late style offer a foretaste of the fragmentation and dissonance of twentieth-century modernism, or does it undertake the laborious restoration of wholeness and unity? This course covers the Cello Sonatas Op. 102, the Piano Sonatas Opp. 101, 106, 109, 110 and 111, the String Quartets Opp. 126, 130, 131, 132 and 135, the Ninth Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, the *Diabelli Variations* Op. 123, the two sets of late Bagatelles and the *Grosse Fuge*.

Songs and Sagas

In an era when the art of storytelling is enjoying a revival, this course explores a range of predominantly oral traditions that weave together stories and songs. Story traditions in the Indian subcontinent (such as the Ramayana) will be discussed but the main focus is on Western European stories e.g. the Rhinegold curse, the earliest surviving lament of Dido, the lay of Atilla the Hun from the Old Icelandic Edda, Beowulf, as well as stories by Dante and Boccaccio. The oral song traditions we will study from an expanding contemporary Europe will include repertoires from Spain, France, Scandinavia, Georgia, Italy, Sicily, Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland.

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.

Music, Nations and Nationalism

The interaction of music, nations and nationalism has proved enormously fertile, alluring and controversial. It raises passions, positive and negative, speaking to our sense of identity and belonging, and underlining and shaping cultural differences. The module examines the history of this interaction from the French Revolution to World War II, drawing on recent research in musicology and the study of nations and nationalism. It covers music and ideas from across Europe and the United States, and analyses the music of (among others) Beethoven, Weber, Chopin, Glinka, Liszt, Wagner, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Grieg, Smetana, Dvořák, Janaček, d'Indy, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Bartók, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Ives, Harris and Copland. Topics covered include the incorporation of ethnic vernaculars, the homeland soundscape, national history and legend, national commemoration rituals, and the canons of national music.

Music and the Brain

Thanks to imaging techniques like fMRI, great advances have been made in our understanding of the human brain and how it functions. Very recently music has taken an increasingly prominent role in this research. Scientists have been intrigued to discover that not only does music activate the nucleus accumbens (the pleasure zone) and the amygdala (that governs emotions) but it also activates the pre-frontal cortex area (which is associated with abstract decision making). The work of Levitin and others has also evidenced an association between music and antibodies governing immunity (in particular immunoglobulin A). A major focus of the course is music and health/well-being and thus it will be of interest to anyone wishing to pursue further research or professional training in this area, whether pure research, or applied research e.g. music therapy. Our study of the scientific literature will show how the neurocognitive processes involved affect intellectual, sensory and emotional processes. We will also study music cognition in the wider sense of how we grasp, conceptualize and process music in the light of past knowledge and experience. This dimension of the course will provide a fresh perspective to all students on ways of listening to and analysing music and should also be of particular interest to composers.

Words and Music

The purpose of this course is to explore the relationship between words and music in both theory and practice. There will be two concurrent strands: 1) a close study of selected texts (principally from the late eighteenth-century to the 20th-century) from the aesthetic debates on words and music; 2) to explore music-text relationships through a series of analytical case studies on repertoires such as the earliest music dramas to late eighteenth-century opera; the nineteenth-century German Lied repertoire; French music at the turn of the twentieth century; and works by Berio and Boulez. A primary focus of this course will be a critique of the methods and limitations in dealing with the analysis of text settings: prose, poetic and dramatic.

Introduction to Jazz Styles: 1920 to 1980

This module will focus on selected jazz styles which fit approximately into the sixty years between 1920 and 1980. Taking a broadly chronological approach, six main jazz styles will be covered: early jazz, swing, bop, modal jazz, free (and avante-garde) jazz, and jazz fusion. This survey will, of course, acknowledge that these styles were influenced by historical, cultural, geographical and other factors, but the main focus of the module will be on the styles themselves. Each of these styles will therefore be investigated primarily through looking at musical parameters such as, harmony, rhythm and tempo, as well as investigating structural tendencies, improvisational approaches and instrumental roles in the repertoire. Similarly, various influential figures such as Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Chick Corea will be discussed mainly with regard to their contributions to jazz styles.

Brahms

The music of Johannes Brahms occupies one of the central positions in the Austro-German tradition of the nineteenth century. This module will examine representative examples of Brahms's music primarily from an analytical and cultural perspective and consider his compositional approach, aesthetics, his standing and influence as a 'canonic' composer.

Studies in Performance Practice

This module combines the disciplines of musicology and performance, introducing students to the main topics in performance practice of Western Music. Case studies are chosen from different periods of Western musical history: Medieval, Early Modern, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th-Century. Topics may include organology, rhythm and tempo, articulation, pitch and temperaments, notation, the history of recorded performance, manuscript and printed musical sources, issues surround existing editions and editorial practices, and debates around 'authenticity' in performance. These will be explored through case studies of individual works, discussions of performances and recordings, readings of contemporary treatises, critical evaluation of the secondary literature on Performance Practice, and workshops with CEMPR vocal and instrumental tutors.

Solo Performance

Students receive practical musical tuition during the teaching weeks of the year. This total of 20 or 22 hours' tuition may be divided between two studies (instrumental or vocal; 1st study 12 hours, 2nd study 10 hours) or may all be taken on one study (20 hours). The aim is to make as much technical and musical progress as possible and to provide a basis for further specialisation in performance at Level 3. Lessons are given by tutors at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and by tutors employed by the Department of Music, some via CEMPR.

