Music *at MSJ Sixth Form*

Music is uniquely varied and challenging at A Level, meaning it requires many different learning styles from analytical to creative. All musical skills are transferable to other subjects and beyond the world of sixth form study.

Performing music teaches preparation, concentration and confidence in front of an audience. Composition trains the musician to match creative ideas with the discipline of theoretical study. Analysis develops the skills to understand, describe and evaluate the music of the Classics, of stage and screen, and the world of popular entertainment. All these skills are widely recognised and desired by university courses. It is a common misconception that by taking A Level Music you limit yourself to a degree choice and career within the subject area. In actual fact, Music opens up a wide range of career opportunities.

TO PURSUE THE A LEVEL COURSE SUCCESSFULLY, PUPILS IDEALLY NEED A MINIMUM OF:

GCSE Music Grade 7

WHAT DOES THE COURSE INVOLVE?

The Music A Level covers three key areas of the subject: Appraising, Performance and Composition. The Appraising Examination (40%) is divided into sections focusing on three different areas of study: The Western Classical Tradition, Musical Theatre and Into the Twentieth Century. Music studied includes symphonies by Haydn and Mendelssohn, a range of musical theatre pieces by composers such as Richard Rodgers and Stephen Sondheim and music by the early Twentieth Century composers Debussy and Poulenc. Question styles include set work analysis with a score, extended responses on a wider context, responding to unprepared extracts of music with and without a score and comparison questions. Students may choose the weighting of Performance and Composition depending on their personal strengths with either being worth 35% or 25% of the final mark. In Performance, a programme of music should be presented lasting 6-8 minutes or 10-12 minutes, depending on the weighting. For composition, students should compose two pieces lasting a total of 4-6 minutes or three pieces totalling 8-10 minutes again depending on their choice of pathway. One of these compositions is to a brief set by the examination board, the other(s) being free choice.

IS IT THE RIGHT COURSE FOR ME?

What skills will I need?

Music A Level is suitable for performers of a minimum Grade 5/6 standard and above. Most candidates have already completed Music GCSE but some have not. In the latter case, good notation skills and some knowledge of theory can suffice. You should have a love of music and enjoy listening to and performing different styles. As an A Level Musician you will be required to listen more widely around the topic in your own time. Playing or singing in ensembles in and out of school will help develop your knowledge of different composers' styles and is important for your performing skills. You will need to read treble and bass clef notation, or at least be able to work it out. We have the use of Sibelius notation programme to help us compose but you also learn to write four-part Harmony by hand.

WITH WHICH OTHER SUBJECTS DOES IT WORK BEST?

Music combines well with both Arts and Sciences. There is no approved combination but you can take Music with Humanities such as English and History, with Languages, or with Science and Maths. It is both a technical and an expressive subject. Music is the perfect complement to any other A Level selection.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAREER PATHWAYS?

Universities welcome applicants for all courses who have studied Music at A Level as it shows you to have a wide-ranging skill set as well as the ability to contribute to the wider life of the university. There is a wealth of single honours Music courses to choose from but Music is also offered as a joint honours course, with Maths or Physics for example, in a number of universities. Pupils who have studied A Level Music have gone on to degrees in not only Music but also Medicine, Biochemistry, Languages, Business Studies and History.

HEAD OF SUBJECT

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EXAM BOARD

WJEC Eduqas

HOW IS IT ASSESSED?

Appraising is examined through a listening and written paper lasting 2 hours and 15 minutes. Performance is externally marked by a visiting examiner to the School. Composition is also externally marked and the final pieces are completed over a number of lessons to include a log of the composition process.