A Level Music
Preparation Booklet

Name: _____

Welcome to A Level Music at Berkhamsted School!

Music A Level is an exciting, but challenging, course, and in order to make a really solid start to the course you are advised to complete this home-learning prior to the start of the new academic year.

There are 4 areas I would like you to focus on, in the short term:

1. Performance Preparation
2. Music Aural Analysis Skills
3. Key Terminology Revision
4. Music Theory Knowledge

There are some stretch tasks, which it would be great if you could attempt!

Good luck with the activities in this booklet! We look forward to welcoming you to the course in September.

Performance Preparation:

For your A-Level Music recital, you will need to prepare a programme of a **minimum of 10 minutes**, at approximately Grade 8 standard.

Similarly to the GCSE, you will be assessed on your ability to perform with **Technical Control** (accuracy and instrumental/vocal technique) and **Expressive Control** (performance details and musicality). The overall **Performance Quality** (delivery, preparation and performance) are also assessed, as is the '**Ambition**' of your programme (ie: how difficult it is!).

Important Caveat: Yes, you get 'up to 5' marks for 'Ambition', but 'over-ambition' can cost marks in other areas. So always better to be cute and "play the game"!

Your performance will be video recorded as **one complete take**, which is sent to AQA to be externally marked and moderated – which is different to your GCSE.

So, to get a start on this, you will all be asked to perform to each other during a lesson in the final week of September. *Over the summer, please prepare **ONE** piece (3+ minutes in length) suitable for this performance!*

Stretch: Write a Short Programme Note about the piece you will be performing. Include details of composer, style and any interesting details about the piece:

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AQA A Level Music Listening and Analysis Overview:

Just like your GCSE, the course has three main components:

1. Appraising (listening),
2. Performance and
3. Composition.

This course overview will help you to see what is coming up, and it will be explained in more detail when you start the course in September.
If you have any questions, write them at the bottom of the page to ask in September.

Component 1: Appraising music	+	Component 2: Performance	+	Component 3: Composition
What's assessed • Listening • Analysis • Contextual understanding		**What's assessed** Music performance		**What's assessed** Composition
How it's assessed Exam paper with listening and written questions using excerpts of music.		**How it's assessed** Solo and/or ensemble performing as an instrumentalist, or vocalist and/or music production (via technology).		**How it's assessed** • Composition 1: Composition to a brief (25 marks) • Composition 2: Free composition (25 marks)
Questions • Section A: Listening (56 marks) • Section B: Analysis (34 marks) • Section C: Essay (30 marks) This component is 40% of A-level marks (120 marks).		**Requirement** **A minimum of ten minutes of performance in total is required.** This component is 35% of A-level marks (50 marks). Non-exam assessment (NEA) will be externally marked by AQA examiners. Work must be completed between 1 March and the specified date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates Work must be sent by post/ uploaded to AQA by the specified date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates		**Requirement** **A minimum of four and a half minutes of music in total is required.** This component is worth 25% of A-level marks (50 marks). NEA will be externally marked by AQA examiners. Work must be completed and sent by post/uploaded to AQA by the specified date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates

AQA A Level Music: Appraisal Overview:

Just like GCSE, you will be studying a number of set works, unlike for GCSE, though, these are only for **AoS A**.

It is strongly recommended that you listen to the pieces below, as well as other works by these composers over the summer. This will be excellent preparation for the course, and a wide listening base will also support you in your composition work.

You will be able to find most (if not all) of these pieces on Spotify or Youtube.

Set Works for Area of Study 1 (Western Classical Traditions 1650-1910)

For this course, we will study 2 of the 3 **strands** below in detail, and 1 more generally.

Strand A: Baroque solo concerto

Composer	Set works
Purcell	Sonata for trumpet and strings in D major Z.850 (complete)
Vivaldi	Flute concerto in D *Il Gardellino* op.10 no.3 RV428 (complete)
Bach	Violin concerto in A minor BWV1041 (complete)

Strand B: The operas of Mozart

Composer	Set works
Mozart	*Le Nozze di Figaro* k.492: Act 1, focusing on: • overture • No.1 Duettino (Figaro and Susanna, including following recitative) • No.3 Cavatina (Figaro, including the previous recitative) • No.4 Aria (Bartolo) • No.5 Duettino (Susanna and Marcellina) • No.6 Aria (Cherubino) • No.7 Terzetto (Susanna, Basilio, Count) • No.9 Aria (Figaro).

Strand C: The piano music of Chopin, Brahms and Grieg

Composer	Set works
Chopin	• Ballade no.2 in F major op.38 • Nocturne in E minor op.72 no.1
Brahms	• Intermezzo in A major op.118. no.2 • Ballade in G minor op.118 no.3
Grieg	• Norwegian march op.54 no.2 • Notturno op.54 no.4

In addition to AoS 1, we will study 2 other areas of study – which for us are AoS 3: Music for Media and AoS 4: Music for the Stage.

Study for these Areas of Study are more general, focusing instead on "named composers" and their wider body of work, less on specific pieces in detail and more about how the composers typically use musical devices in their work.

Named Composers for AoS 3:

- Bernard Hermann (Psycho, The Birds)
- Hans Zimmer (Pirates of the Caribbean, Dune, The Dark Knight Trilogy)
- Michael Giacchino (Up, The Incredibles, Medal of Honor)
- Thomas Newman (Finding Nemo, Saving Mr. Banks, American Beauty)
- Nobuo Uematsu (Final Fantasy Games/Films)

Named Composers for AoS 4:

- Kurt Weill (Threepenny Opera, Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny)
- Richard Rogers (Oklahoma!, The Sound of Music, Carousel)
- Stephen Sondheim (Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods,Company)
- Claude-Michel Schonberg (Les Miserables, Miss Saigon)
- Jason Robert Brown (Parade, Last 5 Years, 13)

Over the summer, aim to listen to at least 2 pieces by at least 3 of these composers (again, use Spotify of YouTube!) and complete the listening log in the following pages.

In the 'Description and Analysis' Columns, try to use musical terms to describe your listening. Don't feel like you have to include an observation EVERYTHING! But do try to include a couple of musical elements, for example:

AoS 3: Uematsu	*Aerith's Theme (FF VII)*	*Disjunct, Arpeggio based melody. Major key, some modal moments. Soft dynamics and clear melody and accompaniment texture.* *Prominent use of woodwinds and harp – angelic sounding.*

Listening Log:

AoS and Composer	Piece Title	Description and Analysis:
AoS 1: Purcell	Sonata for Trumpet and Strings	
AoS 1: Vivaldi	Flute Concerto in D	
AoS 1: Bach	Violin Concerto in A minor	

AoS and Composer	Piece Title	Description and Analysis:

Essential A Level Music Glossary – Complete the definitions for all the words in the table below. These are just some of the terms you will need to know across the course, and will form an excellent starting point for helping you write about music in a coherent and academic manner.

Musical Term	Definition
Alto	
Anacrusis	
Bass	
Basso Continuo	
Cadence	
Chord Progression	
Chromatic	
Circle of 5ths	
Concertino	
Concerto Grosso	
Conjunct	
Cross Rhythm	
Diatonic	
Disjunct	
Dissonant	
Double-Stopping	
Leitmotif	
Melismatic	
Mezzo-Soprano	
Ostinato	
Pedal Note	
Push Rhythm	
Recitative	
Ripieno	
Sample	
Soprano	
Sus Chord	
Suspension	
Syllabic	
Syncopation	
Tenor	

Music Theory – The 'Dreaded' Part!

However, it's not really that bad…honest!

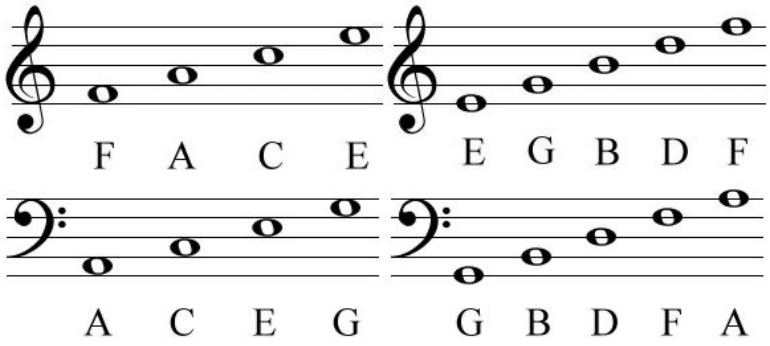
For A Level Music, the main 'theory' which you need to know is about **Harmony**. You don't need to know many complex rhythmic, melodic or textural devices (you will need to know some, but we'll get there!), but you absolutely will need to know how to work out chords and also (crucially!) how to use them in your own composition work.

So, with that in mind here's a few pages on the theory I'd like you to recap/learn over the summer break.

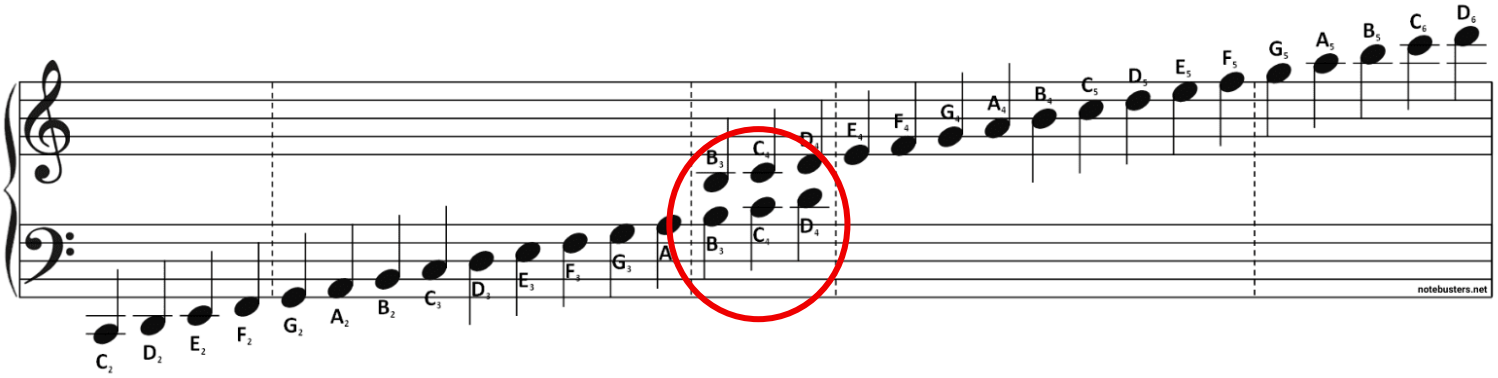
Part 1: Reading the Treble and Bass Clefs

Simply being able to read the pitches and durations is going to be a huge help when starting our analysis work on AoS1 Set Works.

Fundamentally, knowing the below is **<u>absolutely essential</u>**:

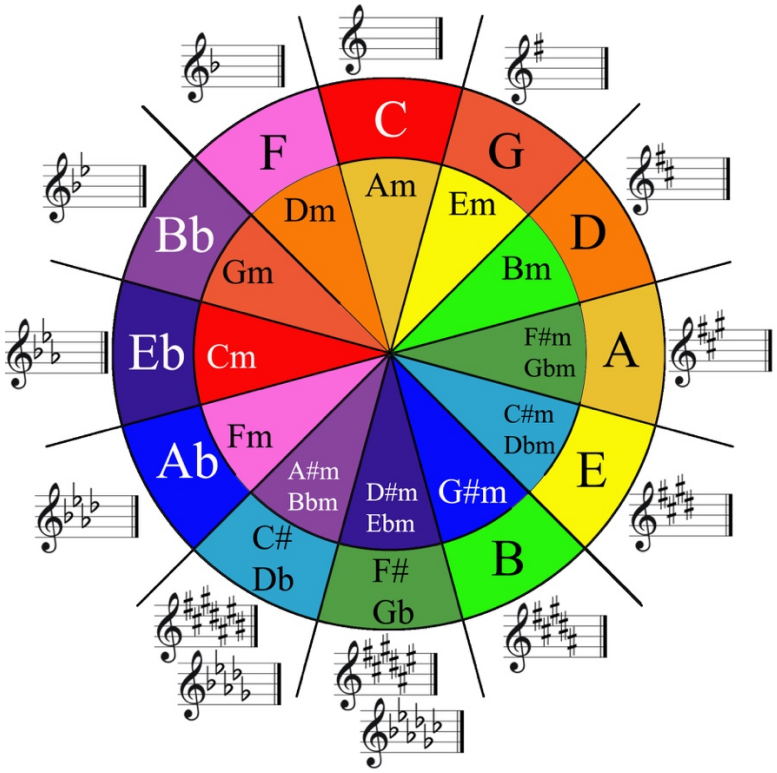


But being able to read some leger lines is also a pretty handy skill:



Note the crossover point between Treble and Bass clefs!

Part 2: Key Signatures: All Major and Minor Key Signatures can be found using the device below:

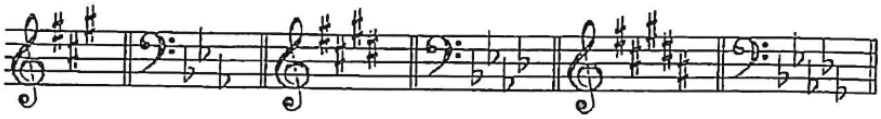


Remember, the order of sharps and flats as below:

Sharps -> **F**ather **C**hristmas **G**ets **D**ad **A**n **E**lectric **B**lanket

Flats -> **B**lanket **E**xplodes **A**nd **D**ad **G**ets **C**old **F**eet

Using this knowledge, complete the exercises below:

1 Name the following major key signatures.

a. ____ b. ____ c. ____ d. ____ e. ____ f. ____

2 Write the following key signatures.

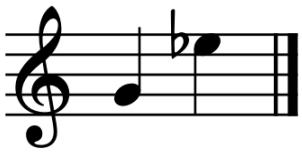
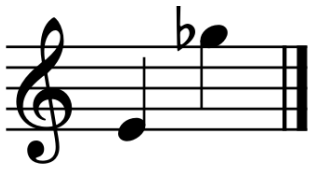
a. E♭ major b. E major c. A♭ major d. C♯ major e. C♭ major f. A major

Part 3: Intervals: You need to be confident with 'Grade 5 Theory' style intervals.

- Major, Minor and Perfect intervals (all related to the scales they can be found in)
- Augmented and Diminished (outside of their scales)
- Compound (for intervals of more than an octave).

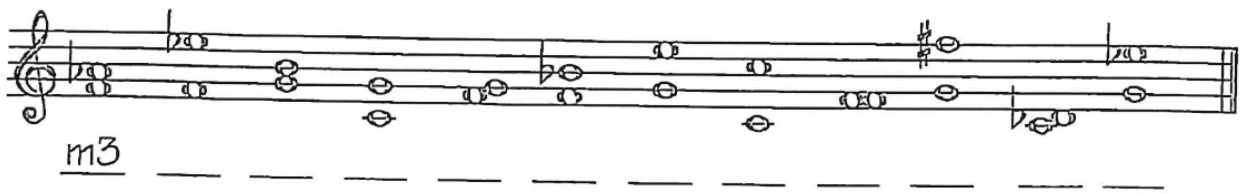
Important Notes:

1. Perfect Intervals are when the interval exists in both major and minor scales. The following intervals **ONLY** can be described a 'Perfect':
    a. 4th
    b. 5th
    c. Octave
2. However, although the '2nd' also exists in both scales, it follows a different rule (coz 'music' amiright?). A 2nd can be:
    a. Major 2nd (1 whole tone *or 2 semi-tones*)
    b. Minor 2nd (1 semi-tone)

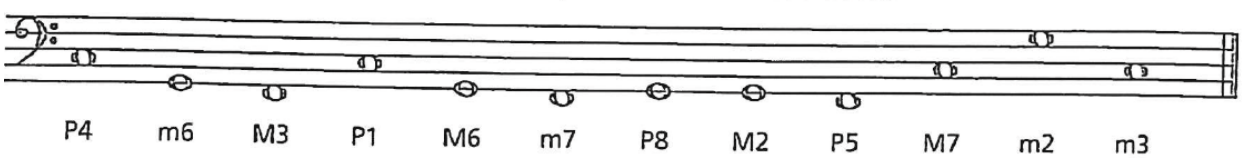
A couple of worked examples:

Step 1: Name the notes – **G to Eb.**
Step 2: count the 'interval number' G = 1, (*a,b,c,d*) E = 6, so some form of **6th**.
Step 3: ID the possible keys
i. G major = 1 sharp (F#) so not in the 'Major' scale.
ii. G minor = 2 flats (Bb, Eb) so is in the Minor Scale.
Step 4: Name the interval: G-Eb = **Minor 6th.**

Step 1: Name notes = E to F.
Step 2: Count Number: E=1, (f,g,a,b,c,d,e,f) G=10. 10 is more than octave, so this is a COMPOUND interval. 10-7 =3rd, so a **Compound 3rd.**
Step 3: ID Keys:
i. E major = 4 sharps, of which F# is one. Not Major.
ii. E minor = 1 sharp, which is F#. Not minor either.
iii. G natural is minor, and G flat is LESS than minor. Smaller = **Diminished.**
Step 4: Name: **Compound Diminished 3rd.**

(There won't ever be anything like that second one, but always good to know...!)

Task: Name and write the intervals indicated in the exercises below:



Write the notes above the given notes to complete the harmonic interval.



One Final Thing:

The hardest thing for most A Level Music pupils is the composition element of the course, which, for AQA, is 25% of the overall grade.

Over the course of the next 12 months, you will be set composition tasks with a range of different focuses (foci?). It is hugely important though, that you consider your own musical tastes and styles and spend time practising writing music.

To that end, your weekly expectation around composition is that you will spend at least 30 minutes per week of your independent time developing your own music. This could take any form:

- A notated idea on Sibelius (or similar, or even manuscript paper!)
- A recording of you playing/improvising into your phone/surface device.
- The beginnings of a sketch using Logic Pro / GarageBand (or similar!)
- A written lead sheet with chords and lyrics, with some recording of a melodic material.

Only with regular practise will you find your composition skills improve – so perhaps you can start getting into this groove over the summer?

If you do create anything over the summer, bring it in to show me! I'd be really excited to see it.

Have a great summer break folks, don't work too hard! Listen to some music, play a bit and enjoy it. We all really look forward to seeing you all in September for the start of you're a Level Music journey!

Best wishes,
Mr. Shiels, Mr. Melling, Mr. Noithip, Mr Mair and Miss Cardwell