

# Transition Pack

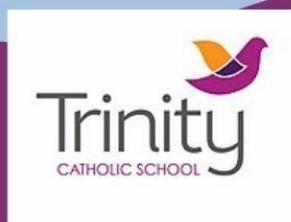
## A Level

### Music

Get ready for Level 3 qualifications!



2021



# A Level Music taster session

The music course consists of:

## A level Music

Component	Overview	Assessment
Component 1 <b>Performing</b> 30% NEA	Total performance time of 8 minutes Performance can be solo and/or ensemble	⚖️ Total of 60 marks (12 marks available for difficulty of pieces)
Component 2 <b>Composing</b> 30% NEA	2 compositions 1 free or free choice brief – min 4 min 1 brief assessing technique – min 1 min Together total min of 6 minutes	2 pieces 40 marks 20 marks ⚖️ Total of 60 marks
Component 3 <b>Appraising</b> 40% Exam	6 Areas of Study with 3 set works in each <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocal Music</li> <li>• Instrumental Music</li> <li>• Music for Film</li> <li>• Popular Music and Jazz</li> <li>• Fusions</li> <li>• New Directions</li> </ul>	🕒 Exam 2hrs ⚖️ Total 100 marks

PHOTO: Music Concert Tour to Barcelona

**MUSIC**

*"Music at Saints is really enjoyable. There are lots of opportunities to take part, whether it is Band, Choir or Showcases. I take A level music, I am doing grade 8 piano and I also play flute. One of the most enjoyable concerts was performing in a town square in Villefranche sur Mer in France"*

**ANNA**  
Year 12 Music Student

# A Level Music Transition Tasks

## Theory

There is a big step up in theoretical understanding at A level. The following website has excellent online lessons that develop theoretical understanding from the basics through to advanced level.

Go to [www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net)

**Please complete these lessons:**

*The Basics* – all sections

*Rhythm and Metre* – all sections

*Scales and Key Signatures* – all sections

*Intervals* – all sections

## Performance

At A Level you will need to be performing at grade 6-7 by the end of year 13.

Use the break between year 11 and year 12 to continue practicing on your instrument/voice.

1. Brush up on a piece that you already know
2. Resurrect a piece that you used to play but may have forgotten
3. Learn a new piece at your current grade level

# A Level Music Transition Tasks

## Listening

A level requires you to listen beyond what is prescribed by the course.

Listen to this piece by Handel as an example of the Baroque period. Listen to the You Tube video with the music score and the audio and read through the following slides and try to identify the features in the music. Then complete the questions below:

- **Three musical points about this piece that I like:**  
*Justify your points and use musical vocabulary.*
- **Three musical points about this piece that I don't like:**  
*Justify your points and use musical vocabulary.*

<https://youtu.be/KyQ3CU93i7E>

## Instruments (timbre) /Ensemble

- SATB choir accompanied by string orchestra with **continuo** (played by cello, double bass and organ in this recording)
- Background/General Information
- The Messiah is an Oratorio – a work for vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra that uses religious text from the Bible.
- It would have traditionally been performed at Easter, but is now often performed at Christmas. Handel composed it in only three weeks in 1741 and it was first performed in Dublin.
- The whole work 'Messiah' is a huge work in three sections that lasts nearly 3 hours. Within each section there are lots of shorter pieces (movements) that include Arias & Recitatives (solo songs/duets), Choruses (with the choir) and some instrumental pieces.

## Melodic/Musical Devices

- Lots of **imitation** in the vocal parts – when one or more parts copies an idea first heard in another part.
- Most of the singing is **syllabic** (one note per syllable) but the word ‘revealed’ is **melismatic** – it has a **melisma** (when a syllable is sung over several notes)
- There are some **hemiolas** – this is a *rhythmic device* - music that is in triple time (3/4) temporarily sounds like it is in duple time (2/4) for two bars – it is very common in baroque music at cadences.
- The music has many **perfect cadences** throughout but a **plagal cadence** at the end

## Melody & Pitch

- All the parts keep to a modest pitch range.
- There is lots of **imitation** in the vocal parts – when one or more parts copies an idea first heard in another part.
- Most of the singing is **syllabic** (one note per syllable) but the word ‘revealed’ is **melismatic** – it has a **melisma** (when a syllable is sung over several notes)

## Structure

- This chorus is based on three lines of text that repeat throughout the whole song. *And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed ... And all flesh shall see it together ... for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*
- There are four main musical ideas, one for each line of text (the first line is split into two phrases, hence four ideas). Handel introduces each idea simply, usually in one part (final phrase begins in tenors and basses) then weaves them into the rest of the music as other parts join in, often **imitating** each other and overlapping.
- There is also a short instrumental introduction called a ‘**ritornello**’ (= ‘a little return’ = a short section that keeps coming back in the piece)
- The last four bars of the song are marked Adagio – they are much slower and there is a **plagal cadence (chords IV – I)**. The texture is also **homorhythmic** with all parts playing/singing to help give a sense of finality.

## Style - Baroque Features (general features)

- **Ornamented melody**
- **Diatonic chords/harmony**
- **Basso continuo** (literally continuous bass – play chordal support with the bass line usually played by the cello)
- **Baroque orchestra** – strings play the melody, a few woodwind, brass and timpani used.
- **Prevalence of one mood or ‘affection’**
- **Terraced dynamics** - contrasting volumes on two levels, loud and soft

## Dynamics

- There are hardly any dynamics marked in the score, and those that are marked are only p and f - this is typical of baroque music that rarely has crescendos or diminuendos marked (actually has very few dynamic markings at all).
- In the recording, only contrasts of and are used.

## Tonality and Harmony

- The piece is in major keys throughout to create a constant happy mood. It is mostly in A major but it does modulate to E major and B major at certain points.
- Chords are **diatonic** (all belong to the key) and there is a fast **harmonic rhythm** (the speed at which chords change). Most cadences are **perfect** but the final cadence is **plagal**.

## Texture

- Mixture of **homophonic** (parts moving together with similar rhythms) and **polyphonic** (different rhythms in the vocal lines that weave in and out of each other). Also **monophonic** when only one part is singing at the start of lines.
- The string parts support and accompany the vocal lines and very often double the vocal lines. If you look at the bass (vocal) part you can see the nearly all its notes are identical to the Basso Continuo line.
- Sometimes, two or more vocal parts sing in unison (exactly the same notes) or together in harmony (same rhythm and words, different notes).
- The continuo players (cello, double bass and organ) play throughout – the other instruments play most of the time but there are some short sections where the other strings drop out and only the continuo players accompany the singers.

## Tempo & Rhythm

- In triple time (3/4) and quick tempo (marked *Allegro*)
- There are some **hemiolas** ( this is when music that is in triple time (3/4) temporarily sounds like it is in duple time (2/4) for two bars – it is very common in baroque music at cadences).
- Almost continuous crotchet movement keeps the piece moving forward until the final bars where there are sustained chords.

## Music from Batman Returns

Listen to the music from Batman Returns (link below), a film released in the 1990s. This set work is from the Film Music area of study.

The music is by the composer Danny Elfman who also wrote the music for many other films.

### You Tube music score:

[Batman Returns – Birth of a Penguin part 1](#)



Like in GCSE, music is analysed through a knowledge of the musical elements.

Listen again to *Birth of a Penguin*. Write down anything you hear under these headings:

- Context
- Structure
- Performing forces
- Melody
- Texture
- Harmony and Tonality
- Rhythm, Metre and Tempo