



Jack Hunt School: Summer Guide



AQA A Level Music

Contents:

- I. Introduction
- II. Music theory
- III. Listening and appraising
- IV. Chord symbols
- V. A (brief) history of harmony
- VI. Advanced harmony
- VII. Reading staff notation
- VIII. (Some) Western classical genres
- IX. Perseverance
- X. Additional tasks



I - Introduction

The long summer holiday is a chance for you to relax and unwind after two years of preparing for your GCSE exams. However, it is also a time to look ahead and think about how best to equip yourself for the AQA Music A Level course. Little and often is far more academically valuable than one massive cramming session the day before you start year 12.

The key areas you will need to address are:

- **Theory** (traditional staff notation, keys, chords, rhythms etc.).
- **Listening and appraising.** You will need to be familiar with the elements of music and what they sound like.
- **Musicology.** There are a variety of research activities in this guide to develop your knowledge of music through time, covering a variety of periods, styles and genres.
- **Performance** (the fun bit). You should be practising for a minimum of 30 minutes per day and aim to be at least ABRSM Grade 5 standard by the start of the course.
- **Composition.** We will combine historical analysis through listening and playing and theory in order to create your compositions. This will be taught from September.

II - Music theory

The A Level course uses full musical scores, and the more rapidly you can look at the information and read and understand it, the greater depth of detail and understanding you will be able to show. You need to have an understanding of at least ABRSM Grade 5 standard.

There are lots of websites that will help you with this, as well as books and past papers. Don't forget the GCSE guide uploaded to firefly too – this could be a useful starting point as it has full explanations and exercises.

- [My Music Theory](#) - a web site with exercises based on the ABRSM theory grades. You can print exercises off as well as do them on line. A great place to start is [What Music Theory Grade Am I](#) to work out your starting point and areas of strength and weakness.
- [Music Theory Net](#) - a very useful site which starts at the very basics of music theory. It has exercises which you can tailor to your needs, from the most basic of concepts to more advanced ones. It also has interval and chord recognition, very useful if you are preparing for grade exams as well as for the listening paper. It is not the flashiest looking site, but the content is excellent.

III - Listening and Appraising

You will need to be familiar with the elements of music and what they sound like. Use your GCSE knowledge as a starting point and work on any areas of weakness. We use MAD T SHIRT – Melody, Articulation, Dynamics, Texture, Structure, Harmony & Tonality, Instrumentation, Rhythm, Tempo. **Focus on Sound** is a great place to start for this vocabulary.

Research through listening and analysing is a key area to develop for the Listening and Appraising exam. A good starting point would be to listen/watch examples of music by the following composers:

AoS1: Western Classical	Baroque Solo Concerto	Purcell – <i>Sonata for trumpet and strings in D major</i> Vivaldi – <i>Flute Concerto in D</i> J.S. Bach – <i>Violin Concert in A minor</i>
	Mozart Opera	Studied for section A only. A variety of pieces from Mozart Opera.
	Romantic Solo Piano music	Chopin – <i>Ballade no. 2 in F major</i> and <i>Nocturne in E minor</i> Brahms – <i>Intermezzo in A major</i> and <i>Mallade in G minor</i> Grieg – <i>Norweigian March</i> and <i>Notturmo no. 4</i>
AoS3: Music for Media	A variety of music for film, TV and gaming by the following composers	Bernard Herrman Thomas Newman Michael Giacchino Hans Zimmer Nobuo Uematsu
AoS5: Jazz	The development and styles of jazz by the following jazz musicians	Louis Armstrong Duke Ellington Charlie Parker Miles Davis Pat Metheny Gwyl iam Simcock

Try identifying similar/contrasting musical features and make a note of your initial response to the music.

- *What was it written for?*
- *How are the elements used?*
- *Is this typical for the composer?*

Now you have the basics – here are some extension preparation tasks

IV - Chord symbols

Reading chord symbols

Read the following link on how to understand reading chord symbols and their extensions.

<https://activatemusic.academy/how-to-read-chord-symbols-in-3-easy-steps/>

1. Which of the following make up the notes of the chord symbol C7? Circle one.

C E G B

C Eb G B

C Eb G Bb

C E G Bb

2. Which of the following make up the notes of the chord symbol Eb7? Circle one.

Eb G Bb D

Eb Gb Bb D

Eb G Bb Db

Eb Gb Bb Db

3. Write out the notes in the chord symbol Gsus4. _____

4. Write out the notes in the chord symbol Bb9. _____

5. What is the chord symbol for the following notes? Ab Cb Eb Gb. Circle one.

Ab7

Abmaj7 Abm7

Abdim7

6. What is the chord symbol for the following notes? D F# A C#. Circle one.

Dm7

D7

Dmaj7

Ddim7

7. Write the chord symbol for the following notes. G B D F. _____

8. Write the chord symbol for the following notes. E G Bb D. _____

V - A (brief) history of harmony

Watch the following clip of Leonard Bernstein talking about the creation of harmony and how we have come to have the chromatic scale and notes available to us today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt2zubHcER4>

Then read the following link building on this for an explanation on how the circle of fifths is created and how keys relate to each other.

<https://www.libertyparkmusic.com/the-circle-of-fifths/>

Research why keys with lots of accidentals were not commonly used before equal temperament. Then write an essay discussing whether musicians should perform music authentically, referring to tuning systems, instrumentation and other performance conventions of the time.

VI - Advanced harmony

Secondary dominants

Read the following link on secondary dominants.

<http://www.simplifyingtheory.com/secondary-dominants/>

If you were in the key of C, what chord would you use as a secondary dominant when going to the following chords?

G _____

Am _____

Em _____

Modes

Read the following link on what modes are and how to construct them.

<https://ledgernote.com/columns/music-theory/musical-modes-explained/>

To follow on from this, you should improvise using each of the modes in order to better understand the sounds that they create.

Pushing harmonic boundaries

Watch the following interview with Jacob Collier discussing advanced harmonies using the circle of fifths, modes and extended harmonies, as well as the importance of voicing within chords.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnBr070vcNE>

VII - Reading staff notation

Reading staff notation is an important skill to develop in A Level Music. Read the following link on the basics. <https://www.earmaster.com/music-theory-online/ch01/chapter-1-1.html>

Now read the following link on creating chord charts. <https://www.cmburridge.com/teaching/bach-chorales/lesson-1-chords-and-keys/>

Copy out the chord chart in the key of C major.

Below is an extract from *If Ye Love Me* by Thomas Tallis.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'If Ye Love Me' by Thomas Tallis. It consists of four staves of music in 4/2 time. The lyrics are: 'If ye love me, keep my com-mand-ments.' The first two staves are in the treble clef, and the last two are in the bass clef. The music is written in a simple, homophonic style with a single melodic line and a supporting bass line.

Work out the chord on each syllable by writing out the notes and then seeing on the chord chart to which chord they translate: e.g. 'If' has the notes C, E, G, C (bottom to top) which makes the chord C major, or Roman numeral I.

What cadence is used at the end of the excerpt? _____

How would you describe the texture of the excerpt? _____

Here is a passage taken from later in *If Ye Love Me*.

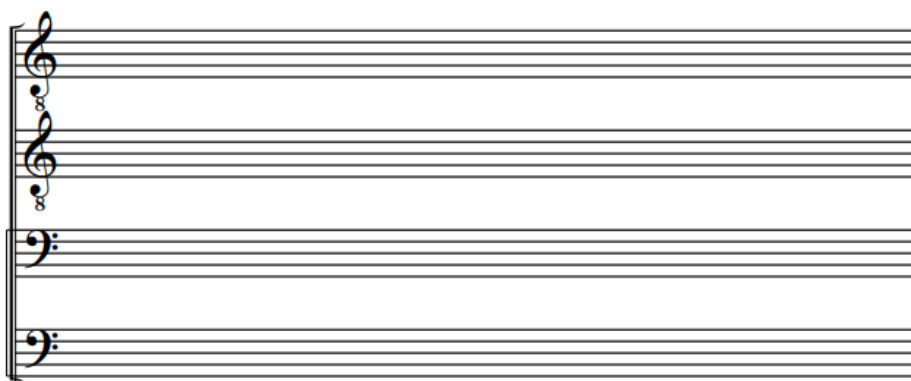
The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'If Ye Love Me' by Thomas Tallis, starting at measure 15. It consists of four staves of music in 4/2 time. The lyrics are: 'that he may 'bide with you for - ev - er, with you for - ev - er, 'bide with you for - ev - er, that he may 'bide with you for - ev - er, may 'bide with you for - ev - er, may 'bide with you for - ev - er.' The music is written in a simple, homophonic style with a single melodic line and a supporting bass line.

Which accidental has been added and in which part? _____

The inclusion of this accidental indicates that the composer has modulated to, or at least hinted at, which key? _____

Transposition

In the blank stave below, write out one of the excerpts of *If Ye Love Me*, transposing it into D major.



VIII - (Some) Western classical genres

Watch the following clips on the features of different classical music styles to have an overview of the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods.

- Baroque - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NutCfBXAFCw>
- Classical - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZfWtmlwf9Y>
- Romantic - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWRDRRZpwDU>

Research the genres further and find some musical examples to listen to. Go on one of the following two websites and find a score to read whilst listening to the piece.

http://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page

<https://www.cpd.org/wiki/>

Analyse the score whilst you are listening and work out the following:

- What key is the piece in?
- Does the piece modulate? If so, where to?
- Can you notice any cadences? If so, which ones and where?
- What is the texture of the piece?
- Do you notice any other features in the music – e.g. sequences, pedals, etc?

IX - Perseverance

- Watch the following clip of John Legend highlighting the importance of not giving up, and learning from failure. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUTCigWSBsw>
- Watch the following clips of some professional musicians giving advice on how to be successful as a musician. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UqCb-oqZY>
- Watch the following video of a series of clips of John Williams talking about his approach to composing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1QciU4Z-k>

What are the main messages that are being conveyed in these videos? Write down some approaches to music-making that you will use during your music course and beyond.

X - Additional tasks

For each of the texts you read throughout this booklet, summarise the key points in one of the following ways:

- Write a review of the book, outlining which were the most useful sections and whether you enjoyed the book/why/why not.
- List any key terms from the text in a vocabulary list, researching their meanings (if not clear from the text) and recording these.
- Create an initial melodic idea for a composition and apply appropriate techniques and devices that you have come across in your reading.
- Create a picture mind-map of the key ideas. Use doodles and images to illustrate these. For a guide to mind-mapping, see this short video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLWV0XN7K1g>