University Music Applicants: Summer Extension Tasks

If you are applying to study music at University, you will need to demonstrate that you have a real passion for your subject. A student who is really interested in music will:

- Take every opportunity to perform both in and out of college
- Learn to play pieces outside those needed for assessment
- Listen to a wide range of music
- Be able to demonstrate an interest in music and composers outside the narrow limits of the A level curriculum
- Have read a range of books on music

The summer before Year 13 is your last relatively free period in which you might realistically do some serious reading and listening. To give yourself a chance of getting a place at the best departments, you should complete some of the following tasks.

It is suggested that you start any tasks that you are intending to complete before the summer and get some help/feedback in the last couple of weeks of term. You can also get feedback on completed tasks when you return in September.

Task One

Find a composer or a country and time period that you are already interested in (e.g. Russian music in the early twentieth century) and do the following:

- Listen to at least ten pieces (you can do this on Youtube) and make notes on what you find interesting about them. Google them and look them up in books so that you can build up some really good research notes.

- Find at least two books on the composer or period and make some notes on anything you find interesting. Look in the bibliography and see if there are any other related books that might also be worth reading. The college library and Dudley and Birmingham libraries all have relatively good selections of books on a wide range of topics.

Why? Listening to music expands your horizons. If you cannot talk about music other than that studied during the course, no admissions tutor will think you are serious about taking music at university.
Task Two

Write an essay that is properly referenced in the style that you will be expected to use at University. You could either expand a Development of the Symphony essay or devise an essay title around your reading and listening in Task Two. You will need to refer to the Academic Writing Guide at the top of the Explorations in Music Moodle. You should book a tutorial to discuss your title and to go over the presentation issues covered in the Academic Writing Guide.

Why? Universities like to see that you will cope with the challenge of essay writing. Many departments ask to see an essay and if you produce a really high quality one that is properly referenced they will be impressed.

Task Three

Find a piece that you find inspiring and analyse some selected passages. You could start with some of the pieces on the composition Moodle if you are stuck for initial ideas. You can find some scores in the library, and a lot of scores can be found by searching “IMSLP <Composer> <Piece>" in Google. You might be interested in the harmony, instrumentation, texture, structure or indeed any aspect of the piece, but be careful not to allow yourself to be daunted by trying to analyze everything at once. If you are stuck, come and see Tom or Iain.

Why? You will learn a lot from looking in detail at a piece of music. Analysing music not covered in the syllabus will give you something different and interesting to talk about in interviews.

Task Four

The Eduqas specification is good on depth but less so on breadth. Your knowledge of 1750-1930 should be pretty good (although you should explore more non-symphonic works) but the syllabus leaves huge holes before and after these dates. Put together some notes (key composers, pieces etc.) for the Renaissance and Baroque periods. My Short History of Music (on www.alevelmusic.com and Moodle) is a good starting point but also see the Reading and Listening List below.

Why? You will learn a lot from looking in detail at a piece of music. Analysing music not covered in the syllabus will give you something different and interesting to talk about in interviews.
Reading and Listening List

These books will increase your general knowledge and are a good starting point for looking at music at undergraduate level

Taruskin, Richard (2004) *A History of Western Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press [six hefty volumes but very readable and in our library at college – you will need Spotify/Youtube handy to listen to some of the examples he gives to get the most out of this]

Cook, Nicholas (2000) *Music a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press [this is on all the University reading lists it is short and snappy but introduces lots of important issues - written by an influential and provocative commentator]

Ross, Alex (2007) *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*, London: Fourth Estate [this is an excellent and accessible introduction to the music of the twentieth century in its wider cultural and historical context]

Caplin, William (2013) *Analyzing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom* Oxford: Oxford University Press [this is a hefty book but is much clearer for students than a similar one by the same author from 2008 that is on several university reading lists. It looks in detail at how Classical form works from the point of view of its phrase structure and has an excellent companion website]

A good starting point for a whistle-stop tour is the Short History of Music on [www.alevelmusic.com](http://www.alevelmusic.com).

Some suggested core listening (of the sort that would help you understand a first year course)

**J. S. Bach**
- Some of the preludes and fugues from the Well-tempered Clavier (often called ‘The 48’)
- B minor mass and/or some of his cantatas
- A Brandenburg Concerto

**W. A. Mozart**
- A symphony (perhaps ‘Jupiter’)
- A piano concerto
- Part of an opera (perhaps Don Giovanni or the Marriage of Figaro)

**F. J. Haydn**
- Some of the other ‘London’ or ‘Paris’ symphonies
- A selection of quartets from Op. 33

**L. v. Beethoven**
- The violin concerto or a piano concerto (you should already have a good knowledge of the symphonies)
- A range of string quartets: earlier (op. 18), middle (op. 59) and later (perhaps Op. 95 or the ‘Grosse Fugue’)
- A piano sonata

Some other basic repertoire not covered in the course (i.e. I have missed out Classical/Romantic symphonists and early twentieth century) might be Josquin’s masses (particularly *l’homme arme*), Palestrina’s masses, Byrd’s sacred music (perhaps *Cantiones sacrae*), Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, Vivaldi’s *L’estro armonico* concertos, Schubert’s lieder, Chopin’s nocturnes, Wagner’s operas (particularly *Tristan und Isolde*), Sibelius’ symphonies (particularly no. 5), Shostakovich’s symphonies, Rachmaninov’s *Three Symphonic Dances*, Bartok’s string quartets, Copland’s *Appalachian Spring*, Messiaen’s piano music (Vingt Regards), Britten’s operas, Ligeti’s *Atmospheres*, Boulez’s *Le Marteau sans maitre*, Cage’s music for prepared piano. You should also listen to some new music (some interesting English composers, for example, include Peter Maxwell-Davies, Harrison Birtwistle, Judith Weir, James MacMillan, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Thomas Ades, Sally Beamish, Kenneth Hesketh and many others)